



National Report:
United States of America

PREPARED BY: NOAA FISHERIES (13 JANUARY 2022)

PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the fisheries and removals of Pacific halibut during 2021 from the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of the United States of America.

Updates in this revision include Additional information about West Coast Law Enforcement activity, Final estimates of halibut mortality in Alaska groundfish fisheries, West Coast Region contact information and minor technical edits.

West Coast of the United States of America – IPHC Regulatory Area 2A

The 2021 Area 2A Pacific halibut (halibut) catch limit of 1,510,000 pounds was allocated according to the 2021 Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for Area 2A as follows:

Treaty Tribes	528,500 (35%)
Non-Tribal Total	981,500 (65%)
Non-Tribal Commercial	301,321
Washington Recreational	349,414
Oregon Recreational	291,506
California Recreational	39,260

All weights in this report are net weight (gutted, head-off, and without ice and slime), unless otherwise noted. The structure of each fishery and the resulting harvests are described below.

TOTAL TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL FISHERIES

Best estimates of halibut catch for Area 2A indicate harvest of 735,531 pounds of the non-tribal total quota and 494,139 pounds of the tribal quota, with a total harvest estimate of 1,229,670 pounds, or 81 percent of the 1,510,000 pound catch limit. A summary of all Area 2A quotas and preliminary harvest estimates for 2021 is attached in Table 2 of this document.

TRIBAL FISHERIES

528,500 pounds (35% of the Area 2A catch limit) was allocated to tribal fisheries. The tribes estimated that 41,478 pounds would be used for ceremonial and subsistence (C&S) fisheries and the remaining 487,022 pounds were allocated to the commercial fishery.

- The unrestricted fishery was open 55 hours for each tribe between March 6 and May 16. The unrestricted fishery landed 246,180 pounds.
- The restricted fishery was open between March 6 and May 16. The restricted fishery landed 67,127 pounds.
- The late fishery was open May 19-June 20 and landed 180,832 pounds.

- The total landings for all tribal fisheries is 494,139 pounds, which is 7,117 pounds over the tribal commercial allocation. The C&S fishery will continue through December 31 and catch estimates will be reported by the tribes in January 2022.

NON-TRIBAL COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

A quota of 301,321 pounds (30.7% of the non-tribal share) was allocated to two fishery components:

- 1) a directed longline fishery targeting halibut south of Point Chehalis, WA; and
- 2) an incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California.

An additional 70,000 pounds were allocated to an incidental catch fishery in the sablefish primary fishery for vessels using longline gear north of Point Chehalis, WA. This allowance for the sablefish primary fishery is taken from the portion of the Washington recreational allocation that is above 214,110 pounds, as long as the amount is at least 10,000 pounds.

Incidental halibut catch in the salmon troll fishery

A quota of 45,198 pounds of Pacific halibut (15% of the non-tribal commercial fishery allocation) was allocated to the non-tribal commercial salmon troll fishery in Area 2A as incidental catch during salmon troll fisheries.

- Halibut retention was permitted in the salmon troll fisheries beginning April 1, with the following ratio: one halibut (minimum 32 inches) per two Chinook salmon landed by a salmon troller, except that one halibut could be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut could be landed per trip.
- On July 1, the fishery was extended at the same ratio and landing limit.
- The fishery is estimated to have taken 18,562 pounds. This fishery closed October 31.

Fishing with salmon troll gear is prohibited within the Salmon Troll Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA) off the northern Washington coast. Additionally, the "C-shaped" North Coast Recreational YRCA off Washington is designated as an area to be avoided (a voluntary closure) by salmon trollers.

Directed fishery targeting halibut

A quota of 256,122 pounds (85% of the non-tribal commercial fishery allocation) was allocated to the directed longline fishery targeting halibut in southern Washington, Oregon, and California. The fishery was confined to the area south of Point Chehalis, WA (46°53.30' N. lat.).

Fishing periods were 58 hours in duration every other week, starting Tuesday, June 22. In 2021, the fishery was open for three fishing periods: June 22-24, July 6-8, and July 20-22. Vessels choosing to operate in this fishery could not land halibut as incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery, nor operate in the recreational fishery.

Table 1 2021 fishing period limits (dressed weight, head-on with ice and slime, in pounds per vessel) by vessel size.

Vessel Class/Size (ft)		Jun 22-24	Jul 6-8	Jul 20-22
0-25	A	2,263	2,263	2,263
26-30	B	2,263	2,263	2,263
31-35	C	2,263	2,263	2,263
36-40	D	3,410	3,410	3,410
41-45	E	3,410	3,410	3,410
46-50	F	4,545	4,545	4,545
51-55	G	4,545	4,545	4,545
56+	H	5,113	5,113	5,113

- The three directed commercial open periods resulted in a catch of approximately 242,997 pounds.

Incidental halibut catch in the sablefish primary longline fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA

A quota of 70,000 pounds was allocated to the primary sablefish fishery in Area 2A as incidental catch north of Point Chehalis, WA. This incidental fishery is only available to vessels with a groundfish limited entry permit endorsed for longline gear with a sablefish tier limit and with an IPHC license.

The fishery is confined to an area seaward of a boundary line approximating the 100-fm depth contour. Fishing is also prohibited in the North Coast Commercial YRCA, an area off the northern Washington coast. In addition, the "C-shaped" North Coast Recreational YRCA off Washington is designated as an area to be avoided (a voluntary closure) by commercial longline sablefish fishermen.

- Starting April 1, the incidental landing limit was 250 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the landing limit ratio.
- Effective June 1, the incidental landing limit was revised to 225 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the landing limit ratio.
- Effective October 29, the sablefish primary fishery season was extended from October 31 to December 31, and as part of the emergency action, NMFS included an extension of incidental halibut retention to December 7.
- This fishery is projected to have landed 69,081 pounds, which is 919 pounds under the quota.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES (NON-TRIBAL)

610,180 pounds were allocated between recreational fisheries in Washington (35.6% of non-tribal share, minus 70,000 pounds allocated to the incidental catch in the sablefish primary fishery), Oregon (29.7% of the non-tribal share), and California (4.0% of the non-tribal share). The allocations were further subdivided as quotas among six geographic subareas as described below. Unless otherwise noted, the daily bag limit in all subareas was one halibut of any size, per person, per day.

Washington Inside Waters Subarea (Puget Sound and Strait of Juan de Fuca)

This area was allocated 78,291 pounds (23.5% of the first 130,845 pounds allocated to the Washington recreational fishery, and 32% of the Washington recreational allocation between 130,845 and 224,110 pounds). The fishery in Puget Sound was open April 22-24, April 29-May 1; May 6-8, 13-15, 20-22, 28-30; June 3-5, 10-12, 17-19, 24-26; August 19-21, 26-28; September 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, and 23-24.

