



## Charter Halibut Management Committee REPORT

December 3, 2025; NPFMC Office

*The North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Charter Halibut Management Committee held an in person/ online hybrid meeting on Wednesday, December 3, 2025. At this meeting, the Committee provided recommendations on a range of charter halibut management measures (e.g., bag limits, size restrictions) for each International Pacific Halibut Commission Area 2C and 3A. All meeting materials are posted to the eAgenda.<sup>1</sup>*

### Committee Members in attendance:

Brian Ritchie (Area 3A; <i>chair</i> )	Seth Bone (Area 2C)	Forrest Braden (Area 2C)
Daniel Donich (Area 3A)	Scott McKelvey (Area 2C)	Adrienne Swan (Area 2C)
Matt Kopec (Area 3A)	Stan Malcolm (Area 2C)	Chance Miller (Area 3A)
Richard Yamada (Area 2C)	Steve Zernia (Area 3A)	Sarah Marrinan ( <i>staff coordinator</i> )

**Members absent:** none

### Others in attendance:

Adam St. Saviour	Lucas Giese	John Hughes
Doug Duncan	Chris Conder	Kayla Buster
Dan Perpich	Phil Joy	Ben Jevons
Macen Kopec	Jed Ullrich	Ben Hinde
Bonnie Steinberg	Capt. Carl	Joel Steenstra
Geoff Jans	Mel Erickson	Kim Landeen
Jim Kerns	Rebecca	Felicia Baker
Clay Duda	Brittany	

Committee chair Brian Ritchie called the meeting to order, and members and participants provided introductions. The meeting began with a brief update from Doug Duncan (NMFS) and Ben Jevons on the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) rollout for 2026.

### Analysis of 2026 Charter Halibut Management Measures

The Committee received a presentation of the ADF&G analysis of management options for the Area 2C and 3A charter halibut fisheries for 2025 from Adam St. Saviour (ADF&G). This report and the corresponding presentation are linked in the eAgenda. Given the uncertainty surrounding IPHC allocation decisions for 2026, the analysis used the 2025 catch limits as a reference, which were **0.720 Mlb for Area 2C** and **1.480 Mlb for Area 3A**. However, Committee members also needed to consider a range of potential allocations above and below these allocations.

### Public Testimony

The Committee received 24 written public comments, providing both recommendations for 2026 charter halibut management measures as well as several other topics. These letters are attached to the

<sup>1</sup> <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3104>

Committee's eAgenda. Additionally, the Committee received oral public comment on management measures from two individuals, Chris Conder and Jim Kerns.

## Recommended Management Measures for 2026

### Area 2C

All allocations shown below include a daily bag limit of one halibut and a reverse slot size limit where the upper limit is fixed at O80 (halibut 80 inches or longer may be retained).

- 1) If the allocation is at or above **0.858 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U37 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 37 inches in length) and increase the lower size limit until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.4 (page 19)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 2) If the allocation is less than **0.858 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.715 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U37 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 37 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 3) If the allocation is less than **0.715 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.691 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U36 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 36 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 4) If the allocation is less than **0.691 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.651 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U35 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 35 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 5) If the allocation is less than **0.651 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.626 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U34 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 34 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 6) If the allocation is less than **0.626 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.594 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U33 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 33 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.
- 7) If the allocation is less than **0.594 Mlb** but greater than or equal to **0.566 Mlb**:
  - Begin with a lower size limit of U32 (retained halibut must be less than or equal to 32 inches in length) closing Thursdays starting September 10 working to May 14 until the allocation is reached, as indicated in **Table 2C.6b (page 22)** of the ADF&G analysis.

### **Rationale and discussion:**

Area 2C Committee members highlighted that they took a similar approach to last year in recommending this progression of management measures. This progression focuses on lowering the maximum size limit on the lower end of the reserve slot limit and closing Thursdays as needed. While these are the type of measures the area is used to, the levels proposed in the progression are not, and members emphasized that

the possible changes would NOT be painless. As can be seen in the Guided Angler Fish (GAF) report, operators are leaning heavily on GAF in order to keep their operations viable. The Committee considers differential impacts across businesses when considering measures and deemed these measures share the pain relative to other types of measures considered.

The difference from what is proposed this year compared to last year is that vessel and CHP trip limits are not proposed for 2026. The analysis showed a much lower saving from this type of measure relative to last year's analysis. Additionally, this type of measure affects certain operations more than others and it can be difficult for businesses to quickly deviate their operational strategies. The Committee also did not recommend annual limits for Area 2C. The analysis shows that meaningful savings would not come into play until a 2-fish annual limit. Again, this type of measure affects certain operations (e.g., multi-day lodges) more than others (e.g., day boat operations).

