

Charter Halibut Management Short-term and Long-term Solutions

**NPFMC Staff
March 20, 2006**

Some confusion exists regarding how the Council intends the Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee to address short-term and long-term management solutions, in the absence of a Council problem statement which could provide guidance on Council priorities. A review of the Council's record since October 2005, indicates that the Council has provided no specific direction to date on timelines, other than to request that the Stakeholder Committee provide a report to the Council at its April 2006 meeting.

In **October 2005**, the Council appointed the GHL Committee and charged it to provide recommendations on possible amendments to the GHL program, including: (1) link GHL to abundance; (2) divide Areas 2C & 3A GHGs into sub-regions; (3) consider moratorium on new entrants and (4) establish a valid reporting system.

In **December 2005**, the Council formed the Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee and tasked it with reviewing management options, which were proposed by the State of Alaska and adopted in a Council motion, and others that may be proposed through the committee process to develop two alternatives for Council review in April 2006. Both alternatives, once streamlined by the Stakeholder Committee and further revised by the Council, will undergo a comprehensive analysis, including impacts on other affected sectors of the halibut fishery.

One alternative would be based on the 2001 preferred alternative with a newly proposed "leveling" plan, an effort-based transferable seat program, or other methods, which may include current participants in a quota share based system.

A second alternative would allocate a percentage of halibut harvests to the charter sector, but the fishery would be managed under more traditional management tools. These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) a percentage-based quota that would fluctuate (up and down) with abundance;
- 2) subdivisions of Area 2C and 3A quotas among smaller geographic sub-districts, including time certain establishment of local area management plans (LAMPs) and super-exclusive registration areas;
- 3) a detailed set of management measures which would be used to enforce the allocation, including measures already approved for analysis to lower harvests below the Area 2C and 3A Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) as described below;
- 4) State-sponsored measures to:
 - a) reinstitute in 2006 a halibut reporting requirement in charter boat logbooks with methodology to ensure accuracy based on a protocol identified by ADF&G, and
 - b) propose a regulation to the Board of Fisheries in 2006 which would prohibit retention or harvest of fish by skipper and crew when clients are on board and limit the number of lines fished to the number of clients;
- 5) annual angler limits;
- 6) limits on days fished either by total number of days or by excluding specific days of the week;
- 7) reduced daily limits, including size limits for the second fish;
- 8) in-season quota monitoring with deductions off next year's quota;
- 9) a vessel moratorium;
- 10) limited entry program for charter boats by the State or NOAA Fisheries Service, with delayed transferability of permits;
- 11) unspecified mechanisms that would result in an "orderly and compensated" allocation shift, including a State charter stamp, similar to the king salmon stamp, to raise funds to manage the fishery and to fund the purchase of commercial QS to be reallocated to the charter sector; and
- 12) additionally, the committee would explore legal issues related to delegation of authority to the State for some management aspects of the sport fishery, including the charter sector.

The Council also set a control date of December 9, 2005 to notice the halibut charter industry that a moratorium and/or limited entry program for this fishery may be implemented, and fishermen and vessels not participating by that date may not be eligible for future access and/or quota.

In **February 2006**, the Council received the GHL Committee report and referred the recommendations to the Stakeholder Committee, in the following motion: "Initiate a new amendment package to address regulatory issues associated with the charter halibut harvest. The package may include additional elements and options as recommended by the Stakeholder committee but at a minimum should include the following: 1. A list of options for implementation of a moratorium on new entrants into the charter halibut fishery with a December 9, 2005 control date and with consideration of communities that may not have mature charter halibut businesses or histories. 2. A list of options to subdivide current halibut management areas 2C and 3A into sub-regions for halibut charter management purposes. 3. A list of options for linking the GHL to the annual IPHC harvest level for each management areas, either by making the GHL a fixed percentage of GHL, or through the stair stepping options that would change the GHL up and down as the TAC changes."

The above motion was intended to be combined with the following GHL Committee recommendations:

- (1) consensus to revise GHL to stair-step up with abundance to mirror stair-step down because the IPHC understanding of status of the Pacific halibut stock is much higher than when the GHL was recommended by the Council in 2001;
- (2) discussion but no consensus to link stair-step changes to GHL with gross CEY and not net CEY;
- (3) consensus to delete the option to divide Areas 2C and 3A GHLs into sub-regions because: a) the charter fleets overlap geographically and could lead to huge battles within the sector; b) drawing lines to subdivide the GHLs would be controversial; c) LAMPs are impractical and do not address allocations and might disproportionately disadvantage small communities if allocations are based on historical catches. Current ADF&G Sportfish Division areas should be used if GHL subdivision is pursued; and d) could subdivide effort or licenses instead of the GHLs (e.g., State registration (exclusive/super-exclusive) area licensing or moratorium limits).
- (4) consensus to initiate an analysis at the February 2006 Council meeting for a moratorium on entry into the charter halibut fishery on a fast track. The moratorium should be a true limit on entry by having minimum criteria (e.g., at least one 2005 ADF&G logbook with bottomfish effort filed by 12/09/05 with ADF&G and participating in the year prior to implementation, unspecified minimum number of trips). The committee acknowledged that: 1) latent capacity exists because the ADF&G vessel registration (green stickers) can be transferred between charter vessels; 2) it is difficult to prove who is an active participant; 3) it is difficult to restrict entry while allowing new entrants in underdeveloped communities. The 2005 registered businesses declined drastically because the State instituted fees for licenses (\$50 for guide registration; \$100 for vessel registration); and considerable additional growth between now and possible implementation is expected, beyond the growth that has occurred since implementation of the GHL.
- (5) discussion but no consensus on implementing a limited entry program. The committee discussed two approaches that could be implemented: 1) everyone gets them initially, but a minimum number of trips would be required to renew them annually; or 2) develop restrictive criteria for initial issuance.

Conversations between NPFMC staff and Council Chair Stephanie Madsen and Committee Chair Dave Hanson clarified that the Stakeholder Committee should treat short term and long term management issues together (and equally) at this time. Staff clarifies that the committee recommendation to prioritize implementation of a moratorium on entry into the charter sector is consistent with the previous advice. The committee may also choose to recommend timelines for action on short term and long term actions, if the need to implement short or intermediate goals supercedes efforts to address difficulties with long term solutions (e.g., data issues).