

Science, Service, Stewardship



**Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for
Southeast and Southcentral Alaska:
determining a maximum length limit for
halibut harvested by charter anglers**

**NOAA
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Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Halibut CSP

- The Council recommended the CSP for Southeast Alaska (Area 2C) and Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A) in October 2008
- The CSP would:
 - establish sector allocations and catch limits for the charter and commercial halibut fisheries in Area 2C and in Area 3A,
 - annually specify harvest restrictions (CSP restrictions) for charter anglers in each area that are intended to limit harvest within a target harvest range around the charter sector's catch limit, and
 - authorize annual transfers of commercial halibut IFQ as guided angler fish (GAF) to charter halibut permit holders for harvest by anglers in the charter halibut fishery.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Charter sector management under the CSP

- The CSP would replace the charter Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) with a percentage allocation of the **combined catch limit** to the charter sector.
- Annual inputs to the CSP = **combined catch limit** and **projected charter harvest**
- These inputs would trigger the **CSP restrictions**, or the harvest limit regulations governing charter anglers for that year.

Preferred Alternative: Area 2C

| Combined Fishery CEY (million lb) | Allocation | Charter Fishery Bag & Size Limit Regulations | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | | If charter harvest projected within allocation range | If charter harvest projected to exceed allocation range | If charter harvest projected to be below allocation range |
| Tier 1 <5 | Comm alloc = 82.7% Charter alloc = 17.3% Charter range = 13.8-20.8% | One fish | Maximum size limit imposed that brings harvest to <17.3% | One fish |
| Tier 2 ≥5 - <9 | Comm alloc = 84.9% Charter alloc = 15.1% Charter range = 11.6-18.6% | One fish | Maximum size limit imposed that brings harvest to <15.1% | Two fish, but one must be less than 32" in length |
| Tier 3 ≥9 - <14 | Comm alloc = 84.9% Charter alloc = 15.1% Charter range = 11.6-18.6% | Two fish, one must be less than 32" in length | One fish | Two fish |
| Tier 4 ≥14 | Comm alloc = 84.9% Charter alloc = 15.1% Charter range = 11.6-18.6% | Two fish | Two fish, but one must be less than 32" in length | Two fish |
| Preferred Alternative: Area 3A | | | | |
| Combined Fishery CEY (million lb) | Allocation | Charter Fishery Bag & Size Limit Regulations | | |
| | | If charter harvest within allocation range | If charter harvest projected to exceed allocation range | If charter harvest projected to be below allocation range |
| Tier 1 <10 | Comm alloc = 84.6% Charter alloc = 15.4% Charter range = 11.9-18.9% | One fish | Maximum size limit imposed that brings harvest to <15.4% | One fish |
| Tier 2 ≥10 but <20 | Comm alloc = 86.0% Charter alloc = 14.0% Charter range = 10.5-17.5% | One fish | Maximum size limit imposed that brings harvest to <14.0% | Two fish, but one must be less than 32" in length |
| Tier 3 ≥20 but <27 | Comm alloc = 86.0% Charter alloc = 14.0% Charter range = 10.5-17.5% | Two fish, one must be less than 32" in length | One fish | Two fish |
| Tier 4 ≥27 | Comm alloc = 86.0% Charter alloc = 14.0% Charter range = 10.5-17.5% | Two fish | Two fish, but one must be less than 32" in length | Two fish |

Excerpt from Council CSP motion – October 2008

Trigger 1: When the combined charter and setline catch limit is < 10 Mlb, the charter halibut fishery will be managed under a 1 halibut daily bag limit. The charter sector's allocation will be 15.4 percent of the combined charter and setline catch limit. The charter sector's expected catch may vary between 11.9 percent and 18.9 percent of the combined catch. However, if the charter harvest for an upcoming season is projected to exceed 18.9 percent of the combined catch limit, **then a maximum size limit will be implemented to reduce the projected charter harvest below 15.4 percent of the combined harvest.** If the projected charter harvest results in a catch rate (percentage of projected charter harvest divided by the combined commercial and charter catch limit for that Area) that is lower than the lowest charter harvest percentage in that trigger range, then the charter harvest shall be managed under the daily bag limit of the next higher trigger, so long as the projected charter harvest percentage of the combined catch limit falls within the percentage range included under that trigger.