### **Area 3A**

**The Charter Halibut Management Committee recommends the following harvest measures for the Area 3A guided recreational halibut fishery in 2026:**

All allocations shown below include, unless otherwise specified:

- A daily bag limit of 2 halibut.
  - One fish of any size and one fish with a maximum size limit of 28 inches.
  - 1 trip per charter vessel per day with retention of halibut; and 1 trip per CHP per day.
  - All Wednesdays to be closed to the retention of halibut.
- 1) If the allocation is greater than or equal to **1.772 Mlb**, raise the size of the second fish to 28 inches with no Tuesday closures, as indicated in **Table 3A.13 (page 33)** of the ADF&G analysis.
  - 2) If the allocation is less than or equal to **1.771 Mlb**, but greater than or equal to **1.430 Mlb**: lower the size of the second fish to as low as 27 inches, Close Tuesdays as needed to keep charter harvest removals within the Area 3A allocation, as indicated in **Table 3A.13 (page 33)** of the ADF&G analysis.
  - 3) If the allocation is below **1.472 Mlb**, but greater than or equal to **1.403 Mlb**: In addition to closing all Tuesdays and Wednesdays, lower the size of the second fish to as low as 26 inches, until the projected charter harvest removals meet the allocation, as indicated in **Table 3A.13 (page 33)** of the ADF&G analysis.
  - 4) If the allocation is below **1.403 Mlb**, but greater than or equal to **1.327 Mlb**, in addition to all closed Tuesdays and a second fish of 26 inches, adjust the season start date to open between May 1 and May 29 to align with allocation (**Table 3A.14**).
  - 5) If the allocation is below **1.327 Mlb**, but greater than or equal **1.243 Mlb**, in addition to all closed Tuesdays, a second fish of 26 inches, and a season start date of May 29, adjust the season close date between September 28 and September 1 to align with allocation (**Table 3A.14**).
  - 6) If the allocation is below **1.243 Mlb**, in addition to all closed Tuesdays, a season start date of May 29, and a season close date of September 1, implement a daily bag limit of 1 halibut of any size (**Table 3A.17**).

This motion passed 4:2.

### **Rationale and discussion:**

Committee members in support of this progression of measures for Area 3A highlighted that the list begins as close to status quo as possible for the first few options. In addition to Wednesday closures, this includes a 28-26 inch second fish and closing Tuesdays if needed.

Step 4-6 is based on the need to come up with a reduction down to 25% below the 2025 allocation of 1.480 MIb. At this range, there are few options available. Committee members in support of this motion chose to include consideration of adjusted seasonal start dates and end dates, prior to consideration of changing to a 1-fish bag limit for Area 3A. The charter sector has never had a 1-fish bag limit in Area 3A, so although ADF&G prepared an analysis to project removals under this measure, three scenarios are provided to bracket the uncertainty in the results. Members added this measure to the end of the progression as it has the least certainty in its outcome (in particular, how it could impact the average weight of harvested halibut).

### **Opposition:**

Note that typically, the Committee operates based on consensus. In this case, two members did not vote in support of the Area 3A progression of recommended management measures. Opposition was expressed for including delayed seasonal openers/ early seasonal closures *prior* to moving to a 1-fish bag limit. Members in opposition emphasized disproportionate impacts that delayed seasonal openers/ early seasonal closures could have for businesses that rely on the shoulder seasons. There was concern expressed that delayed seasonal openers/ early seasonal closures could cut 60 days out of the operations of certain smaller businesses in certain ports like Kodiak, Deep Creek, and some operations in Homer. These members would have liked to consider moving to a 1-fish bag limit prior to any consideration of delayed seasonal openers/ early seasonal closures.

### **Public Testimony**

Additional oral public comments were received from Joel Steenstra, Paul Olsen, and Jim Kerns. Testifiers covered topics including the importance of GAF, concerns around the unguided rental boat fleet and the disparity in limits, the onboard consumption of halibut, concerns about the lack of multi-day stamp for the RQE, as well as a recommendation to consider all recreational anglers (guided and unguided) under the same allocation.

### **Other Business**

The Committee briefly highlighted a number of topics of interest. One member shared concerns about the maximum IFQ transfer limit that will be shared between the RQE and GAF transfers. With the recent reliance on GAF there are concerns that the transfer caps will not be sufficient for businesses to continue to attract anglers at low levels of abundance. Another member highlighted concerns about halibut trawl bycatch in the GOA, and an interest in encouraging the Council to consider adjusting the limits. While the trawl fleet has been under its limit, concern was expressed that a lightning strike year could lead to substantial impacts on other halibut user groups.