



## National Report: Canada

PREPARED BY: FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA (27 DECEMBER 2024 & 7 JANUARY 2025)

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### PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Pacific halibut fisheries in 2024 in the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of Regulatory Area 2B (Canada, British Columbia).

**Contracting party:** Canada

**Reporting agency:** Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**Contact person:** Gwyn Mason, Halibut Coordinator, [Gwynhyfar.Mason@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:Gwynhyfar.Mason@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

### SUMMARY

Each year Fisheries and Oceans Canada provides harvest opportunities to First Nations for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes (or domestic purposes for First Nations with modern treaties), and the commercial and recreational fisheries. First Nations, recreational, and commercial fisheries on the Pacific coast of Canada have long harvested groundfish. Groundfish serve as a source of food, they provide jobs, income, and enjoyment for individuals, businesses, and coastal communities and they play key roles in natural ecosystems.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for collection and reporting of data and statistics for the agri-food sector. An important part of that mandate is to analyse the impact of various sectors, including fisheries and seafood to the broader provincial economy. B.C. commercially harvests and reports on over 25 wild fisheries including Pacific halibut which is within B.C.'s top most valuable wild fishery commodities.

#### Indigenous fisheries

In the 1990 Sparrow decision, the Supreme Court of Canada found that where an Indigenous group has an Indigenous right to fish for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) purposes, it takes priority, after conservation, over other uses of the resource. Fisheries are authorized via a Communal Licence issued by the Department under the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licences Regulations.

#### Commercial fisheries

There are seven distinct commercial groundfish sectors: Groundfish trawl, Halibut, Sablefish, Inside Rockfish, Outside Rockfish, Lingcod, and Dogfish fisheries that are managed according to the measures set out in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP). The management of these sector groups is integrated, with all groups subject to 100% at-sea monitoring and 100% dockside monitoring, individual vessel accountability for all catch (both retained and released), individual transferable quotas (ITQ), and reallocation of these quotas between vessels and fisheries to cover catch of non-directed species. There are approximately 223 active commercial

groundfish vessels. Information on licensed vessels is available online at the DFO website: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/licence-permis/index-eng.htm>.

### Recreational fisheries

A recreational fishery may occur where authorized by a valid Tidal Waters Sport Fishing licence, which is required for the recreational harvest of all species of fish. Approximately 300,000 Tidal Waters Sport Fishing licences are sold each year. Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences can be purchased online by using the DFO website:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/licence-permis/application-eng.html>

### Compliance and Enforcement Priorities

The enforcement priorities for groundfish, including commercial Halibut, for 2024 are outlined in the Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. These priorities are set by the Groundfish Enforcement Coordinator and remain unchanged from 2023. Here are the key points:

1. **Closed Area Fishing:** Enforcement in rockfish conservation areas, sponge reef marine protection areas, marine conservation areas, interim sanctuary zones, and other permanent and in-season fishing closures.
2. **Retention Without Licence:** Focus on groundfish caught, retained, or possessed without proper licence authority, especially when intended for sale.
3. **Unauthorized Commercial/FSC Fishing:** Addressing unauthorized dual fishing activities.
4. **Monitoring Program Compliance:** Ensuring compliance with 100% at-sea and dockside monitoring programs, including hails, electronic monitoring systems, accurate fishing logs, and proper offloading procedures.
5. **False Statements:** Preventing false and misleading statements to DFO designated observers.
6. **Assistance to Observers:** Ensuring vessel masters and landing station personnel provide all reasonable assistance to DFO designated observers.
7. **Rockfish Release:** Prohibiting the release of rockfish at sea.
8. **Registration:** Ensuring all persons on board a commercial fishing vessel are registered, especially those aged sixteen or older.
9. **Prohibited Species:** Preventing the retention of prohibited species.
10. **Seabird Avoidance Gear:** Ensuring the deployment of seabird avoidance gear.
11. **Fish Slips:** Requiring vessel masters to submit fish slips within thirty days after landing.

## **COMMERCIAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW**

### **Summary/Regulatory Framework**

Fisheries and Oceans Canada follows an allocation policy that defines access to the Pacific Halibut Canadian Total Allowable Catch (CTAC) for Canadian commercial, recreational, and food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fisheries. For 2024, the CTAC was 5,970,000 net pounds (fresh, head-off, dressed weight). The CTAC is composed of the catch limit for regulatory area 2B and an allocation for FSC. In addition to the CTAC, a carryover of quota from previous seasons is allocated to some licences.

Priority access is provided to the CTAC for FSC purposes, while commercial and recreational access is divided between the sectors 85% / 15% respectively. The 2024 Commercial and Recreational catch limit for allocation purposes was 5,775,000 net pounds (table 1).

For allocation purposes, the commercial / recreational total allowable catch (TAC) is equal to the Canadian catch limit, plus “O26” wastage mortality. The TAC is then allocated between the commercial and recreational sectors, and the respective “O26” wastage mortality is removed from the commercial and recreational TACs (table 1). The domestic research allocation (use of fish) is also removed from the commercial sector’s allocation prior to establishing the 2024 commercial TAC. As of December 17, 2024, the combined commercial and recreational halibut catch (including XRQ landed catch, commercial landed catch and mortality associated with all released fish in the commercial groundfish fisheries) was 5,239,182 net pounds (table 1).

In 2024, the Canadian commercial Pacific halibut catch totalled 4,386,271 net pounds (table 1). This catch, reported by all hook and line/trap groundfish fisheries in area 2B, includes both landed and released at-sea mortality. Given that non-halibut groundfish fisheries continue throughout the Halibut winter closure, additional released at-sea mortality will continue to be attributed to the 2024 Halibut catch until February 20, 2025, after which released at-sea mortality will be attributed to the 2025 TAC. As such the 2024 commercial catch is current as of December 17, 2024.