Trigger 2: When the combined catch limit is \geq 10 Mlb and $<$ 20 Mlb, the halibut charter fishery will be managed under a 1 halibut daily bag limit. The charter sector's allocation will be 14.0 percent of the combined catch limit. The charter sector's expected catch may vary between 10.5 percent and 17.5 percent of the combined catch limit. However, if the charter harvest for an upcoming season is projected to exceed 17.5 percent of the combined catch limit, **then a maximum size limit will be implemented to reduce the projected charter harvest level to 14 percent of the combined catch limit.** If the projected charter harvest results in a catch rate (percentage of projected charter harvest divided by the combined catch limit for that area) that is lower than the lowest charter harvest percentage in that trigger range, then the charter harvest shall be managed under the daily bag limit of the next higher trigger, so long as the projected charter harvest percentage of the combined catch limit falls within the percentage range included under that trigger.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Maximum length limit under the CSP

- Following Council recommendation of the CSP, the Council contracted an analyst to prepare a supplemental analysis on the process for selecting a maximum length limit.
- In January 2009, the analyst presented a paper to the SSC noting that there are a number of methods that could be used to calculate a maximum length limit to restrict the total pounds of halibut harvested equal to or below the charter catch limit.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Maximum length limit under the CSP

- The discussion paper described two methods (Method A and Method B) for determining the maximum length limit under the CSP.
- Method A uses sample data from the previous year's fishery to estimate charter harvest for the upcoming year. May underestimate charter harvest and result in the sector exceeding its catch limit if anglers are able to increase the average size of retained halibut relative to the previous year.
- Method B does not use sample data from the previous year's fishery. Uses a conservative assumption that all halibut harvested under the maximum length limit would be equal to the maximum length. Method B is the most biologically conservative because it is likely to overestimate charter harvest and result in charter harvest not reaching the sector's allocation.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

- The SSC reviewed the discussion paper and provided its recommendations in February 2009.

February 2009 SSC comments on Method A

- Underestimated charter harvest due to changes in angler behavior under Method A could result in actual charter harvest exceeding the charter catch limit.
- Method A would be expected to produce the least impact on the charter industry but the most impact on the halibut resource.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

February 2009 SSC comments on Method B

- Method B uses a conservative approach by assuming that all charter vessel anglers will highgrade to the maximum length limit. This increases the likelihood that charter harvest will not reach the sector's catch limit because not all anglers will be able to highgrade to the maximum length limit.
- The biologically conservative assumption used under Method B could result in an undesirable economic loss to the charter industry and a loss of opportunity to charter vessel anglers because the maximum length limit would be smaller than limits calculated using less biologically conservative assumptions.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

February 2009 SSC comments on maximum length limit calculation

- The SSC suggested that the CSP could use an iterative approach to calculating maximum length limits for a few years in order to accommodate new information on angler behavior under maximum length limit restrictions.
- However, NMFS determined that the maximum length limit methodology should be specified in the CSP regulations to the extent possible in order to provide affected anglers with notice and some level of predictability.
- The Council received the SSC's report but did not recommend a maximum length limit calculation method.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Maximum length limit under the CSP

- In October 2010, NMFS proposed using Method B, the more biologically conservative method, in draft regulations provided to the Council.
- This proposal is consistent with a December 2007 Council statement in which it acknowledged that charter harvest may not precisely meet the sector allocation under the CSP.

Excerpt from Council statement of management objectives for the proposed CSP action in December 2007.

...In meeting its conservation mandate while accommodating the charter industry's need for predictability and stability, the Council will necessarily err on the side of conservation in the selection of management tools and season length, with the result that the sport charter sector may not be able to harvest its entire allocation.



Halibut CSP for Area 2C and Area 3A

Maximum length limit under the CSP

- In January 2011, the IPHC used the Method B approach to recommend a 37" maximum length limit for the 2011 Area 2C charter halibut fishery.
- Following the IPHC annual meeting, ADF&G developed an alternative method to calculate the maximum size limit. This additional method, (Method C), combines the assumptions used in Methods A and B to produce an intermediate result.
- In April 2011, the Council requested a review of the CSP maximum length limit methodology for its June meeting.
- In the proposed rule for the CSP, NMFS will request public comment on the use of proposed Methods A, B, or C, or on other potential methods, to establish maximum length limits.