



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



This guide summarizes regulations for charter halibut fisheries in Alaska. If you are required to comply with the regulations, you should consult and rely on the actual regulatory text. Please refer to the [annual management measures and regulations under 50 CFR 300](#) or contact NMFS at 907-586-7228 or 907-586-7225.

March 22, 2012

2012 Charter Halibut Fisheries

Halibut Fishery Management

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) manages the halibut resource and fisheries under an international agreement between the United States and Canada. The IPHC meets annually to review the status of the halibut stock and halibut research, as well as recommend catch limits by IPHC regulatory area and changes in regulations. The IPHC recommendations are implemented in the United States by the Northern Pacific Halibut Act, which provides that the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce, may accept or reject halibut fishery regulations recommended by the IPHC. In addition, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) may develop halibut fishery regulations, not in conflict with IPHC regulations, that allocate the halibut resource among U.S. fishermen in and off of Alaska. Visit the websites for the IPHC (www.iphc.int) and Council (<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/>) to get involved and learn about the regulation process and halibut fishery management.

South central Alaska (Area 3A)

The IPHC retained the charter angler bag limit of 2 fish per day of any size in Area 3A for the 2012 charter halibut fishing season.

Southeast Alaska (Area 2C)

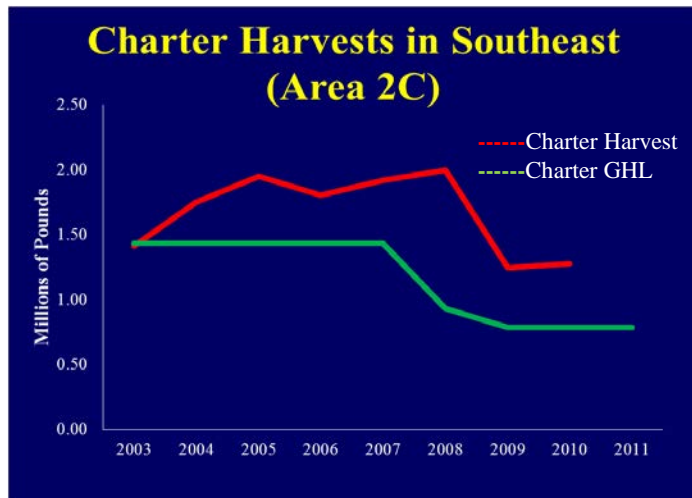
For charter anglers in Area 2C, a one halibut per person per day bag limit remains in effect for 2012. Based on a recommendation from the Council, the IPHC also implemented a reverse slot limit for retained halibut, which means that charter anglers can retain one halibut with a head-on length of less than or equal to 45 inches (U45) or greater than or equal to 68 inches (O68) per day. This U45/O68 reverse slot limit allows Area 2C charter anglers to retain one halibut per day that is approximately ≤ 32 pounds or ≥ 123 pounds (headed and gutted). Charter anglers in Area 2C are also required to retain the halibut carcass until landing, when halibut are filleted at sea, so enforcement officers can verify compliance with the reverse slot limit. Each halibut filleted at sea may be cut into no more than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with skin on all pieces.

The purpose of the one halibut daily bag limit and the reverse slot limit is to limit total charter harvest in Area 2C to the 2012 domestic allocation target for charter halibut harvest, the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL), of 931,000 pounds.

Background on Management of the Charter Halibut Fishery

Since 2007, the charter fishery in Area 2C has been subject to numerous restrictions developed by the Council or the IPHC in an attempt to more closely align charter harvest with the GHL. Halibut harvest in the Area 2C charter fishery exceeded the GHL each year from 2004 through 2010. Area 3A charter halibut harvests have not exceeded the GHL since 2007.

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The Council recommended a limited access program for the charter sector in Area 2C and Area 3A, which was effective on February 1, 2011. Although the limited access program is expected to stabilize participation in the charter sector by limiting the number of permitted charter businesses, it is not anticipated to reduce charter harvest. The Council also recommended the halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for Area 2C and Area 3A to establish an allocation of halibut between the charter and commercial fishing sectors and implement a series of management measures that are intended to keep the halibut harvest by the charter fishery within its allocation. The plan also would allow charter operators to lease individual fishing quota from commercial halibut quota holders to offer charter anglers an opportunity to harvest halibut in addition to halibut harvested under the CSP charter daily bag limits. NMFS published a proposed rule for the Area 2C and Area 3A CSP on July 16, 2011, and accepted comments on the proposed rule through September 21, 2011. In October 2011, NMFS informed the Council that public comments received on the proposed CSP raised issues that require additional input from the Council before NMFS can proceed to a final rule. NMFS is continuing to work with the Council to address these issues and is seeking Council advice on how to proceed with agency review of the Area 2C and Area 3A CSP.

Each year, the IPHC estimates the exploitable biomass of halibut using harvest data from the commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries, as well as information collected during scientific surveys and sampling of bycatch in other fisheries. Based on the 2011 estimate of actual charter harvest that was well below the Area 2C GHL under the 37-inch maximum length limit regulation, the Council recommended that the IPHC implement the U45/O68 reverse slot limit in Area 2C for the 2012 charter halibut fishing season to limit charter harvest to the 2012 GHL.