

Charter Management Implementation Committee Report

December 6, 2011

Anchorage Alaska

Attendance The meeting convened at approximately 4pm.

Committee: Chair Ed Dersham, Seth Bone, Ken Dole, Tim Evers, Kent Huff, Stan Malcom, Andy Mezirow, Richard Yamada

NPFMC Staff: Jane DiCosimo, Mark Fina

NOAA: Glenn Merrill, Rachel Baker

ADF&G: Scott Meyer, Charlie Swanton, Ruth Christiansen, Bob Clark, Barbi Failor

IPHC: Gregg Williams

Public: Approximately 15 members of the public

Opening Remarks

Chair Ed Dersham opened the meeting with general remarks on the range of topics on the agenda to address charter halibut management for Area 2C and Area 3A in 2012, in the short term (amend the CSP Tier 1), and in the long term. Mr. Dersham identified that the committee would limit its recommendations in accordance with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) staff recommendations for commercial catch limits and corresponding GHLS, and would not address potential further reductions that were covered in the IPHC webinar on November 29, 2011. He said it was his intent to get through the entire agenda during the meeting.

Committee Discussion of 2012 Management for Area 2C

Mr. Dersham requested that Scott Meyer answer questions from the committee on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) discussion paper which analyzed a range of proposed management measures to keep charter halibut harvests to its GHL in Area 2C, which had been requested during the committee's October 2011 meeting. The paper covered GHLS of 788,000 lb (the 2011 GHL) and 931,000 lb (the 2012 GHL that results from the IPHC staff recommendations) for 2012. Committee members received several clarifications from Scott Meyer on components of his analysis.

Mr. Dersham asked if Area 2C committee members were prepared to propose their recommendations for 2012 management measures for Area 2C. After a short break Richard Yamada summarized the consensus recommendations for Area 2C, which were based on the analysis provided by Scott Meyer and IPHC staff recommendations on November 30, 2011. In making their recommendations, Area 2C committee members wrestled with which options would have the greatest improvement for operators throughout the region and recognized that each management option affected each port differently. As was noted by the committee chair and other committee members, it is difficult to say with certainty which option is preferable until the IPHC makes its final determination on harvest limits for the 2012 season. The consensus recommendations are ranked (below) in priority for Council consideration.

1. *One day per week closure, with no maximum fish size on the remaining days of the week.* With regard to a recommendation on a specific day, committee members suggested that the day should be that which provides the greatest conservation effect. According to the paper, Tuesdays would have the greatest effect.

Committee members noted that multiple day of the week closures could result in undue hardships on anglers from cruise ships whose schedules are not flexible. Day closures would not require handling and measuring fish and would minimize unaccounted release mortality. It would eliminate leakage to the non-guided sector and handling mortality.

2. *Reverse slot limit.*

- a) U45/O62 - Under the "best case" assumptions in the paper, a reverse slot limit would be 45" and below and 64" and above.
- b) U42/O64 - Under a more conservative model, the reverse slot limit could be 42" and below and 64" and above.

3. *Maximum size limit.*

The committee stipulated that a maximum size limit at the highest justifiable size was their third preference.

Committee member indicated that these recommendations were not ideal solutions for all business models, but that they represented the best options that could be implemented for the 2012 season. The reverse slot limit would allow trophy fish, which is very important to all business models and critical to some business models. A committee member noted that handling of released fish would be minimal as there are very few large fish, but the possibility of catching and keeping one is critical to the industry. Forty-five inches is still a reasonable size halibut and is a big increase to the current maximum size limit of 37 inches. Committee members acknowledged the potential mortality of released fish. Gregg Williams clarified that sport release mortality is not currently included in the IPHC process for setting halibut catch limits, but such a management measure (reverse slot limit) may spur the IPHC into doing so, similar to what is currently done with commercial wastage.

Committee Discussion of 2012 Management for Area 3A

Tim Evers and Andy Mezirow recommended the status quo for Area 3A, based on ADF&G charter halibut harvest projections for 2012. No action appears to be needed either under the current GHM (3.65 Mlb) or the GHM that results from IPHC staff recommendations for 2012 (3.103 Mlb). Giving up *captain and crew fish* would be the first choice for a management measure if additional action is warranted.

Committee Discussion of Changes to the Catch Sharing Plan

The chair also addressed how the Council will make its recommendations on the CSP to the Council. Mr. Dersham suggested that committee members make recommendations for management measures that were better suited to the charter industry for 2013 and beyond than under the currently proposed components of the CSP. Because the fate of the Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) is uncertain, Mr. Dersham encouraged forwarding multiple options that could be analyzed for future consideration. He noted that NMFS staff will report to the Council later in the week on additional clarifications as to which management options could be considered a logical outgrowth of the proposed rule and which could not be considered such. Committee members then proposed a wide range of management options that could be considered by the Council, for either within the "logical outgrowth" context or outside of it.

Andy Mezirow asked if amending the Guided Angler Fish (GAF) program is within the scope of the committee. After concurrence from the chair, Andy described why the purchase of GAFs is not optimal because better capitalized permit holders have an advantage. Tim Evers noted that it would be better to provide opportunities for both purchasing and leasing GAF, if the program was to be implemented.