The 2025/2026 commercial groundfish fishing season will commence February 21, 2025, at which time the renewed Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) will be available. All commercial groundfish management measures are detailed in the IFMP, which can be requested once available at: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/ifmp-eng.html#Groundfish>

## Monitoring

First introduced as a pilot program in 2006, the Commercial Groundfish Integration Program (CGIP) was made permanent in January 2010 to manage groundfish fisheries, including Pacific Halibut, in British Columbia. The objectives of the CGIP are to improve and maintain groundfish harvest sustainability and management through improved catch monitoring and catch accountability. The CGIP implemented individual vessel accountability for all catch, both retained and released, via individual transferable quotas which may be reallocated between licences and fisheries to cover non-directed catch. In addition, these management tools are supported by 100% at-sea monitoring (via at-sea observers, or electronic monitoring) and 100% dockside monitoring for all groundfish vessels.

Groundfish hook and line fisheries have almost exclusively utilized electronic monitoring (EM) systems for at-sea monitoring for nearly two decades. In April 2020, electronic monitoring was formally launched on groundfish trawl vessels, when at-sea observers were removed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. EM systems were configured on a vessel-by-vessel basis to ensure that groundfish fish trawls vessels met the 100% at-sea monitoring requirements that were previously completed by at-sea observers. Details regarding the trawl EM system requirements can be found in section 14 of appendix 8 in the [Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan](#).

During the 2023/24 groundfish fishing season, a pilot program for collecting Halibut length samples in the trawl sector using EM technology was developed in collaboration with industry representatives and Archipelago Marine Research (AMR) in the Option A groundfish trawl fishery. The pilot ran for approximately 7 months and was implemented fleetwide in May 2024.

While Pacific Halibut remains a prohibited species in the trawl fishery and must be released in accordance with existing requirements, the purpose of this program is to facilitate the collection of Pacific halibut length information using a representative sampling design. Vessel crew are responsible for placing Pacific halibut on a specialized measuring board in view of the vessel’s electronic monitoring (EM) camera so AMR EM program video reviewers can estimate lengths

and weight using the International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC) current length-weight table. Information collected from the program will be used to meet Canada's international commitments to support IPHC data requirements for stock assessment purposes.

## Fishery statistics

**Table 1.** Halibut allocations in Canada as of December 17, 2024. All values in net pounds.

Commercial / recreational TAC for allocation <sup>A</sup>		5,775,000
Commercial allocation	x 85%	
O26 wastage	- 180,000	
Research (use of fish)	- 60,000	
Commercial TAC for allocation purposes		4,668,750
Recreational allocation		X 15%
O26 wastage	- 30,000	
Recreational TAC		836,250
Total commercial catch <sup>B</sup>		4,386,271
2B commercial and recreational catch <sup>C</sup>		5,239,182

**A** Value does not include underage carried forward from 2023/24 fishing season.

**B** Catch includes all landed fish from the commercial hook and line sector, as well as the mortality associated with legal-sized released fish in the hook and line sector.

**C** Catch includes all landed fish from both the commercial and recreational sectors, as well as the mortality associated with legal-sized released fish in the commercial trawl fishery.

## Compliance with Regulations and Enforcement

Below is a comparison of the commercial halibut fishery statistics between 2023 and 2024:

- **2024 Season:**
  - **Opening Date:** March 15, 2024, at 06:00 Pacific Daylight Time
  - **Closing Date:** December 07, 2024, at 23:59 Pacific Standard Time
  - **Total Vessels:** 136
  - **Total Fishing Trips:** 492
- **2023 Season:**
  - **Opening date:** March 7, 2023, at 12:00 Pacific Standard Time
  - **Closing date:** December 10, 2023, at 12:00 Pacific Standard Time
  - **Total Vessels:** 139
  - **Total Fishing Trips:** 535

The 2024 season saw a slight decrease in both the number of vessels (from 139 to 136) and fishing trips (from 535 to 492). This reduction could be attributed to the 11-day shorter fishing season in 2024.

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## Marine Patrol Program

The Marine Patrol Program (MPP) is a dedicated enforcement initiative that contracts the Canadian Coast Guard for support.

- The MPP operates two 140-foot ships: the CCGS Captain Goddard and the CCGS M Charles.
- The MPP vessels are staffed 24 hours a day with nine Coast Guard employees and have 2-3 Fishery Officers permanently on board
- The Fishery Officers use a 7.53-meter rigid hull inflatable for at-sea patrols.
- The primary purpose of the MPP is to support land-based detachment operations by patrolling the marine components of the land-based detachments' areas of responsibility.
- The MPP Detachment Commander (DC) collaborates closely with other Detachment Commanders and Area Chiefs to determine regional priorities and develop general patrol plans to best utilize the MPP.
- Once plans are developed, the shipboard crews work closely with the land-based detachment field staff to implement strategic daily patrols based on the priorities set by Regional Headquarters and supervisory staff.

In 2024, the MPP conducted 26 two-week patrols across the two ships. Of these, four patrols were specifically dedicated to groundfish. The primary patrol areas spanned from north of Cape Caution to the Alaskan border (North Coast).