- The estimated total catch in this area is 54,955 pounds, which is 23,336 pounds under the quota.

Northern Washington Coastal Waters Subarea (landings in Neah Bay and La Push)

The coastal area off Cape Flattery to Queets River was allocated 128,928 pounds (62.2% of the first 130,845 pounds allocated to the Washington recreational fishery, and 32% of the Washington recreational allocation between 130,945 and 224,110 pounds). The fishery was open May 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 28, 30; June 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26; August 19-21, 26-28; September 2-4, 9-11, 16-18, and 23-24. The "C-shaped" North Coast Recreational YRCA, southwest of Cape Flattery, was closed to recreational halibut fishing.

- The estimated total catch for this area is 84,759 pounds, which is 44,169 pounds under the quota.

Washington South Coast Subarea (landings in Westport)

The area from the Queets River to Leadbetter Point was allocated 63,636 pounds (12.3% of the first 130,845 pounds allocated to the Washington recreational fishery and 32% of the Washington recreational allocation between 130,845 and 224,110 pounds). The all-depth fishery was open May 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27; June 17, 20, 24; August 27 and September 24.

- The all-depth fishery estimated catch is 90,626 pounds, which is 26,990 pounds over the quota.

Columbia River Subarea (Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon)

This recreational fishery subarea was allocated 18,662 pounds, consisting of 2.0% of the first 130,845 pounds allocated to the Washington recreational fishery, and 4.0% of the Washington recreational allocation between 130,845 and 224,110 pounds, 2.3% of the Oregon recreational allocation, and any quota over 8,000 pounds in the Southern Oregon subarea. The fishery operates with an all-depth and nearshore fishery. The nearshore fishery is allocated 500 pounds to accommodate incidental halibut retention during groundfish fishing when the all depth halibut fishery in this area is closed.

- The all-depth fishery was open May 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27; June 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24; August 27 and September 24. The nearshore fishery was open May 10, Monday – Wednesday each week until June 24.
- The all-depth fishery estimated catch is 21,477 pounds which is 2,815 pounds over the combined subarea quota.

Oregon Central Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain)

This recreational fishery subarea was allocated 273,403 pounds (93.79% of the Oregon recreational allocation).

Three seasons occurred in this subarea, and harvest in these areas is summarized below.

- A restricted depth nearshore (inside 40-fathom) fishery, opened May 1, seven days a week, until September 13, when the all-depth fishery opened 7 days per week.
 - The inside 40-fathom fishery has an estimated catch of 10,982 pounds, which is 21,826 pounds under the allocation.
- a Spring season in all depths that was open on May 13-15, 20-22; June 3-5, 10-12, 17-19; and July 1-3, 15-17 and 29-31;
 - The Spring all-depth fishery resulted in an estimated catch of 69,795 pounds, which is 102,449 pounds under the spring allocation. The remaining quota would shift to other fisheries as needed.
- a Summer season in all depths that was open August 5-7, and every Thursday through Saturday through September 12. Beginning September 13, this fishery opened 7 days per week until October 31. In addition, the daily bag limit was increased from one to two fish on September 13.
 - The Summer all-depth fishery had an estimated catch of 41,799 pounds, which is 26,552 pounds under the allocation.

Southern Oregon (Humboldt Mountain to the OR/CA Border)

- This recreational fishery was allocated 8,000 pounds (3.9% of the Oregon recreational fishery allocation minus the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River subarea). This area has a pre-set season of 7 days per week from May 1 to October 31. Beginning September 13, the daily bag limit was increased from one to two fish.
- This fishery has estimated catch of 5,699 pounds, which is 2,301 pounds under the quota.

California (Off the California Coast)

This recreational fishery was allocated 39,260 pounds (4.0% of the non-tribal share). The fishery was open May 1- June 30, and September 3-November 15.

- The fishery has an estimated catch of 24,800 pounds which is 14,460 pounds under the quota.

Table 2 Summary of all Area 2A quotas and preliminary 2021 harvest estimates, updated with fishery information reported to NMFS through 12/15/2021.

2021 Area 2A Catch Limit and Catch (in pounds)			2021 Quota	Catch to date	% Quota taken
Tribal			528,500		
Tribal	C&S		41,478	-	-
Tribal	Comm.		487,022	494,139	102
Non-Tribal			981,500	735,531	75
Commercial			301,321	261,559	87
Commercial	Directed		256,122	242,997	95
Commercial	Incid. Salmon Troll		45,198	18,562	41
WA Recreational			349,414	299,421	86
WA Recreational	Incid. Sablefish		70,000	69,081	99
WA Recreational	Puget Sound		78,291	54,955	70
WA Recreational	North Coast		128,928	84,759	66
WA Recreational	South Coast		63,636	90,626	142
WA/OR	Columbia River	All-Depth	18,162	21,477	118
WA/OR	Columbia River	Nearshore	500	-	0
OR Recreational			291,506	128,275	44
OR Recreational	Central OR Coast	Spring all-depth	172,244	69,795	41
OR Recreational	Central OR Coast	Summer all-depth	68,351	41,799	61
OR Recreational	Central OR Coast	Nearshore	32,808	10,982	34
OR Recreational	Southern OR		8,000	5,699	71
CA Recreational			39,260	24,800	63
Total			1,510,000	1,229,670	81

Law Enforcement – West Coast Area 2A

NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) protects marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and international treaty requirements implemented to ensure these global resources are available for future generations. The 2021 IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Report summarizes the collective activities of the IPHC Area 2A cooperating federal and state entities, and includes the individual state enforcement reports to provide more detailed information about their respective enforcement and compliance efforts. Tribal reports are provided separately.

Enforcement of the commercial, tribal, and recreational Pacific halibut fisheries in International Pacific Halibut Commission Area 2A is an ongoing multi-agency effort performed cooperatively by NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) West Coast Division (WCD), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police (WDFW), Oregon State Patrol Fish and Wildlife Division (OSP), California Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Division (CDFW), and Tribal Enforcement. Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 present a consolidated summary of IPHC Area 2A Commercial-Directed, Commercial-Incidental and Recreational enforcement statistics for 2021 using data elements provided by OLE, USCG, WDFW, OSP, and CDFW

enforcement partners. Table 3 summarizes *Effort*, *Actions* and *Results* data for the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'30" N). Tables 4 and 5 summarize general Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) fisheries enforcement that broadly include the two other fishing sectors that catch Pacific halibut: Commercial-Incidental, and Recreational. *Effort* data provides a measure of fisheries-related enforcement coverage and capacity. The *Actions* and *Results* sections allow for an analysis of regulatory compliance and enforcement issues of concern associated with the fishing sectors.

