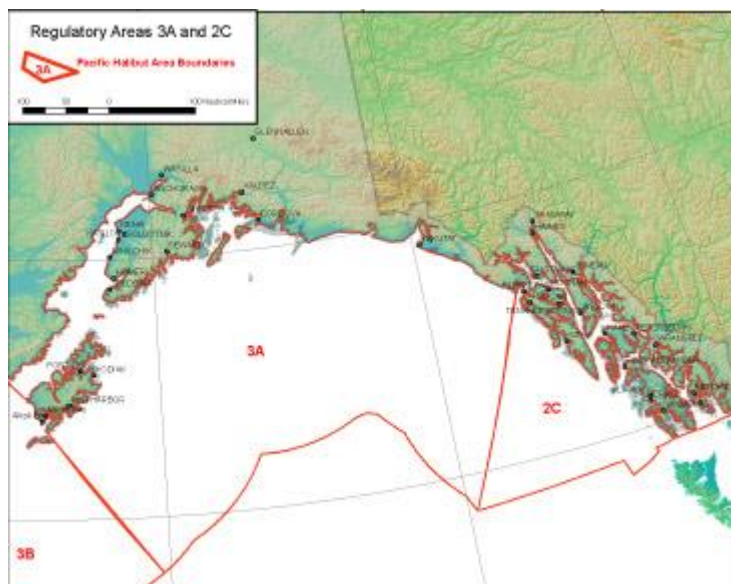


# 2014 Halibut Catch Sharing Plan – Fact Sheet

## Background

On December 9, 2013, NOAA Fisheries announced its intent to implement the [Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan](#) (CSP) for the commercial and charter halibut fisheries in Southeast Alaska (Area 2C) and the Central Gulf of Alaska (Area 3A). The catch sharing plan will be in effect for the 2014 fishing season. Prior to the catch sharing plan, the charter sector was managed under a guideline harvest level (GHL). The Council determined that the guideline harvest level program in effect since 2004 was not optimal in preventing overages when harvest of halibut by guided anglers on charter vessels increased in Areas 2C and 3A beginning in the late 1990s. The Council recommended a series of regulatory amendments under the GHL program for implementation by NOAA in order to attempt to keep charter harvests to the GHLs. Implementation of more restrictive management measures were unable to constrain harvests to the GHLs in Area 2C, particularly as the GHL was reduced due to declining halibut abundance.



On October 5, 2012, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended a catch sharing plan with a clear allocation between the commercial and charter sectors in areas 2C and 3A to replace the guideline harvest level. Under the catch sharing plan, commercial and charter halibut operations will have a combined catch limit determined by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) each year prior to the fishing season. The plan is designed to provide halibut fishery managers with greater precision in setting halibut catch limits and management measures that are responsive to changes in halibut exploitable biomass and fishing effort each year. Allocations to both the charter and commercial sectors will vary with changes in halibut abundance. Each sector's catch limit will be reduced by estimates of its discard mortality.

Since 2012 annual management measures have been implemented through the annual management measures adopted by the IPHC at its annual meeting. The current daily bag and size limit for Area 2C for 2013 was 1-fish, which must be less than or equal to 45 inches and greater than or equal to 68 inches (also described as "U45O68"). The current daily bag and size limit for Area 3A for 2013 was 2 fish of any size.

## Decision Making Process for 2014

- Since 2012 the Council, NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and IPHC have cooperated on a joint process to use stakeholder input and agency expertise to develop recommendations for management measures to keep charter halibut harvests within their allocations in Area 2C and Area 3A for implementation under IPHC Annual Management Measures.