- Fishery Officers conducted inspections on 12 commercial halibut vessels (L) and 5 (five) commercial/communal vessels (FL).
- Common violations included:
  - Undersized halibut
  - Lack of seabird avoidance gear
  - No personal fishing licences
  - Failure to mark FSC-caught fish in the logbook
  - Fishing outside the FSC area
  - Turning off Electronic Monitoring Equipment prior to landing
  - Failure to produce licensing paperwork

## Aerial Surveillance Patrol

The Fishery Aerial Surveillance Enforcement (FASE) Detachment primarily patrols Canada's EEZ with a Dash 8 Aircraft.

- The FASE unit is a dedicated team comprised of three Fishery Officers whose primary responsibility is flying.
- The FASE unit uses a variety of aerial surveillance resources throughout the year to ensure compliance with the Fisheries Act, regulations, licence conditions, and other relevant acts and regulations.
- Flight reports, photographs, videos, and other data collected from surveillance flights are readily available to departmental managers and Fishery Officers through an internet-based flight information system.
- All vessels encountered via radar are visually identified and documented.

In 2024, FASE conducted 108 missions, patrolled 752.49 hours, and encountered 209 halibut (L) vessels and 3 commercial/communal (FL) vessels.

In 2023, FASE conducted 101 missions, patrolled 757.77 hours, and encountered 426 commercial halibut (L) vessels and 29 commercial/communal (FL) vessels.

The number of halibut vessels encountered in 2023 is an anomaly, and the reasons for this increase are unclear. The 2024 data aligns with the typical number of missions, patrol hours, and encountered halibut vessels seen in previous years.

**Third Party Service Provider Reporting: Archipelago Marine Research Ltd.**

Archipelago Marine Research Ltd (AMR) is a DFO-designated at-sea observer and dockside monitoring company.

- All observers employed by AMR are designated under section 39(1) of the Fishery General Regulations.
- All commercial groundfish fishing trips are required to be validated by a designated AMR observer.
- All commercial groundfish fishing trips also require an at-sea observer or 100% electronic monitoring.
- The BC Commercial Integrated Groundfish Society (BCCIGS) represents the commercial groundfish sectors covered in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, including Lingcod, ZNO, ZNI, Dogfish, Halibut, Sablefish, and Trawl, as well as the Trawl and Hand Line Processors.
- The BCCIGS makes decisions about service providers that support the Commercial Industry Caucus process (such as web office, facilitation, etc.) and administers the contracting process for the provision of Hook and Line electronic monitoring (currently provided by AMR).
- AMR provides cameras, GPS sensors, and hydraulic sensors to commercial fishers as part of their contract.
- Members of the BCCIGS use AMR to hail in and out for commercial fishing.
- AMR also provides all dockside validations as part of their contract with the BCCIGS.
- AMR manages the commercial hook and line logbook data and validation records, and uploads this information into FOS.
- AMR has checks and balances in place to ensure that the information entered into FOS is true and accurate.
- AMR produces occurrence reports based on thresholds identified by DFO which are stored in AMR’s portal

**AMR Generated Occurrence Reports**

AMR generated 276 halibut-related occurrence reports (OR) and 72 combination halibut/sablefish occurrence reports in 2024, compared to 197 halibut-related occurrence reports and 36 combination halibut/sablefish occurrence reports in 2023. This represents an increase of 115 occurrence reports (49.4%) in 2024.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING RELATED – 3% decrease from 2023

<b>2024 – 22.4% of OR</b>	<b>2023 – 23.1 % of OR</b>
Time Gaps – 18 OR	Time Gaps – 12 OR
Monitoring Equipment – 60 OR	Monitoring Equipment – 42 OR

RELEASED ROCKFISH – 44% increase from 2023

<b>2024 – 19.2 % of OR</b>	<b>2023 – 13.3% of OR</b>
67 OR	31 OR

UNDERSIZED HALIBUT – 172% increase from 2023

<b>2024 – 4.9 % of OR</b>	<b>2023 – 1.8% of OR</b>
17 OR	4 OR

CLOSED AREA – 32.4% decrease from 2023

<b>2024 – 2.3% of OR</b>	<b>2023 – 3.4% of OR</b>
GHLSP protection Zone – 3 OR	MPA – 1 OR
RCA – 5 OR	RCA – 6 OR
	USA – 1 OR

PROHIBITED SPECIES – 30.8% decrease from 2023

<b>2024 – 0.9% of OR</b>	<b>2023 – 1.3% of OR</b>
3 OR	3 OR

NO COMMERCIAL HALIBUT LICENCE

<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
1 vessel	1 vessel

**Notable Management Updates**

The commercial groundfish fisheries, including the Halibut sector, saw several notable management changes for the 2024 season. These changes include:

- A rollover of the seasonal expansion (November 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025) to the existing 800-line pilot bottom trawl closure was first implemented in 2020. The existing and expanded seasonal closures are at a fishing location in the Queen Charlotte Sound known as the Circle Tow by the groundfish trawl fleet and the 800-line by the Halibut fleet. This expanded seasonal closure is an interim management measure that is intended to limit harvest of spawning aggregations of Arrowtooth Flounder and Halibut. The year-round pilot bottom trawl closure that was implemented in March 2019 continues to be in effect. This expanded seasonal closure will be re-evaluated during the 2025/2026 fishing season.
- The continued engagement regarding the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Action Plan (NAP) for the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) by the trilateral partnership of the Government of Canada, the Province of BC and 17 First Nations. Trilateral partners are focused on network coordination and implementation, including establishing governance and development of a network workplan that will focus on monitoring, cumulative impacts, reporting and engagement on Network implementation.
- Engagement regarding reforms in the licensing and management of Canada’s west coast commercial fishing industry commenced in July 2024. Termed West Coast Commercial Fisheries Modernization (WCCFM), this initiative aims to engage with a broad spectrum of people involved in commercial fisheries. The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (FOPO) held hearings in 2019 and 2023 on west coast fisheries licensing, foreign ownership and corporate concentration. DFO has been undertaking broad engagement with First Nations, Indigenous groups and industry stakeholders on five overarching topics: inclusive representation on fishery advisory boards, transparency of licence and quota holdings,

strengthened and more transparent socio-economic data, foreign ownership and concentration of access, and modernizing licensing and management rules to better support economic sustainability. DFO is seeking detailed input at a series of workshops in February 2025.

## RECREATIONAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

### Summary

The recreational halibut fishery had a TAC of 836,250 net lbs for the 2024 season. However, an overage of 30,571 net lbs was incurred in the 2023 season prior to its early closure on September 30, 2023. The Canadian recreational halibut sector has a overage provision, which indicates that, in addition to an early closure of the fishery, if recreational catch exceeds the TAC for a given season, catch exceeding the TAC would be deducted from the following year's TAC. As such, the overage incurred in the 2023 season was deducted from the 2024 TAC prior to the season's opening, resulting in a fishable TAC of 805,679 net lbs (table 2).

The 2024 recreational halibut fishery opened on February 3, 2024, with a daily limit of 1 fish per day. The fishery operated under the 2023 recreational licence until March 31. On April 1, the 2024 licence and management measures entered into effect, with a daily limit of 1 fish per day. Current regulations – including daily catch and possession limits, open and closed areas, size limits and gear restrictions – are available online in the BC Sport Fishing Guide: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/index-eng.html>. The 2024 measures included:

- A maximum length of 126 cm head-on length
- A daily limit that is set in regulation, is defined in the conditions of licence and can be varied in-season as required. The possession limit is contingent on the daily limit as defined by the *BC Sports Fishing Regulations*, up to maximum of three per day:
  - If the Daily Limit is one (1) or two (2):
    - the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 85 cm to 126 cm head-on length - OR - two (2) halibut measuring under 85 cm head-on length.
  - If the Daily Limit is three (3):
    - the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 85 cm to 126 cm head-on length – OR - three (3) halibut measuring under 85 cm head-on length.
  - NOTE: If in possession of one (1) Halibut 85 cm head-on length or longer, you shall not possess any other Halibut
- An annual limit of ten (10) in aggregate, from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025
- All halibut retained must be recorded on the Tidal Waters Licence plus the date and area from which each halibut is caught and its length
- A mandatory Condition of Licence to report catch when surveyed.

The opening was for all Pacific Fishery Management Areas (PFMAs) with the exception of portions of San Juan River Mouth (portion of Area 20-2). Anglers were not permitted to fish for nor retain halibut in this area.



The DFO and Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) Halibut Committee met monthly throughout the fishing season to review estimated catches. By August of 2024, it was determined that the recreational sector would be unlikely to reach their TAC under the existing management conditions. Resultantly, DFO, in consultation with SFAB, proceeded with a change to the daily limit of Halibut measuring under 85 cm in length – varying the daily limit from one (1) daily to two (2) daily on August 21, 2024. The daily limit was reduced back to one (1) daily on September 20, 2024. As the season progressed catch estimates for summer months showed higher than forecasted catch. Catch information indicated that the recreational share of the Total Allowable Catch for halibut was going to be achieved by mid-fall 2024. The committee voted to close the recreational fishing for halibut under the BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence at 23:59 hours on October 9, 2024.

### Experimental Recreational Halibut Program

The Experimental Recreational Halibut fishery pilot program allows individual anglers as well as guides, charters, lodges, marinas and other fishing experience providers to lease Halibut quota from the commercial fishery and subsequently retain Halibut that is in excess of the regular recreational fisheries daily and possession limits, and maximum size limits. An XRQ licence holder is permitted to fish for and retain Halibut from April 1 – December 31, even if the traditional recreational fishery is closed prior to December 31. Participants in the XRQ fishery must complete logbooks and submit them electronically within seven days of retaining a Halibut. Licence holders are permitted to carry forward uncaught quota (up to 10% or 200 net pounds, whichever is greater) to the subsequent season upon licence issuance, if they are in good standing. Additional details about the XRQ program are available online: <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/groundfish-poissons-fond/halibut-fletan/index-eng.html>.

In 2024, 256 XRQ licences were issued and 7,663 net lbs of uncaught quota was carried forward from the previous season. As of December 17, 2024, estimated catch from the XRQ program was 18,553 net lbs (table 2).

### **Monitoring**

Catch monitoring of the recreational fishery in BC is extremely challenging given the large geographic area (numerous remote areas), the diversity of fishing opportunities and the diversity of participants.

Starting in 2015, Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences (TWSFL) included Conditions of Licence that make catch reporting mandatory. Specifically, the conditions state that *“The licence holder shall provide accurate information regarding their catch and fishing activities upon request of a Creel Surveyor or an on-line surveyor, authorities designated under s.61(5) of the Fisheries Act”*. Conditions of Licence also included regulations related to possession limits, size limits and an annual limit.

In 2020, DFO began using IPHC’s estimate of Area 2B recreational release mortality. This resulted in an estimate of 30,000 lbs of release mortality for the 2024 season. This discard mortality is accounted for before the 2B recreational catch limit is established and thus is not included in the calculation of catch relative to the recreational catch limit described elsewhere in this report.

DFO has been working with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board on an implementation plan to strengthen recreational fishery monitoring and catch reporting in the Pacific Region. For the 2024 recreational halibut fishery, DFO used estimates from three sources; the iREC survey, logbook and lodge manifest program, and creel surveys.