Table 3 Area 2A Enforcement Statistics for Commercial-Directed Fishery






2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
COMMERCIAL - DIRECTED						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	30					30
Air Patrol Hours	96					96
Air Patrol Personnel Hours	N/A	71				71
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	68		7	4		79
Vessel Patrol Hours	875		31	21		927
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A	16	76	42		134
Number of Boardings/Contacts	34	3	19	10		66
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols			2	17	42	61
Shoreside Personnel Hours		178	12	147	116	453
Number of Boardings/Contacts		26	2	11	24	63
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	54	5	6	6	4	75
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance		3			1	4
Citations			3	1		4
Not in Compliance			6			6
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Prohibited Gear			4			4
Logbook/Reporting		2				2
Permit/License			1	1		2
Seabird Avoidance Gear Not Used		1				1

Table 4 Area 2A Enforcement Statistics for Commercial-Incidental Fisheries











2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
<i>COMMERCIAL - INCIDENTAL</i>						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	222					222
Air Patrol Hours	701					701
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	417		1		25	443
Vessel Patrol Hours	6250		6		49	6305
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A		12		116	128
Number of Boardings/Contacts	156		4		9	169
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols		2				2
Shoreside Personnel Hours		16				16
Number of Boardings/Contacts		4				4
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	54	2	2		4	62
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance		2				2
Written Warnings		1				1
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
N/A						

Table 5 Area 2A Enforcement Statistics for Recreational Fisheries

2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
RECREATIONAL						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	222					222
Air Patrol Hours	701					701
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	417		29	19	25	490
Vessel Patrol Hours	6250		201	64	49	6564
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A		445	128	116	689
Number of Boardings/Contacts			425	263	77	765
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols		2	35	11	52	100
Shoreside Personnel Hours		18	170	50	126	364
Number of Boardings/Contacts		12	719	19	189	939
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	96	1	19	8	9	133
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Written Warnings		4	130	6		140
Citations			105	19	4	128
Vessels Not In Compliance			105			105
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Over Limit			4	1		5
Prohibited Gear			80			80
Permit/License		4	52	4		60
Restricted/Closed Area			11			11
Fail to Validate Tag			15	16		31
Possess Groundfish w/Halibut On Board				4		4
Prohibited Species			9			9

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) – Police



WDFW Pacific halibut land-based enforcement activities include conducting dockside patrols to monitor commercial catch off-loads (including incidental catch), ensuring individual and vessel license compliance, coordinating activities related to compliance and verification checks, and carrying out collaborative enforcement efforts. WDFW at-sea responsibilities include patrolling its Pacific Ocean area of responsibility, conducting joint enforcement operations, and inspecting at-sea vessels and personnel for licenses, federal permits, logbooks, marine permits and registrations, and catch, with emphasis on activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone. Pacific halibut is shared among four user groups in Washington State: recreational, directed non-Indian commercial, non-Indian incidental, and Tribal fishermen.

WDFW IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021

WDFW IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating WDFW Officers	21	20	22
Dockside Personnel Hours	182	219	299
At-Sea Personnel Hours	533	608	430
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	1,169	1,680	752
Commercial - Directed	21	N/A	N/A
Commercial - Incidental	4	N/A	N/A
Recreational	1,144	N/A	N/A
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings / Citations	349	216	163

Commercial Halibut

Officers from the Columbia River conducted several boat patrols for the commercial halibut opener. Violations pertaining to the seabird avoidance gear continue to be an issue and were forwarded to NOAA OLE. Several recreational bottomfish, halibut, and salmon contacts were made during these patrols. Violations observed included failure to record catch, and no license on person. Verbal warnings and notice of infractions were issued.

During a commercial halibut boat patrol, officers noticed a single commercial-looking vessel well outside the typical halibut grounds. Upon contact, they found two gentlemen recreational bottomfishing from the Washington-based vessel. Officers Ariss and Barabasz boarded the vessel and found them in possession of one yelloweye rockfish. Additionally, they were fishing offshore Oregon waters (outside 3 miles) without adhering to the offshore longleader gear rule. A citation was issued and the yelloweye was seized for evidence.

Sergeant Dielman and Officer Ariss logged several hours in Marine Area 1 patrolling the second commercial halibut opener and recreational marine salmon. Vessel participation for the second halibut opener declined compared to the first opener. The improper use or non-use of seabird avoidance gear continues to be an issue and was observed by a NOAA Officer riding along. A vessel contacted during the previous opener was discovered to have a crew who lied about crewmember licenses. Having found they did not possess them at all, officers sought them out to see what the story was. One crewmember obtained his license the night before, the other had

more excuses. He received a citation. Several recreational marine salmon contacts were made. Several failure to record and use of barbed hooks were addressed with verbal warnings and infraction notices.

Recreational Halibut

Sergeant Alexander, Sergeant Dielman, and Officer Baldwin conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 2 (Westport) for the first halibut weekend fishery. Many anglers were out pursuing the prized fish with most having great success. Only one charter boat was found to be in possession of one too many lingcod; and the skipper willingly took the blame for not checking on his crew. All anglers were found to have halibut catch cards and properly recorded their catch.

Officers Davidson and Hillman patrolled Marine Area 4 on a recent halibut opening and found higher success rates than in past weeks; but there were also more significant violations detected. One boat with 2 anglers was found to have retained (but not recorded) 4 halibut and a yelloweye rockfish. Another boat east of Tatoosh Island was fishing with illegal gear (more than 2 hooks); and while offshore had retained 3 yelloweye and 2 quillback rockfish. The yelloweye are illegal to retain anywhere in Marine Area 4 and it was illegal to possess the quillback while fishing east of Tatoosh as it is a violation to fish while in possession of a fish not legal to retain at that location. Several other boats were found to have not recorded their halibut immediately upon retention, as required. All the illegal fish were seized and later donated.

Officer Ariss and Sergeant Dielman conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 1 focusing on the open halibut fishery. The catch rate was moderate, with several anglers failing to record their halibut. Infraction notices and verbal warnings were issued.

Officer Davidson, Sgt. Rosenberger, and a USCG Boarding Officer performed a boat patrol in Marine Area 3 and 4. A charter vessel was observed by Officer Murray aboard a USCG helicopter actively fishing more than 20 miles offshore in a halibut hotspot on a closed halibut day. The charter boat was boarded on the water as it was leaving the location.



