

DRAFT October 2005 Council Meeting Summary

Charter Halibut At its October 2005 meeting, the Council reviewed final 2004 halibut charter harvest estimates from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport Fish Division. The data indicated that the halibut charter **guideline harvest level (GHL)** had been exceeded by 22 percent in Area 2C (Southeast) and 1 percent in Area 3A (Southcentral) in 2004. The GHLs establish an amount of halibut that are monitored annually in the guided sport fishery. They equate to 1,432,000 lb (net weight) for Southeast and 3,650,000 lb for Southcentral.

In response to the new information, the Council initiated an analysis that includes the following proposed management measures that may be implemented to lower halibut charter harvests below the GHLs. The proposed measures derive from the Council's 2000 analysis for measures that would result in lower charter halibut harvests. The analysis will be reviewed at the February 2006 Council meeting. Final action is scheduled for April 2006. If recommended by the Council and approved by the Secretary of Commerce, implementation could occur prior to the start of the 2007 charter season.

For Area 2C: Alternative 1. No action
 Alternative 2. One trip per day, no harvest by skipper and crew, and annual limit of 6 fish
 Alternative 3. One trip per day, no harvest by skipper and crew, and annual limit of 5 fish

For Area 3A: Alternative 1. No action
 Alternative 2. One trip per day
 Alternative 3. One trip per day, no harvest by skipper and crew

The Council is calling for nominations to a new **GHL Committee** to consider additional changes on a separate timeline. Nominees should send a letter that details their experience in the charter fishing sector to the Council by November 5th. The committee may convene in Anchorage in December 2005 to discuss the following additional changes to the GHL program. It may meet again in late January 2006 to review the draft GHL analysis described above. Committee members would be responsible for their own travel expenses.

Possible GHL amendments

- (1) link GHL to abundance
- (2) divide Areas 2C & 3A GHLs into sub-regions
- (3) consider moratorium on new entrants
- (4) establish a valid reporting system; ADFG and NMFS to work together to make recommendations to committee

The Council also reviewed a letter from Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator of Fisheries, dated August 3, 2005, in which he requested that the Council confirm its support of the 2001 decision to incorporate the charter sector into the halibut commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ) program before NMFS publishes the proposed rule in the *Federal Register*. After receiving a brief staff report and testimony from nearly 100 members of the public, the Council agreed to send a letter to Dr. Hogarth, stating, "*The Council is concerned with the process that has transpired since its approval of the Halibut Charter IFQ program. This letter does not confirm support nor does it deny support. Without prejudice to any future Council action on this issue, the Council takes no action on your letter. It requests that you proceed with agency assessment of the draft proposed rule.*"

The Council will consider a motion to rescind the 2001 decision to implement a charter IFQ program at its next meeting in December 2005. Sign-up for public testimony would occur on Wednesday afternoon, December 7th. ADF&G committed to provide additional charter halibut data regarding qualified [(1998 and/or 1999) and 2000] participants/businesses, current [2004] participants/businesses, halibut charter harvests by area, and background on data collection methodology. For more information, contact Jane DiCosimo.