- The first year of the new Catch Sharing Plan in which the Area 2C and Area 3A charter sectors are under an allocation is 2014.
- On October 25, 2013, the Council's Charter Management Implementation Committee requested analysis of projected charter yield under the following measures. The range of possible measures was provided by consulting with numerous charter organizations and charter halibut permit holders.
  - Area 2C: 1) One-fish bag limit and U45-O68 reverse slot limit (status quo), 2) One-fish bag limit with maximum size limit, 3) One-fish bag limit and annual limit combined with a maximum size limit, and 4) One-fish bag limit, and annual limit combined with a reverse slot limit.
  - Area 3A: 1) Two-fish bag limit, no size limit (status quo), 2) Two-fish bag limit with a maximum size limit on the second fish (one fish any size), 3) Two-fish bag limit ( any size) with annual limit, 4) Two-fish bag limit (any size) and prohibit harvest by skipper and crew (default under CSP), and 5) Two-fish bag limit (any size) combined with vessel trip limit of one trip per day.
- Due to meeting schedules, the Council considers charter halibut management measures for Area 2C and Area 3A in 2014 to recommend to the IPHC as part of the CSP before the latter has determined the combined charter and commercial halibut allocation for each area at its January 2014 Annual Meeting.
- In lieu of final combined catch limits, results from the December 4 - 5, 2013 interim IPHC meeting were used as a benchmark. The halibut exploitable biomass increased by about 9% in Area 2C. The charter allocation resulting from the "blue line" (the current IPHC harvest policy to the stock assessment) for Area 2C is 760,000 pounds. The Pacific halibut exploitable biomass declined by about 20% compared to 2013 in Area 3A. The IPHC "blue line" results in a charter allocation in Area 3A of 1.78 million pounds.
- The charter allocations resulting from the interim IPHC meeting (at the "blue line") are:
  - Area 2C: 18.3% of the combined commercial and charter catch limit
  - Area 3A: 18.9% of the combined commercial and charter catch limit
- Under the Catch Sharing Plan, the charter allocations include the estimates of the amount of wastage that would occur in each fishery. The preliminary estimates of sport fishery release mortality from the charter sector accounted for 41,000 lb in Area 2C total and 36,000 lb in Area 3A<sup>i</sup>.
- On December 9, 2013 the Charter Management Implementation Committee 1) [reviewed an analysis](#) for setting 2014 charter halibut annual management measures, which was prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Sportfish Division and 2) [recommended management measures for Area 2C and Area 3A for 2014](#). The analysis accounted for estimates of wastage in each area.
- On December 12, 2013, the Council reviewed the ADF&G analysis and adopted the following committee recommendations, based on reference ("blue line") allocations of 760,000 lb in Area 2C and 1.78 million lb in Area 3A and adjustments for estimates of wastage in each area.
  - Area 2C: 1) One-fish daily bag limit and 2) Reverse slot limit of U44O76 ( $\leq 44$  inches or  $\geq 76$  inches)**

If the final charter allocation is sufficiently higher than the “blue line” to accommodate a change in the reverse slot limit, adjust the size of the lower limit up one inch (for example to 45 inches). The next adjustment would be to reduce the upper limit to meet the allocation.

The rationale for these measures in Area 2C (southeast) was to stay as consistent as possible with current measures and thereby facilitate understanding by the public and the charter operators in this area. The reverse slot limit has been used in this area in recent years, and still allows for the possibility of a trophy fish.

**Area 3A:** 1) Two-fish daily bag limit, 2) One fish of any size, with maximum size of the second fish at 29 inches, and 3) One trip per day (limit each vessel to one trip per calendar day)

If the final charter allocation is sufficiently higher than the “blue line” to remove the trip limit, the measures would be a two-fish daily bag limit, one of which is equal to or less than 29 inches. As further needed, depending on the final charter allocation, the size of the second fish may be adjusted up or down to meet the allocation.

The rationale for these measures is to maintain a two-fish limit in Area 3A (southcentral), recognizing that the second fish must be limited in size in order to stay within the projected allocation.

- At its January 13 – 17, 2014 Annual Meeting, the IPHC will consider the Council recommendations for setting charter management measures for Area 2C and Area 3A when it adopts the CSP allocations for its 2014 Annual Management Measures. The Council’s recommendations to the IPHC include guidance on how to adjust its recommendations to account for differences between the “blue line” and final combined catch limits in each area.
- Area 2C and Area 3A management measures for 2014 will be implemented under final rulemaking for the IPHC Annual Management Measures, likely by March 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/halibut/ADFG\\_IPHCsportdataLetter1113.pdf](http://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/halibut/ADFG_IPHCsportdataLetter1113.pdf)