DFO uses data from traditional catch monitoring (e.g. creel, lodge logbooks and manifests) where available, in priority of iREC survey data. As in previous years, traditional monitoring and catch reporting programs such as logbook, lodge manifest and the creel survey were used during peak months and areas of the recreational fishery. In areas and months where traditional programs were not implemented in 2024, DFO used in-season iREC survey catch estimates. In 2024, approximately 86% of the catch estimate was derived from traditional catch monitoring sources, and 14% from iREC survey estimates.

Biological data received as length is converted to net weight using the following formula developed by the IPHC, approved by the Commission at AM098, and adopted for use in the Canadian fishery beginning in the 2023 season:

$$\text{Net weight} = (7.031 \times 10^{-6}) * \text{length (cm)}^{3.231}$$

Biological data received as round weight is converted to net weight, head off and dressed, using a 75% conversion factor. The conversion to net weight via length instead of round weight is prioritized when both biological metrics are provided.

Final estimates are anticipated to be available by the spring of 2025. Estimated harvest in pieces and net weight by regional areas are noted below.

### Fishery statistics

**Table 2.** Halibut for 2B recreational and the Halibut Experimental Recreational pilot program (XRQ) fisheries as of as of December 17, 2024. All values in net pounds.

Initial Recreational TAC	836,250
2023 Recreational Overage	30,571
Fishable Recreational TAC	805,679
Recreational catch <sup>A</sup>	834,358
XRQ TAC	20,432
XRQ catch	18,553 <sup>B</sup>
Fishable Recreational and XRQ TAC <sup>C</sup>	826,111
Recreational and XRQ catch <sup>D</sup>	852,911

**A** This is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2025.

**B** Effective December 17, 2024.

**C** There is no initial allocation provided to XRQ fishery, though quota may be transferred into the XRQ fishery from commercial Halibut fisheries. As a result the XRQ TAC changes proportionately with the commercial TAC as quota is transferred between fisheries.

**D** Catch includes all landed fish.

**Table 3.** Summary of the 2024 Recreational Halibut Catch by Pacific Fishery Management Area (PFMA)

Regional Area	PFMA	Piece Count	Total Net Wt. (net lbs)
Haida Gwaii	1	15,009	133,589
	2	2,440	31,015
North Coast	3	7,084	125,064

	4	10,032	122,195
	5/6	2,863	34,610
<b>Central Coast</b>	7/8/9	3,734	35,019
<b>South Coast</b>	10/11/111	1,397	18,740
	12	1,203	11,430
	13/14	71	615
	15-18/28/29	2	30
	19	1,999	30,098
	20	657	7,821
	21/121	3,455	47,600
	23/123	5,789	72,971
	24/124	3,740	64,589
	25/125	2,006	28,673
	26/126	2,320	37,335
27/127	2,476	32,964	
<b>Total Landed Catch</b>		66,277	834,358
<b>2023 Recreational Overage</b>			30,571
<b>2024 Fishable Recreational TAC</b>			805,679
<b>Estimated Remaining Balance (end of September)</b>			-28,679
			-3.56%

**Table 4.** Recreational Halibut Monthly Catch Estimates (net weight, lbs) for 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

	Net Weight (net lbs)					Cumulative Net Weight (net lbs)					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
<b>FEB</b>	0	0	1,448	2,266	3,657	0	0	1,448	2,266	3,657	
<b>MAR</b>	3,814	13,466	5,371	5,211	6,867	3,814	13,466	6,818	7,478	10,523	
<b>APR</b>	7,111	10,923	12,057	15,808	12,226	10,926	24,389	18,876	23,286	22,749	
<b>MAY</b>	26,356	55,931	62,298	39,193	60,143	37,282	80,320	81,174	62,479	82,893	
<b>JUN</b>	74,348	153,858	196,453	169,935	167,072	111,630	234,179	277,627	232,414	249,964	
<b>JUL</b>	182,655	289,479	314,871	351,683	247,450	294,284	523,657	592,499	584,097	497,414	
<b>AUG</b>	148,422	202,856	275,558	275,390	281,775	442,707	726,513	868,057	859,487	779,189	
<b>SEP</b>	69,419	45,733	53,776	49,036	55,169	512,125	772,246	921,833	908,523	834,358	
<b>OCT</b>	4,236	1,021	3,654	1,276	-	516,361	773,267	925,486	909,799	-	
<b>NOV</b>	398	2,041	1,009	0	-	516,758	775,307	926,496	909,799	-	
<b>DEC</b>	2,216	40	2,348	1,022	-	518,974	775,347	928,844	910,821	-	
<b>Total</b>	518,974	775,347	928,844	910,821	834,358	518,974	775,347	928,844	910,821	497,414	
									<b>2023 Recreational Overage</b>		30,571
									<b>2024 Fishable Recreational TAC</b>		805,679
									<b>Estimated Total Catch</b>		834,358
									<b>Estimated Remaining Balance (end of September)</b>		-28,679
											-3.56%

**A** This is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2025.

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## Compliance with Regulations and Enforcement

Below is a comparison of the recreational halibut fishery between 2023 and 2024:

- **2024 Season:**
  - **Opening Date:** February 3, 2024, at 00:01 Pacific Standard Time Fishery Notice (FN) FN0084
  - **Daily Limit:** 1 (one) halibut per day
  - **Possession Limit:** one (1) halibut measuring 90 cm to 126 cm in length (69 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) halibut, each measuring under 90 cm in length (69 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
  - **In Season Change:** April 1, 2024, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN0238
  - **Daily Limit:** 1 (one) halibut per day
  - **Possession Limit:** one (1) halibut measuring 85 cm to 126 cm in length (65 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) halibut, each measuring under 85 cm in length (65 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
  - **In Season Change:** August 21, 2024, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN0838
  - **Daily and Possession Limit:** one (1) Halibut measuring 85 cm to 126 cm in length (65 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) Halibut, each measuring under 85 cm in length (65 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
  - **In Season Change:** September 20, 2024, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN0971
  - **Daily Limit:** 1 (one) halibut per day
  - **Possession Limit:** one (1) halibut measuring 85 cm to 126 cm in length (65 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) halibut, each measuring under 85 cm in length (65 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
  - **Closing Date:** October 9, 2024, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN1042
  - **Annual limit:** 10 (ten) halibut
  - **Total Licences:** 352,701
  
- **2023 Season:**
  - **Opening date:** February 1, 2023, at 00:01 Pacific Standard Time FN0100
  - **Daily Limit:** 1 (one) halibut per day
  - **Possession Limit:** one (1) halibut measuring 90 cm to 133 cm in length (69 cm to 102 cm head-off), OR two (2) halibut, each measuring under 90 cm in length (69 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 133 cm head-on length (102 cm head-off).
  - **In Season Change:** April 1, 2023, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN0264
  - **Daily Limit:** 1 (one) halibut per day
  - **Possession Limit:** one (1) halibut measuring 90 cm to 126 cm in length (69 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) halibut, each measuring under 90 cm in length (69 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
  - **In Season Change:** July 8, 2023, at 00:01 Pacific Daylight Time FN0628

- **Daily and Possession Limit:** one (1) Halibut measuring 90 cm to 126 cm in length (69 cm to 97 cm head-off), OR two (2) Halibut, each measuring under 90 cm in length (69 cm head-off). No person shall retain a Halibut greater than 126 cm head-on length (97 cm head-off).
- **Closing date:** September 30, 2023, at 23:59 Pacific Daylight Time FN1049
- **Annual Limit:** 10 (ten) halibut
- **Total Licences:** 350,548

Recreational Licences are issued for a fiscal year (April 1 – March 31).

The main change in recreational halibut regulations from 2023 to 2024 was the adjustment of the daily limit.

- From February 3, 2024, to August 20, 2024, the daily limit for halibut was set at 1 (one).
- The daily limit increased to 2 (two) halibut from August 21, 2024, to September 19, 2024, but this only applied to halibut less than 85 cm.
- The daily limit was reduced back to 1 (one) halibut on September 20, 2024.

### **Experimental Recreational Halibut Program**

The Experimental Recreational Halibut Program (XRQ) provides an opportunity for recreational harvesters to retain halibut in excess of the size and daily/possession limits.

- In addition to the Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence, recreational harvesters may apply for the experimental licence on a voluntary basis. This licence allows the holder to purchase halibut quota from the commercial sector for use in the recreational fishery. A minimum of 20 pounds of quota is required to be purchased to activate the licence.
- It was introduced in response to feedback from harvesters, who indicated that additional opportunities for recreational halibut fishing would increase stability and certainty.
- Through this program, approved recreational harvesters can fish until December 31st, even if the regular recreational halibut fishery under the Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence is closed.

### **The XRQ fishery was open from April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.**

- There were 256 XRQ licences issued in 2024, compared to 225 in 2023.
- In 2024, only 6 experimental licence holders failed to purchase the minimum 20 pounds of halibut quota to activate their licence, compared to 28 in 2023.
- This improvement is attributed to the education and warning letters issued in 2023.

## **INDIGENOUS FISHERIES OVERVIEW**

### **Summary**

The estimated Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) halibut catch in area 2B is 405,000 net pounds. Since 2009, conditions have been applied to commercial Halibut licences and many communal halibut permits, to improve catch reporting of FSC caught fish on commercial trips. Of the total FSC halibut caught in 2024, approximately 29,548 net pounds were caught in conjunction with commercial fishing trips and were subject to all commercial monitoring requirements, including 100% at-sea and 100% dockside monitoring, an activity known as dual fishing. In addition, First Nations engaging in fishing only for FSC used tools such as catch

calendars, some dockside monitoring and phone surveys to estimate their catch. Fisheries and Oceans Canada continues to work with First Nations to improve catch reporting within the FSC fisheries.

In April 2011 the Maa-nulth Final Agreement came into effect. The agreement allocates 26,000 net pounds of FSC Halibut (part of the 405,000 net pounds described above) plus 0.39% of the total CTAC to the Maa-nulth First Nations for FSC purposes (equivalent to 49,283 net pounds in 2024). In 2011 DFO mitigated for the additional treaty allocation through acquisition of 0.47% of the commercial TAC which is set aside for the Maa-nulth First Nation on an annual basis.

In order to advance reconciliation efforts, consultations with Indigenous Peoples and the implementation of Reconciliation Framework Agreements, Treaties and rights-based fisheries as they pertain to groundfish have occurred throughout 2024 and will be ongoing throughout the 2025/26 fishing season.

### **Compliance with Regulations and Enforcement**

For all dual fishing (commercial and FSC) halibut trips (FL Licences) the vessel master is responsible for following the halibut commercial/communal commercial conditions of licence including those specific to dual fishing. All of the fish require 100% monitoring at-sea and 100% monitoring at the dock.

In 2024, 35 commercial/communal commercial halibut vessels completed 132 dual fishing trips, compared to 49 vessels completing 128 dual fishing trips in 2023.