Catch from one vessel with only 2 anglers who possessed 2 halibut over their limit and a closed-area yellow eye rockfish.

The charter boat captain told Sgt. Rosenberger he started fishing and then realized the area was closed when he saw no other boats around. A safety gear inspection by USCG revealed that the charter vessel had no current flares on the vessel. The USCG ordered the charter boat to return immediately to port for the violation.



Officer Baldwin with seized overlimit halibut and lingcod.



Sgt. Rosenberger and USCG boarding charter vessel.

While conducting a halibut boat patrol, Officers Baldwin and Cilk approached a recreational charter boat out of Westport. As the patrol vessel approached, the deckhand looked up at the officers, stopped filleting fish, ushered multiple anglers inside the cabin from the rear deck, and then closed the rear door. The anglers could be seen through the rear windows of the boat completing their catch record cards while the skipper on the flybridge refused to look at the patrol vessel which was travelling right beside his vessel. The officers were finally able to get the skipper's attention and approached the vessel. The officers directed the skipper to get his deckhand's attention to stop completing catch cards and move gear blocking their approach. After several minutes, an officer was able to board and discussed the blatant violations. The deckhand was cited for failing to record his catch, and both he and the skipper were warned for the obstruction and failing to complete their catch record cards. After clearing the contact, the officers determined that the charter was not listed as a current holder of a federal license to charter for recreational halibut. Further investigation into the charter's legal status was conducted and relevant charges were forwarded to NOAA OLE.

While checking vessels returning to the boat ramp in Westport, Officer Baldwin contacted a vessel that had fished the previous day's halibut fishery. Both anglers admitted to retaining halibut the previous day, and directed the officer to where all their fish were cleaned, vacuum packed, and labeled. Both anglers provided their licenses and catch record cards, though neither had recorded their halibut. Both anglers were cited for failing to record their catch.

Officers Cilk and Baldwin patrolled the ocean for compliance of halibut and fishing regulations. Violations detected included: no license, catch card, failure to record, and over-limit of halibut and lingcod.

Officer Ariss and Sergeant Dielman were returning from a halibut-day boat patrol when they heard a vessel calling for assistance on the marine VHF Channel 16. Despite its dogged effort to cross the choppy Columbia River bar during an ebb tide, the "Sea Dog" caught crab gear in its motor and was unable to break free or make way. A Good Samaritan vessel pulled them away from the rocks of the North Jetty before snapping their tow line. Officers responded to the area in minutes and were able to secure a single tow line and pull the vessel with three men aboard to safety. The vessel was then transferred to the USCG. While enroute to safety, a large male orca traveled alongside the vessels and put on a show.



Officer Baldwin inspecting a recreational fishing vessel in Marine Area 2.



Officer Ariss operating the patrol vessel while towing a disabled vessel away from the Columbia River North jetty after a halibut patrol.

Officer Davidson and Sergeant Rosenberger patrolled the Marine Sanctuary, and Marine Area 4 West to monitor halibut anglers during the opening, and to enforce the Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA). One vessel contacted fishing within the closed area had retained halibut. Two halibut were seized and the skipper cited. Weather and sea conditions were very good and allowed for rapid movement around the areas, allowing for numerous contacts. Participation and catch rates were both high. While returning to USCG Station Neah Bay, a boat was contacted just outside of Tatoosh Island. On approach to the vessel, Sergeant Rosenberger observed one male subject tossing fish over the transom of his vessel. Upon contact and further investigation, the boat was found to be overlimit on rockfish. A nearby vessel came over and loaned Officer Davidson a net to scoop up the overlimit rockfish as they floated away. The skipper of the vessel was cited for overlimit of rockfish and failure to have a descending device onboard.



Trail of floating overlimit rockfish suspects were trying to toss overboard as officers approached.

Sergeant Alexander patrolled the Westport docks for halibut and bottomfish activity. One subject was cited for failing to record his, and his friend's, halibut; and another subject was cited for catching and retaining lingcod without a valid license.

Officer Wessel and Officer Davidson patrolled Marine Areas 4 and 5. Several citations for failing to record halibut and fishing with barbed hooks violations were issued.

Sergeant Dielman and Officer Cilk conducted an offshore recreational halibut boat patrol. Participation was low and citations were issued for failing to record.

Officer Davidson and Sergeant Rosenberger conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 4 West to monitor halibut anglers. Good weather and sea conditions allowed for a far-ranging patrol. Catch success was moderate to good, with most anglers obtaining their limit of halibut and lingcod. Very few violations were noted, and were addressed. While on patrol, Sergeant Rosenberger and Officer Davidson contacted and inspected several commercial salmon trollers, observing that the salmon fishery was off to a slow start with very few fish harvested.

Officers Wessel, Davidson, Beltz and Miller patrolled Marine Area 4 and during their inspection of a recreational vessel, the anglers stated they had retained a yelloweye rockfish. When asked if they had an experimental permit for the retention, they stated they did not. The officers seized the rockfish and the angler cited accordingly. Officers Beltz and Miller are both located on the east side of the state and received rockfish identification training.

While on patrol for the recreational halibut season in Westport, Sergeant Alexander and Officer Baldwin were approached by an angler who had just returned to the marina. The angler stated that he had to leave but needed to account for his fish on the vessel he departed. He said he had a halibut, two lingcod, and one canary rockfish on the vessel. He provided Sergeant Alexander with his license and catch record card, which did not include the halibut. When asked, the angler said that the dealer had handed him a separate portion of halibut, which he pulled out of the license wallet and provided. The piece was approximately 1" tall and appeared to be the halibut

Officers Wessel and Hillman patrolled Marine Area 4, and contacted vessels fishing halibut closed season as well. Anglers were cited for possessing illegal rockfish and having fish aboard in unlawful condition.

Officer Hillman, Sergeant Rosenberger, and Makah Natural Resource Enforcement Sergeant Butterfield patrolled Marine Areas 4 and 5. The officers observed that 100% of the vessels contacted while fishing in Marine Area 5 were in violation of regulations. Violations encountered and cited for included fishing for halibut closed season, fishing with illegal gear, and possession of fish in unlawful condition.

portion of another catch record card that had been cut off. Sergeant Alexander and Officer Baldwin explained that this was not how a catch card would print and began asking where the license came from. The angler remained adamant that this was how he was given his license. Finally, after confirming that he had not purchased a halibut catch card, and showing him that the WDFW logo and cut mark did not match with any of his licenses, the angler decided to come clean. He said that once he realized he didn't have a catch card, they cut the halibut portion from the skipper's son's catch card and attempted to pass off the lie. The angler was cited for unlawful use of a license, providing false information, and fishing without a license. Additionally, his halibut was seized and donated. The skipper was also given a stern warning on the license use violation.