Richard Yamada described his Charter Halibut Allocation Management Plan (CHAMP) proposal (Proposal 1 in the committee handout (<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/halibut/Implementation/YamadaProposal1011.pdf>)). Because of the two core difficulties with sport fish management: changes in the annual average size fish and unknown angler demand, he proposed range of some lower percent of allocation and provided buffer. In times of low abundance, guided anglers would be managed under the least restrictive harvest measure that would be projected to achieve a harvest of 90% of the regulatory allocation for the upcoming season. If at the end of the season the harvest is below this 90%

threshold, the underage difference would be added to the next season's allocation. On the other hand, if at the end of the season the harvest is over 110% of that season's regulatory allocation, the overage difference would be deducted from the next season's allocation. It is assumed that this 20% range in projecting harvest is well within the capabilities of regulators at the moment and that a plus or minus 10% underage or overage would balance itself out over time. This proposal also requests consideration of three alternative harvest measures for Area 2C.

1. Daily bag limit of two fish under the commercial minimum size limit, currently 32 inch of which an angler may substitute one of these fish to be a fish of any size, but this fish of any size may only be done once annually for this angler.
2. Daily bag limit of one halibut with a maximum size of 45" or larger.
3. Daily bag limit of two fish with a maximum size of 37".

Several other proposals were generally discussed but not in detail. These include a Harvest Day/Trip Management Tool proposed by Stan Malcom ((Proposal 2 in the committee handout (<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/halibut/Implementation/HARVESTday1011.pdf>)). A pre-determined number of "Harvest Days/Trips" would be assigned to each valid charter halibut permit (CHP) each season. Each CHP would be issued an equal number of Harvest Days/Trips. The number of Harvest Days/Trips allocated would be based on assumption of total usage of those Harvest Days/Trips using average harvest rates, sizes and clients per trip from the previous season. Permit stacking would be allowed (by purchase or lease) in order to increase the number of Harvest Days/Trips per vessel. Those vessels wishing to make multiple trips in a single day can do so by using a Harvest Day/Trip for each trip.

Ken Huff submitted a proposal for a Sub Area method in Area 2C for a short-term or long-term management option ((Proposal 3 in the committee handout (<http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/halibut/Implementation/HuffProposal1111.pdf>)). This would give each sub area the opportunity to choose the best harvest option for the business model in their area. Using the total GHL, have data analysis done for all of the different options available, then each sub area would choose the option that works best for that sub area. Total harvestable pounds would remain the same area wide, just the harvest method from sub area to sub area would change. Methods of harvest could include:

1. Reverse Slot Limit
2. Days of the Week Closure
3. One Fish Maximum Size (Hybrid method)
4. Annual limits
5. Two Fish 32" and under
6. Slot Limits
7. Trip Limits
8. Two or Three fish any size Annual
9. and any other method that works best for a business model in each of the sub areas.

Prior to the meeting an interim proposal for a Catch Accountability Through Compensated Halibut (CATCH) Guided Recreational Pool Plan Components was submitted as a placeholder for future consideration ((Proposal 4 in the committee handout (http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/PDFdocuments/halibut/Implementation/CATCH_plan1211.pdf)).

Ken Dole suggested that the same measures recommended for 2012 could be examined in a trailing regulatory amendment. Seth Bone recommended that annual limits also should be analyzed. Kent Huff spoke in support of an annual trophy limit.

Ed appreciated the work put into the proposals and commented on issues that came up at the IPHC interim meeting regarding potential lower biomass estimations. Jane DiCosimo briefly addressed the currently proposed CSP matrix and specifically the Tier 1 box that identifies the one fish of a maximum size that would be implemented if approved by the Secretary, unless otherwise revised by the Council. She spoke to support simple, short term measures that could be implemented through separate rulemaking in conjunction with the CSP, in order to revise the tier 1 box of the CSP matrix. Ed agreed with Jane's explanation but stated that the options before the Council were more expansive, such that the individuals

could recommend to the Council during public testimony on the C-6 agenda item (and the Council could make) more substantive changes to the CSP.

Andy asked about the effect of the difference of adding a small fish U26 because he thought that the IPHC did not count them in determining the CEY. Ed noted that the Council and Commission are planning a work shop in late April to address a number of questions that the Council and the public have raised. Jane directed the committee to the Executive Director's report (Agenda B-1), which contains a draft work shop outline that was prepared by the Council and Commission staffs.

The committee took public testimony from two charter captains. They suggested a number of management measures for consideration (most of which were covered by committee members at one of their two meetings).

Committee Recommendations for Short Term Changes to the CSP

Area 2C

- Annual limit (allowing retention of at least one trophy fish)

Area 3A

- Include buying as an alternative to leasing GAF fish
- Two fish any size
- Restricting Captain & Crew Harvest (annual limit/6-8-10, monthly closures)
- One Trip per day (trip limits, weekly? monthly? season?)
- Two fish of Maximum size
- One fish <32", one fish >32"
- Reverse Slot limits (2nd fish above or below a certain size limit)
- Two fish any size except July & August, one fish <32, one fish >32 July & August
- Two fish > 32"
- One fish any size (all season)
- Annual limit of 4/6/8 fish

Committee Recommendations for Long Term Changes to the CSP

Area 2C

- Harvest Day/Trip Management Tool
- Charter Halibut Allocation Management Plan (CHAMP)
- Subarea Management
- CATCH Program

Area 3A

- Include buying QS as an alternative to leasing GAF Fish (CSP)
- Angler Day Program/Common Pool
- Limited Entry Program/Common Pool
- Guided Angler Fish/Allocated Effort Based Method
- Harvest Tag

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 pm.