Directed FSC halibut fishing does not have electronic monitoring or the dockside validation requirements.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IPHC-2025-AM101-NR01 Rev\_1 which provides the Commission with an overview from Fisheries and Oceans Canada of the Pacific halibut fisheries in 2024 in the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of Canada.

### **APPENDICES**

#### **Appendix I**

Province of British Columbia 2024 Annual Report

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**PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA 2024 ANNUAL REPORT****PREPARED BY: British Columbia Ministry Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship**

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**DATE:** 12/DEC/2024**CONTRACTING PARTY:** CANADA**AGENCY:**

The Province of British Columbia represented by the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship.

**CONTACT:**

Mike Turner, Director, Policy; Fisheries, Aquaculture and Wild Salmon Branch  
[Michael.R.Turner@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Michael.R.Turner@gov.bc.ca)

Kevin Romanin, Senior Policy Analyst, [Kevin.Romanin@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Kevin.Romanin@gov.bc.ca)

**FISHERY SECTORS:**

All sectors within British Columbia.

**IPHC REGULATORY AREA:**

*IPHC Regulatory Area 2B (Canada: British Columbia)*

**Discussion**

The Province of British Columbia (BC) has a long history of involvement with the Pacific halibut fishery and the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). BC recognizes the importance of Canada working bilaterally with the United States through the Pacific Halibut Treaty as well as the work done by the IPHC to develop and conserve Pacific halibut stocks. The significant history of this Treaty, as one of the first Canadian international agreements and now over a century of mutual benefit to both countries serves as a tremendous example in global fisheries management. BC commends the efforts made by the Commission to reach agreement again during the 100<sup>th</sup> session of the IPHC Annual Meetings in 2024. Thousands of jobs rely on this continued cooperation, and it is critical that this history of collaboration continues.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food is responsible for collection and reporting of data and statistics for the agri-food sector. An important part of that mandate is to analyze the impact of various sectors, including fisheries and seafood, to the broader provincial economy. BC commercially harvests and reports on over 25 wild fisheries including Pacific halibut which is among BC's top most valuable wild fishery commodities<sup>1</sup>. The Pacific halibut fishery supports significant commercial harvests in Canada's waters while providing many fishing and processing jobs and is significantly important to small coastal communities and First Nations across Canada's west coast. The Province licences seafood processors and annually collects data on the volumes and values of the various seafood products. In 2023, the survey showed the processing of 3,160 tonnes (6.97M lbs) of Pacific halibut, which includes some imported halibut processed in BC. The survey also showed landed and wholesale values of \$53.6M and \$60.8M, respectively. In 2023, BC exported \$53.3M worth of halibut products<sup>1</sup>. The Province historically conducts a seafood sector employment survey which provides data on jobs, wages, and seafood processing activities. The most recent available data from 2022 show that the fish and seafood processing in BC provided 2,465 jobs with related labour income estimated at \$138.3 million<sup>2</sup>.



In addition, the recreational halibut fishery supports the hundreds of fishing lodges, charter companies, and individuals that contribute tremendously to the economies of coastal communities. In 2022, revenue associated with spending by sport fishers was estimated at \$1.1 billion, accounting for 33.0% of total revenue in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Additionally, there were 4,866 jobs in industries benefitting from spending by sport fishers, representing nearly half of the employment in all BC fisheries and aquaculture sectors in 2022<sup>2</sup>. Beginning in 2019, there were severe restrictions on salmon fishing in BC which will continue in future years, which have amplified the importance of the halibut fishery to the recreational sector.

First Nations are entitled to a Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) allocation of the total allowable catch (TAC), and many jobs within the halibut fishery and halibut processing facilities are held by members of First Nations across BC. In the commercial halibut fishery, approximately 23% of licenses are held by BC First Nations. In 2019, BC became the first province in Canada to introduce legislation aimed at adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (known as 'DRIPA') mandates that government bring its laws and policies into harmony with the aims of the declaration. The BC government has set Indigenous reconciliation as a priority and is working to ensure that First Nations are meaningfully included in management of all BC fisheries.

BC will continue to provide available data to the IPHC from provincially licensed seafood processors to advance the IPHC economic report which will help highlight the benefits that Pacific halibut provide. As BC's lead agency responsible for fisheries policy, the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources recognizes the importance of understanding the broader socioeconomic impacts and downstream effects of the Pacific halibut fishery and looks forward to continuing to work together.

The decisions made annually by the IPHC commissioners greatly impact the livelihood of many coastal BC residents and local economies. With the extensive and costly efforts of fisheries monitoring in place to account for all halibut bycatch, BC expects that all fishers who share access to the Pacific halibut stocks should be held to similar standards of catch accounting. BC fishers need to be assured that the decisions made by IPHC commissioners are based on the best data and science possible by ensuring that all contributing data sources are as thorough and reliable.

BC's halibut fishery is part of the Integrated Groundfish Fishery which effectively manages all groundfish species by coordinating the quotas and bycatch allocations between the various groundfish fisheries including trawl, halibut, sablefish, and rockfish. The Integrated Groundfish Fishery operates with 100 percent monitoring and 100 percent bycatch accountability. This includes 100 percent monitoring while on the fishing grounds, 100 percent dockside monitoring, and auditing programs in place to compare validated landed catch with at-sea catch records from both the vessel and the third party contracted source. BC's groundfish fisheries monitoring programs are well established with components of at-sea observers and electronic monitoring and is regarded as one of the most well-monitored fisheries in the world. These extensive fisheries monitoring programs come at a direct cost to fishermen and license holders as they are entirely funded by industry. BC fishers respect that monitoring programs level the playing field by keeping all fishery participants compliant with the rules which help to ensure sustainable stocks and the future of their industry. The BC Pacific halibut fishery has held Marine Stewardship Council certification since 2009 for being a sustainable, well-managed fishery.