Officer Davidson inspecting a charter fishing vessel in Marine Area 4.



Falsified halibut catch card.

Oregon State Police (OSP) – Fish & Wildlife Division

OSP IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021

OSP IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating OSP Troopers	8	17	13
Dockside Personnel Hours	197	264	191
At-Sea Personnel Hours	170	461	162
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	303	802	379
Commercial - Directed	21	93	99
Commercial - Incidental	0	N/A	N/A
Recreational	282	709	280
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings / Citations	26	57	18



Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted a halibut patrol on the ocean off Newport and made contact with numerous halibut and rockfish anglers. Multiple Electronic Licensing System (ELS) related warnings were issued. Seven citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*.

Marine Fisheries Team Troopers conducted an ocean patrol out of Newport for the All Depth Halibut fishery. Citations were issued for *Failure to Immediately Validate Harvest Card* and *Angling Prohibited Method*. Warnings were issued for *Possession of Groundfish After Retention of Halibut*.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted a boat patrol on the ocean out of Newport and made contact with numerous halibut and rockfish anglers. Multiple ELS related warnings were given. Citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*, and *Exceed the Daily Limit of Halibut* to a boat with two anglers that claimed to keep "1 halibut and 2 petrale sole", but subsequently found to have 3 Pacific halibut.

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper conducted an ocean patrol off of Cape Falcon and made contact with multiple salmon, halibut, and rockfish anglers. One citation was issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*.

Marine Fisheries Team (MFT) Troopers conducted an offshore Guardian patrol out of Newport for the commercial halibut season. Multiple boats were observed fishing and no violations were noted. Several recreational salmon anglers were also contacted, again with no violations.

While checking anglers who were returning from fishing in the ocean, a Fish and Wildlife Trooper contacted a subject who retained halibut and a lingcod on an All-Depth Halibut day. The subject was cited for *Take/Possession of Groundfish with Halibut on Board - All-Depth Halibut Days*.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an ocean patrol from Manzanita to Cannon Beach. Numerous ocean salmon, rockfish, and halibut anglers were contacted, and multiple warnings were given. Four citations were issued for *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks for Salmon*, and two citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card*.

Newport MFT Troopers conducted an ocean patrol during a very busy salmon and halibut weekend. During the patrol eighteen citations were issued for angling violations that included *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card*, *No Harvest Card*, *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks*, and *Angling More Than One Rod*. Two fish were seized.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an ocean patrol from Nehalem Bay to Cape Falcon. Multiple salmon, rockfish, and halibut anglers were contacted. Citations and warnings were issued for *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks for Salmon*, and for *Angling Prohibited Method - Treble Hooks for Salmon*.



OSP Fish and Wildlife Trooper checking anglers.

California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) – Law Enforcement Division

CDFW IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021



CDFW IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating CDFW Wardens	9	9	11
Dockside Personnel Hours	178	66	85
At-Sea Personnel Hours	116	9	13
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	319	161	399
Commercial - Directed	24	14	20
Commercial - Incidental	9	N/A	N/A
Recreational	286	147	379
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings	1	0	0
Citations	4	0	1

CDFW Wildlife Officers worked joint operations with USCG and NOAA OLE uniformed personnel during the 2021 halibut season. The CDFW halibut patrols covered the major ports in Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, and approximately 15 sport boat launch ramps. CDFW patrolled, contacted, and regularly checked 9 party boats targeting halibut between Shelter Cove and Crescent City. Offshore halibut patrols were made in combination with salmon and rockfish patrols.

9 CDFW officers were involved in halibut season patrols patrolling from the Gualala River north, working the ports of Pt. Arena, Albion, Noyo Harbor, Shelter Cove, Eureka, Trinidad, and Crescent City.

49 hours of near-shore vessel hours were used in support of enforcement of halibut fishing regulations.

33 commercial contacts and 286 recreational contacts were made enforcing halibut regulations.

One verbal warning was issued to a commercial trawl vessel for unlawfully retaining one halibut. Four citations were issued for angling with too many rods for halibut.



CDFW's 38' patrol boat utilized for enforcement of offshore fisheries in the Eureka area. The vessel was purchased with CDFW and NOAA Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) funding, and is docked at the Woodley Island Marina in Eureka.



CDFW's Warden Michael Hampton working aboard CDFW's Patrol Boat "Mako".

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement – West Coast Division

During 2021, OLE's West Coast Enforcement Division (WCD) continued to work closely with the USCG and Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) partners to monitor activity associated with Pacific halibut fisheries, pursuant to IPHC regulations. As one of its annual enforcement priorities, OLE-WCD Enforcement Officers (EOs), along with JEA partners from WDFW, OSP, and CDFW, conducted patrols and vessel boardings, primarily focused on enforcement of Area 2A Pacific halibut directed commercial fishery regulations.



INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION (IPHC) AREA 2A 2021 HALIBUT OPENERS

The IPHC has set forth the Pacific Halibut fishing periods for Area 2A in Section 9 Part 2 of the 2021 IPHC Halibut Fishery Regulations, and is adopted by US regulation at 50 Code of Federal Regulations §300.62. The fishery is restricted to waters south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'30" N) under regulations promulgated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Fishing activities occur predominantly along the 100-150 fathom curve off Grays and Astoria Canyons, Heceta and Stonewall Banks, and the Bandon High Spot. The 2021 Area 2A Commercial Halibut directed fishery was the second season for these annual three day openers. The first opener for the 2021 season began on Tuesday, June 22, at 8 a.m. PST; and ended on Thursday, June 24, at 6:00 p.m. PST. Additional openers were conducted on July 6th -8th, and July 20th -22nd, 2021 after the Commission determined the landing limits specified for IPHC Regulatory Area 2A was not yet attained.

OPERATION FLATFISH FRENZY

Operation Flatfish Frenzy is planned and executed annually in support of the IPHC Area 2A Commercial Directed Fishery. NOAA OLE WCD, USCG District 13 (Washington and Oregon) and District 11 (California), WDFW, OSP, and CDFW coordinate efforts, assets, and personnel to ensure compliance of fishing regulations during Area 2A Directed Halibut openers.

