

Guideline Harvest Level Committee
February 1, 2006
Anchorage, Alaska

David Hanson, Chair
Tim Evers
Andy Mezirow
Ken Dole

Seth Bone
Dan Hull
Sean Martin (absent)
Jim Preston (absent)

The GHL Committee convened at 8:30 am on February 1, 2006. Introductions were made and a proposal to add an alternative to the GHL analysis was added to the agenda. The Committee reviewed its two charges. Its first charge was to review the initial review draft of the GHL analysis, which if adopted, would implement management measures to lower the charter halibut harvest to below the Area 2C and 3A GHs. The second charge was to develop alternatives for analysis to revise the GHL Program. These alternatives could include: 1) link the GHL to halibut abundance; 2) divide the Area 2C and 3A GHs into sub-regions; 3) set a moratorium on new entrants; and 4) provide recommendations on a valid reporting system.

Analysis Jonathan King, Northern Economics, summarized the conclusions of the GHL analysis. For Area 2C, alternatives include: (1) no action; (2) limit vessels to one trip per day, prohibit harvest by skipper and crew, and set an annual catch limit of six fish for individual clients; and (3) limit vessels to one trip per day, prohibit harvest by skipper and crew, and set an annual catch limit of five fish for individual clients. Alternative 2 would have reduced harvest in 2004 from 122.2 percent of the GHL to between 107.5 and 109.6 percent of the Area's GHL. Alternative 3 would have reduced harvest in 2004 from 122.2 percent of the GHL to between 101.3 and 102.7 percent of the GHL. For Area 3A, alternatives include: (1) no action; (2) limit vessels to one trip per day; and (3) limit vessels to one trip per day and prohibit harvest by skipper and crew. Alternative 2 would have reduced harvest in 2004 from 100.5 percent of the GHL to between 94.0 and 96.1 percent of the Area's GHL. Alternative 3 would have reduced harvest in 2004 from 100.5 percent of the GHL to between 83.5 and 88.4 percent of the GHL.

The committee discussed the effects of annual changes in average weights for each area at length. The increase in halibut weight in 2004 may account for more than half of the overage in Area 2C. Average weight of halibut in Area 3A declined by more than a pound in 2004, and did not contribute to the overage. ADFG staff noted that average weight of charter halibut declined in both areas in 2005. The Committee recommended that the Council include a second method for determining the effect of proposed alternatives, i.e., using the average charter halibut weights from the last 5 years rather than just the 2004 average weight. A 5-year average was recommended to mirror the use of a 5-year average of charter halibut harvests, although the GHL did not use a 5-year average of weights.

This smoothing of average weight fluctuations was endorsed by the committee to enhance management goals because these annual fluctuations may result in the Council initiating an analysis next year to remove restrictions that may be adopted in April as a result of a known decrease in average weight of halibut in 2005. A hypothetical example illustrates the complications inherent in the time lag between the year of the overage and implementation of measures.

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE OF TIME LAG (added by staff)	
Year1	Charter harvest exceeds GHL
Year2	1. ADFG reports that charter harvest in Year1 exceeds GHL 2. Council initiates analysis to add restrictive measures 3. Charter harvest is under the GHL in Year2
Year3	1. ADFG reports that charter harvest in Year2 is under the GHL 2. Council adopts restrictive measures based on year1 3. Council initiates analysis to remove restrictive measures based on Year2
Year4	1. ADF&G reports on status of GHL 2. NMFS implements Year1 restrictive measures 3. Council takes final action to remove measures

From an analytical perspective, the committee acknowledged that it may be sensible to apply the 2004 average to 2004 estimates for consistency. The committee acknowledged the consequences of smoothing the average weights. While it would lower the GHL overage in Area 2C to 1,639,000 lb (because the 2004 average weight was higher than the 5-year average (20.7 v. 19.5 lb/fish); it would increase the overage in Area 3A to 3,400,000 lb (because the 2004 average weight was lower than the 5-year average 18.6 v. 19.3 lb/average). The change to using the 5-year average would result in slightly lower effectiveness of proposed measures.

The committee questioned the limitations of using only a few years of logbook data (catch reductions are minor in Area 2C; reductions may have been large in 3A, but the data is old). The analysis addressed that issue by taking the high and low estimates instead of making predictive estimates. Even with that adjustment, there was not much difference between the years, which added to the credibility of the results.

The committee acknowledged that there is less reliance on multiple trips per day in Area 2C. There is less effort on second trips because: 1) of the short length of trips targeting cruise ship passengers; 2) combination trips may approximate 50% of trips; and 3) approximately 90% of lodge effort targets salmon. Therefore, it is expected that this measure would decrease charter halibut harvests by a smaller amount in Area 2C than Area 3A. Operators rely more on local anglers who are trying to fill their freezers in Area 3A, compared with vacationers seeking a fighting fish experience in Area 2C.

The committee considered the effectiveness of the measure to ban retention by crew because it is unclear whether crew fish were accurately reported in the logbooks.

ADF&G staff reported that 2005 harvest projections were 1.639 M lb for Area 2C and 3.414 M lb for Area 3A. Therefore, the projections are that Area 2C continued to exceed the GHL (by 14.5 percent) but Area 3A dropped below the GHL by 6.5 percent).

Committee recommendation to release the GHL Analysis for public review with specific comments:

- Consensus to enhance discussion of economic effects on all sectors
- Consensus on adding the 5-year average weight to determine GHL overage and effectiveness of proposed measures in the public review draft of the analysis.
- No consensus on ALFA proposal due to lack of time to review and the need to consult with industry members
- Area 2C
 1. Majority recommended eliminating trip limit management measure for the public review draft of the analysis
 - trip limit is the most disruptive to industry due to business models that rely on multiple trips per day, which would be disproportionately affected;
 - associated harvest reduction is negligible and dissipated in short amount of time as anglers switch to single trip operators and the associated harvest reductions would be further diminished (least bang for the buck);
 - in conjunction with applying the smoothed average weight of halibut, harvests can be reduced under the GHL under Alternative 3 without that measure.
 2. Consensus on eliminating trip limits at final action
 3. Consensus on prohibiting retention by captain and crew as the most effective measure at final action
 4. Consensus on proceeding with 5 or 6 annual limit in the public review draft with 6 preferred by the majority to get harvests below the GHL
- Area 3A

Consensus on prohibiting retention by captain and crew as the most effective measure at final action, given similar proposed BOF action to be considered in March 2006, which would reduce harvest to below the GHL.

Committee recommendation on GHL amendments:

- 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.
- Discussion but no consensus to link stair-step changes to GHL with gross CEY and not net CEY.
- Consensus to delete the option to divide Areas 2C and 3A GHLs into sub-regions because: 1) the charter fleets overlap geographically and could lead to huge battles within the sector; 2) drawing lines to subdivide the GHLs would be controversial; 3) 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 4) could subdivide effort or licenses instead of the GHLs (e.g., State registration (exclusive/super-exclusive) area licensing or moratorium limits).
- 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.
- 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.

Committee recommendation on reporting requirements

- Consensus to include column for angler initials to verify ADF&G charter halibut logbook reports. Businesses are required to record data for each angler (and report their license number) before anglers offload and report weekly.

Others in attendance:

Jane DiCosimo, Council Staff
Jonathan King, Northern Economics
Jay Ginter, NMFS
Jason Gasper, NMFS
John Lepore, NOAA GC
Gregg Williams, IPHC
Allen Bingham, ADFG

Scott Meyer, ADFG
Earl Krygier, ADFG
Butch Syms
Scott Glosser
Dan Falvey
Phil Cutler