BC remains concerned with levels of bycatch in Alaskan fisheries and the uncertainty in the data that comes along with fisheries that are only partially monitored. The IPHC secretariat annually releases the Fisheries Data Overview report that summarizes the total annual removals by

regulatory area and fishery<sup>4</sup>. Data in these tables for the non-directed commercial discard mortalities are supplied by observer programs run by Contracting Party agencies in most fisheries. In BC, these estimates are reliably provided by the well-established data systems as part of the 100 percent monitoring programs outlined above. Every year, the Fisheries Data Overview contains statements regarding how Regulatory Area 3 remains the area where non-directed commercial discard mortality is estimated most poorly, where the lowest coverage rates are realized for the non-pelagic trawl fishery, which also has the highest likelihood of encountering Pacific halibut. The report outlines an analysis showing how observed trips are not representative of all trips in many regards (e.g., duration, species composition, etc.)<sup>4</sup>. The report concludes that non-directed commercial discard mortality estimates for the Gulf of Alaska (IPHC Regulatory Area 3) have both a greater uncertainty and potential for bias than those from areas with higher coverage rates and/or where there is no evidence of different behavior when observed and unobserved trips. Alaska's annual deployment plan for observers and electronic monitoring report<sup>5</sup> outlines the expected number of total trips and expected number of observed trips by area and gear types. For the 2024 fishing season this report estimated a total of around 4,100 trips across all fisheries would take place in Area 3, with around 3,200 of those trips to be unobserved (this does not include the anticipated 1,400 additional trips in Area 3 that will be unobserved due to monitoring not being available on smaller vessels under 40ft). The report outlines the increased monitoring efforts in the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands, and the advancements in monitoring efforts in Alaska in general. While B.C. appreciates the increased efforts in Alaskan catch monitoring, the remaining expected number of unobserved trips combined with IPHC secretariat's analysis that in Area 3 observed trips are not representative of all trips, leaves serious concerns for the accuracy of bycatch numbers and the total mortality of halibut in these areas.

BC's concerns also include the high volumes of bycatch in Alaskan fisheries that impact other species, and the impacts that Alaskan removals have on BC fisheries of all species that move between Canadian and US waters. This bycatch includes over 87,000 salmon caught as bycatch in Alaskan fleets in 2024, of which over 38,800 were vulnerable chinook salmon<sup>4</sup>. For halibut, IPHC research has shown a historic migration from Alaskan waters to eastern and southern regulatory areas, making Alaskan fisheries directly impact the fish moving down to BC waters. High levels of U26 bycatch poses a significant threat to recruitment with mortality of juvenile halibut that might otherwise grow and become available to the fishery and other regulatory areas. The Fisheries Data Overview report also annually shows the high levels of U26 bycatch mortality in Areas 4CDE, where in 2024, 1.16M lbs of the total coastwide 1.79M lbs of U26 bycatch mortality was reported. These high levels of U26 bycatch mortality in 4CDE combined with the data uncertainties in total U26 bycatch mortality in area 3, leave BC concerned of the impacts to the migration of halibut into area 2B and to the recurring pattern of poor recruitment years.

The Non-directed Commercial Discard Mortality by Area section of the IPHC Fisheries Data Overview report has continuously outlined the lack of reliability in the bycatch estimates from Areas in Alaska year after year. As part of the 2019 interim agreement, the Commission agreed to continue the development of a workplan to explore methods for improvement of monitoring requirements in directed and non-directed fisheries, and to examine options in each IPHC Regulatory Area for mitigating the impact of bycatch in one IPHC Regulatory Area on available harvest in other IPHC Regulatory Areas. The Province of BC is advocating for a continued catch share and U26 mitigation strategy that reflects and accounts for the reliability and accuracy of the data being provided from Area 2B relative to the uncertainties in data and total removals in other IPHC Areas. Having confidence in the total number of halibut removals for all regulatory areas should be a priority for the IPHC commission to effectively manage this shared resource

and better understand the impacts of fishing activities on the stock and the low recruitment levels seen in recent history.

## Recommendations

The Government of British Columbia's position is that the IPHC must exercise its authority to regulate the incidental catch of Pacific halibut in all Regulatory Areas by:

1. establishing minimum data requirements for more accurate estimates of non-directed commercial discard mortality which could inform monitoring standards; and
2. ensure that the differences in data integrity between Canadian and US regulatory areas is mitigated through catch share agreements and U26 bycatch mortality.

## References

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2. *British Columbia's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector 2022 Edition.* [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/industry-and-sector-profiles/sector-reports/four\\_sector\\_report\\_2022\\_edition.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/statistics/industry-and-sector-profiles/sector-reports/four_sector_report_2022_edition.pdf)
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4. *Fisheries data overview (2024): Preliminary statistics (B. Hutniczak, H. Tran, T. Kong, K. Sawyer van Vleck, & K. Magrane) IPHC-2024-IM100-08 Rev\_2.* [https://www.iphc.int/uploads/2024/11/IPHC-2024-IM100-08-Rev\\_2-2024-fisheries-data-overview.pdf](https://www.iphc.int/uploads/2024/11/IPHC-2024-IM100-08-Rev_2-2024-fisheries-data-overview.pdf)
5. *2024 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska (Nov 2023).* <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3//2023-11/Final-2024-ADP.pdf>