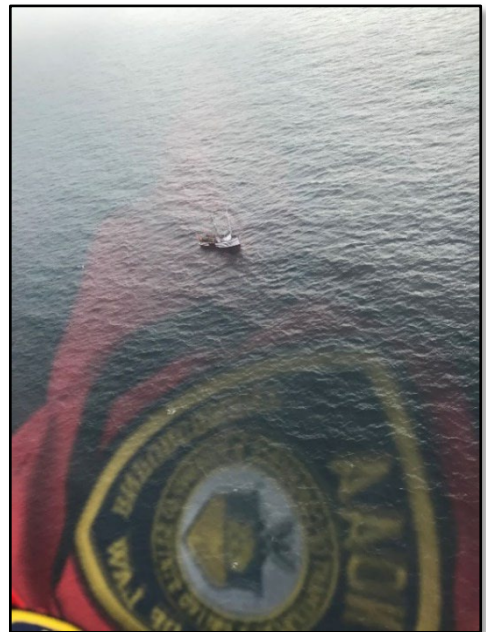
Operation Flatfish Frenzy enforcement efforts focused on ensuring commercial fisherman participating in the 2021 fishery were practicing careful release methods for Pacific halibut, complying with opener start and stop times, adhering to area restrictions, properly recording offloads, and following retention requirements.

ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS

- This was the second year longline fishing vessels landing groundfish were required to use Tori lines (Seabird Avoidance Gear) when setting gear.
- Vessel participation was affected by crew members who opted to take advantage of increased COVID unemployment benefits, rather than fish.
- Complaints were received from fisherman concerning lost time caused by vessel boardings.
- The Commercial Halibut fleet recommended better coordination among federal and state enforcement agencies to avoid multiple boardings by enforcement officials on the same day.
- Morning helicopter flights were difficult throughout the three openers due to poor visibility.

ENFORCEMENT EFFORT

- 1st Derby (22-24 June)
 - Daily USCG C-27 flights from Joint Base Lewis McChord with NOAA rider.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights from Newport and North Bend with NOAA riders.
 - Patrol vessel (PV) deployments: ELM, ORCAS, ALERT, BENJAMIN BOTTOMS.
 - D13 Stations: Increased bar and boat patrols, and shoreside backup for NOAA OLE and states.
 - WDFW deployed 2 PVs out of Westport and Ilwaco, and provided a shoreside presence.
 - OSP PV GUARDIAN deployed out of Newport.
 - NOAA OLE provided riders for aircraft and shoreside patrols alongside state JEA partners.
 - 3 WCD EOs and 1 WCD Supervisory Enforcement Officer (SEO) conducted a total of 76 hours of land patrols, 36 hours of air patrols, 6 hours of at-sea patrols, and 14 boardings in support of Operation Flatfish Frenzy. 14 dockside boardings were conducted that resulted in 0 violations identified. Based on boarding interviews with fishermen, violations have decreased due to outreach efforts and knowledge of increased USCG, JEA and NOAA OLE presence during all aspects of the derby.
- 2nd Derby (6-8 July)
 - Enforcement effort throttled back as in previous years.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights with NOAA OLE riders continued.
 - OSP GUARDIAN and WDFW ORLISS patrol vessels deployed.
 - 4 WCD EOs and 1 WCD SEO logged a total of 58 hours of land patrols, 35 hours of air patrols, 10 hours of at-sea patrols, and 9 boardings. 1 violation during an at-sea patrol was identified when the captain self-reported not using seabird avoidance gear that morning, which resulted in compliance assistance.
- 3rd Derby (20-22 July)
 - Enforcement effort throttled back as in previous years.
 - Daily USCG C-27 flights were cancelled due to aircraft mechanical issues.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights with NOAA OLE riders continued.
 - OSP GUARDIAN and WDFW CORLISS patrol vessels deployed.
 - 4 WCD EOs and 1 WCD SEO conducted a total of 44 hours of land patrols, 5 hours of air patrols, and 9 boarding's. There were 0 documented violations.



NOAA Enforcement Officer observing fishing vessel during USCG air patrol.

Alaska – IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4CDE

Charter Halibut Fisheries

The Area 2C and 3A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan was implemented in 2014, and is used to determine the allowable charter halibut harvest in those areas. The Catch Sharing Plan also endorses a process through which the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) recommends annual management measures to the IPHC that are likely to limit charter harvests to their annual catch limits.

In October 2021, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided final estimates of the 2020 sport halibut removals and preliminary estimates of the 2021 removals for Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, and 4, including information on estimation methods (Webster, Jaenicke, et al. 2021).¹ Additional details on estimation methods are available in Webster and Buzzee (2020).²

2020 Final Harvest Estimates

The Area 2C charter fishery allocation for 2020 was 0.78 Mlb. Regulations included a one-fish bag limit with a reverse slot limit of less than or equal to 40 inches or greater than or equal to 80 inches through June 14, then changed June 15 by emergency action due to the COVID-19 pandemic to a one-fish bag limit with a reverse slot limit of less than or equal to 45 inches or greater than or equal to 80 inches for the remainder of the year. The Area 3A charter allocation was 1.71 Mlb. Regulations through June 14 included a two-fish bag limit with a maximum size on one of the fish of 26 inches, a limit of one trip per charter vessel per day and per CHP per day, a closure to halibut retention on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and a 4-fish annual limit with a recording requirement. Regulations were changed by emergency action on June 15 and included a two-fish bag limit with a maximum size on one of the fish of 32 inches and limits of one trip per charter vessel per day and per CHP per day; there were no closure days or annual limits after the regulation change. Charter captains and crew were not allowed to retain halibut while guiding clients in Area 2C or Area 3A. Charter fishery regulations in the remainder of the state included a bag limit of two fish of any size. Unguided fishery regulations statewide were a bag limit of two fish of any size.

The total 2020 Area 2C estimated sport harvest was 83,471 fish, for a yield of 1.334 million pounds. Area 2C charter removals were estimated to be 0.483 Mlb, approximately 38% under the allocation. Unguided removals were estimated to be 0.885 Mlb. The Area 3A estimated sport harvest was 197,355 fish, for a yield of 2.971 Mlb. Area 3A charter removals were estimated to be 1.567 Mlb, approximately 8% under the allocation. Unguided removals were estimated to be 1.437 Mlb. Areas 3B and 4 (A-E combined) do not have separate charter allocations. The final harvest estimates for western Areas were 402 halibut in Area 3B and 549 halibut in Area 4. Applying the Kodiak unguided average weight of 18.40 lb resulted in yield estimates of 0.007 Mlb in Area 3B and 0.010 Mlb in Area 4. Additional detail on numbers of fish harvested and released, releases by size category, average weights, and confidence intervals are included in Webster,

¹ Webster, S., M. Jaenicke, D. Tersteeg, M. Ford, and M. Schuster. 2021. Letter from ADF&G to IPHC reporting final 2020 and preliminary 2021 sport halibut harvest estimates, Oct 25, 2021. Retrieved 10 December 2021, from <https://www.npfmc.org/halibut-charter-management/>

² Webster, S. R., and B. Buzzee. 2020. Estimation and projection of statewide sport halibut harvest. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, Regional Operational Plan ROP.SF.4A.2020.04, Anchorage. <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.4A.2020.04.pdf>

Jaenicke, et al. (2021). Information on harvest by subarea and historical harvest can be found in North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (2021).

