

DRAFT

Charter Halibut Management The Council took a number of actions affecting management of the charter halibut fishery. The Council reviewed the public review draft of an analysis that considered a range of Guideline Harvest Level management measures to reduce charter halibut harvest to the respective guideline harvest levels of 1.432 million pounds in Area 2C and 3.65 million pounds in Area 3A. The Council recognized that the ADF&G Commissioner plans to enact State regulations to prohibit retention of groundfish (including halibut) by skippers and crew, except for certain terminal fisheries areas. A limit on the number of lines equal to the number of clients aboard a charter vessel is already in place for Southeast Alaska. Therefore, the Council adopted an annual limit of five halibut per charter angler in Area 2C to further reduce charter halibut harvests. NOAA Fisheries will report back to the Council at its June 2006 meeting on enforcement and recordkeeping and reporting requirements associated with the proposed annual limit, specifically whether Federal regulations may rely on State recordkeeping and requirement vehicles for enforcement. The Council took no action for Area 3A, recognizing that charter halibut harvests are expected to be below the GHF in 2006 and that the Commissioner has executive order authority to implement similar measures in that area, as will be in place for Area 2C, if harvests warrant such an action.

The Council reviewed a discussion paper on a commercial industry proposal for separate accountability of charter and commercial allocations. The Council took no action on the proposal, but recognized that the Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee will address the proposal in its development of alternatives for a permanent solution at one of its subsequent meetings. The Council scheduled deliberation of this proposal again at the December 2006 Council meeting, so that it would recommend changes to the IPHC process for setting catch limits in time for the IPHC annual meeting in January 2007.

In response to the committee's recommendation for an interim solution, the Council initiated an analysis for a moratorium on entry into the charter fishery using the December 9, 2005 control date. The suite of elements and options, as revised by the Council, is posted on the Council website. The Council scheduled a discussion of staff workload and timeline for analysis of community options in the moratorium analysis at the June 2006 Council meeting. The Council will consider whether to analyze the moratorium for all of Area 2C and 3A and initiate a trailing regulatory package to address community options. The proposed moratorium analysis is tentatively scheduled for initial review in December 2006 in Anchorage. Implementation, if subsequently approved by the Secretary of Commerce, would occur for the 2008 charter season, at the earliest.

The Stakeholder Committee will hold its next meeting on April 18-20, 2006 at the Anchorage Hilton. In June 2006, the Council will review the committee's recommendations on interim (revise the GHF to increase with halibut abundance) and permanent management measures (percent allocation and quota share program). Those analyses would be scheduled for action after the moratorium analysis. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.

Research priorities The Council adopted research priorities for groundfish, crab and scallops based on recommendations from its plan teams and Scientific and Statistical Committee. These research priorities will be used by NOAA Fisheries, North Pacific Research Board, and other academic institutions. They are available from the Council office. Contact Jane DiCosimo for more information.