2021 Preliminary Harvest Estimates

The Area 2C charter fishery allocation for 2021 was 0.81 Mlb. Regulations included a one-fish bag limit with a reverse slot limit of less than or equal to 50 inches or greater than or equal to 72 inches. The Area 3A charter allocation was 1.95 Mlb. Regulations included a two-fish bag limit with a maximum size on one of the fish of 32 inches, a limit of one trip per charter vessel per day and per CHP per day, and a closure to halibut retention on Wednesdays. When management measure analyses were reviewed prior to the 2021 season, forecasts were reduced by 35% in Area 2C and by 25% in 3A to account for anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on effort in the charter sector (COVID buffers). Charter captains and crew were not allowed to retain halibut while guiding clients in Area 2C or Area 3A. Charter fishery regulations in the remainder of the state included a bag limit of two fish of any size. Unguided fishery regulations statewide were a bag limit of two fish of any size.

One notable change to preliminary estimates in 2021 is that use of electronic logbooks (eLogbooks) became mandatory for charter operators in Southeast Alaska. As such, harvest reported through mid-October was used for the preliminary charter estimates in Area 2C, noting that in recent years there was no charter harvest reported in Area 2C after October 15th. There was no mandate to use eLogbook in most of 3A in 2021 and most operators still use paper logbooks. Preliminary logbook data were available for trips taken through August 31 in Area 3A and this was used to project harvest for the year in Area 3A. This is an improvement from past preliminary estimates that only used logbook data through July 31 in both Areas.

The preliminary reported charter harvest and estimated removal in Area 2C was 77,287 halibut and 1.154 Mlb, respectively, approximately 42% over the 2021 allocation. Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 2C were 61,981 fish and 1.089 Mlb. The preliminary estimates of charter harvest and removal in Area 3A were 184,160 fish and 2.454 Mlb, respectively, approximately 26% over the allocation. Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 3A were 109,298 fish and 1.577 Mlb. The preliminary harvest estimates for 2021 were 452 halibut in Area 3B and 761 halibut in Area 4 (A-E combined). Applying the unguided average weight from Kodiak of 14.23 lb resulted in removal estimates of 0.006 Mlb in Area 3B and 0.011 Mlb in Area 4. Additional detail on numbers of fish harvested and released, releases by size category, average weights, and confidence intervals are included in Webster, Jaenicke, et al. (2021).

2022 Areas 2C and 3A Charter Halibut Management Measure Analyses

In addition to estimating all recreational halibut harvest in Alaska, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is responsible for analyzing alternative management measures for the charter halibut fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A. Analyses were requested by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council's Charter Halibut Management Committee on 26 October 2021. Results were presented at the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting in December. Analyses attempted to project removals under "normal" conditions; data assumed to have been impacted because of the COVID-19 pandemic were omitted from time series forecasts, which often resulted in forecasting out three time-steps and increased uncertainty in results. No attempts were made to account for future impacts of the pandemic. Projected removals in 2022 under status quo regulations are 1.10 Mlb in Area 2C and 2.30 Mlb in Area 3A. Based on the reference allocations, charter regulations for both Areas will need to be more restrictive in 2022 than in 2021. Under the suite of management measures recommended by the NPFMC at the December

2021 meeting, removal projections range from 0.583 to 1.044 Mlb for Area 2C and from 1.795 to 2.156 for Area 3A (Webster, Jevons, & Powers 2021).³

NPFMC Charter Halibut Fishery actions in 2021

On December 8, 2021 the NPFMC recommended management measures for charter halibut fishing in Areas 2C and 3A for the 2022 fishing season. These recommendations are submitted as Regulatory Proposal B2 to the IPHC for consideration and adoption by the Commission at AM098 in January 2022. The measures approved by the NPFMC were developed by the Charter Halibut Management Committee based on analyses provided by ADF&G as well as the needs of the fishery.⁴ These measures are expected to constrain overall charter removals to the final 2022 area allocations, as determined by the IPHC under the Catch Sharing Plan.

Guided Angler Fish Program- 2021 Summary

In 2014, NMFS implemented the guided angler fish (GAF) program to authorize limited annual transfers of commercial halibut IFQ as GAF to qualified charter halibut permit holders for harvest by charter vessel anglers in Areas 2C and 3A. The GAF program allows qualified charter halibut permit holders to offer charter vessel anglers the opportunity to retain halibut up to the limit for unguided anglers when the charter management measure in place limits charter vessel anglers to a more restrictive harvest limit.

In 2021, charter vessel anglers who used GAF in Area 2C and Area 3A could harvest up to two halibut of any size per day, and GAF were not subject to the daily closures in Area 3A. Table 6 summarizes IFQ to GAF transfers for 2017 through 2021. From the outset of the program, GAF is has been used more frequently in Area 2C than 3A. In Area 2C in 2021, 97,056 pounds of IFQ was transferred as GAF to the charter fishery; this translated into 1,312 harvestable halibut, of which 79% (1,031 fish) were actually taken. In Area 3A in 2021, 11,913 pounds IFQ was transferred as GAF, resulting in 441 harvestable fish. However, only 29% (128 fish) of the Area 3A GAF was taken.⁵

Table 6 Summary of IFQ to GAF transfers

Year	IPHC Regulatory Area	Number of GAF transferred	Number of GAF Harvested (% of amount transferred)	Actual Net Pounds of IFQ Harvested	Average Length in Inches (range)	Number of GAF Permits Issued	Number of GAF Permit Holders
2017	2C	719	576 (80%)	40,860	55 (18-79)	207	34
	3A	233	157 (67%)	6,920	48 (29-72)	22	13
	Total	952	733 (77%)	47,780		229	47

³ Webster, S., B. Jevons, and R. Powers 2021. Analysis of management options for the Area 2C and 3A charter halibut fisheries for 2022: A report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, December 2021. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Agenda item C3. Unpublished. Retrieved 10 December 2021, from <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2713>

⁴ ADF&G Analysis is available on the December NPFMC meeting agenda under item C1 at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2713>

⁵ GAF Program Annual reports are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/guided-angler-fish-gaf-program-annual-reports>.

Year	IPHC Regulatory Area	Number of GAF transferred	Number of GAF Harvested (% of amount transferred)	Actual Net Pounds of IFQ Harvested	Average Length in Inches (range)	Number of GAF Permits Issued	Number of GAF Permit Holders
2018	2C	1,222	972 (80%)	64,365	54 (22-79)	332	46
	3A	304	215 (71%)	9,052	47 (25-89)	31	17
	Total	1,526	1,187 (78%)	73,417		363	63
2019	2C	1,601	1,237 (77%)	75,039	53 (22-83)	341	56
	3A	338	266 (79%)	10,652	46 (25-66)	29	13
	Total	1,939	1,503 (78%)	85,691		370	69
2020	2C	801	764 (95%)	55,061	56 (23-85)	235	48
	3A	92	38 (41%)	2,147	52 (34-64)	15	7
	Total	893	802 (90%)	57,208		250	55
2021	2C	1,312	1,031 (79%)	76,529	57 (29-75)	407	59
	3A	441	128 (29%)	3,446	39 (19-65)	24	8
	Total	1,753	1,159 (66%)	79,976		431	67

Commercial Groundfish Fisheries

Halibut Bycatch

Current Halibut Bycatch Amounts and Management

Halibut bycatch mortality in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fisheries is highly regulated and closely managed by the NPFMC and NMFS through the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for each management area. Through regulations implementing the FMPs, NMFS manages halibut bycatch by (1) establishing annual halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, (2) apportioning PSC limits to fishery categories and seasons to accommodate halibut PSC needs in specific groundfish fisheries, and (3) managing groundfish fisheries to prevent PSC from exceeding the established limits.

The FMPs specify that halibut bycatch in groundfish fisheries is managed as PSC. Catch of PSC species must be avoided while fishing for groundfish and PSC species may not be retained unless required under the FMP. Halibut PSC limits are an apportioned, non-retainable amount of halibut provided to a groundfish fishery to provide an upper limit on the bycatch of halibut in a fishery. When a halibut PSC limit is reached in an area, further fishing with specific types of gear or modes of operation is prohibited by those types of operations taking halibut PSC in that area.

Although halibut PSC is taken by vessels using all types of gear (trawl, hook-and-line, pot, and jig gear), halibut PSC primarily occurs in the trawl and hook-and-line (non-trawl) groundfish fisheries. The NPFMC and NMFS annually establish halibut PSC limits for vessels in the trawl and non-trawl groundfish fisheries in the BSAI and GOA. NMFS manages groundfish fisheries to ensure these limits are not exceeded.

The total estimated halibut PSC use for 2021 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Total and Projected Halibut Mortality in the GOA and BSAI (nearest metric ton) by Area and Gear (Target)

2020 Total		2021 (Predicted 10/20)	2021 Actual	Difference (Actual – Predicted)
Area 2C				
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	3	0	1	1
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	8	14	14	0
Pot	0	1	2	1
Total	11	15	17	2
Area 3A				
Trawl	561	159	182	23
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	1	50	44	-6
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	8	4	4	0
Pot	0	4	5	1
Total	570	217	235	18
Area 3B				
Trawl	223	172	168	-4
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	0	8	18	10
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	3	5	4	-1
Pot	0	4	5	1
Total	226	189	195	6
Area 4A				
Trawl	148	134	173	39
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	4	2	6	4
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0	0	0
Pot	2	2	6	4
Total	154	138	185	47
Area 4B				
Trawl	49	45	52	7
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	7	30	31	1
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0	1	1
Pot	2	1	4	3
Total	58	76	88	12

2020 Total		2021 (Predicted 10/20)	2021 Actual	Difference (Actual – Predicted)
Area 4 CDE				
Trawl	668	533	544	11
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	73	49	55	6
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0	0	0
Pot	0	0	0	0
Total	741	582	599	17
Area 4 Closed				
Trawl	712	620	668	48
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	3	8	2	-6
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0	0	0
Pot	1	1	8	7
Total	716	629	678	49
TOTAL (All Areas)				
Trawl	2,361	1,663	1,787	124
Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	91	147	157	10
Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	19	23	23	0
Pot	5	13	30	17
Total	2,476	1,846	1,997	151

Table 7 includes estimates of halibut mortality from groundfish fisheries managed by the State of Alaska, and halibut mortality from federally managed groundfish fisheries. Table 7 estimates the amount of halibut mortality by each gear type using a method of apportioning by IPHC area.

Additional information about halibut bycatch mortality please see slides 46 – 49 in the in the BSAI inseason management report⁶ and slides 45 – 50 in the GOA inseason management report⁷ to the NPFMC in December 2021.

Halibut Bycatch Management Actions in Progress

This report covers actions that are under development by NMFS.

⁶ Available at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=db7f5de4-1a82-4e40-8134-dec039dedd12.pdf&fileName=B2%20BSAI%20Inseason%20Management%20Report%202021.pdf>.

⁷ Available at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=e81d85e9-3844-4660-b9e5-3cbc15c4bbde.pdf&fileName=B2%20GOA%20Inseason%20Management%20Report%202021.pdf>.

Exempted fishing permit (EFP) application

NMFS signed and issued an EFP to the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) in April 2021. The EFP will enable a collaborative study to conduct field testing of potentially improved designs on halibut excluders in the Bering Sea flatfish trawl fishery. Additional information is available on the NMFS Alaska Region webpage under the Halibut Excluder heading at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/resources-fishing/exempted-fishing-permits-alaska>.

NMFS sent a letter to the IPHC in January 2021 to provide notice of this EFP application for review and determination as to whether this action requires further consultation.

BSAI Pacific Cod Trawl Catcher Vessel Cooperative Program

On October 13, 2021, the NPFMC recommended implementation of Amendment 122 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). If approved by the Secretary of Commerce and implemented by NMFS, the Pacific cod Trawl Cooperative Program (PCTC Program) would allocate quota share (QS) to harvesters with an eligible groundfish License Limitation Program (LLP) license based on the harvest of BSAI Pacific cod during qualifying years. This Program would also allocate QS to processors based on processing history during the qualifying years. QS allocated under this program would yield an exclusive harvest privilege to members of a PCTC Program cooperative. The NPFMC's intent in recommending Amendment 122 is to improve the prosecution of the fishery by promoting safety and stability in the harvesting and processing sectors, increasing the value of the fishery, minimizing bycatch to the extent practicable, providing for the sustained participation of fishery dependent communities, and ensuring the sustainability and viability of the Pacific cod resource in the BSAI. Under the management of the PCTC program, halibut PSC limits for the A and B season of the BSAI Pacific cod fishery would be reduced by 25 percent. The Analysis, public comments, and other documents considered by the Council in recommending Amendment 122 are available under item C4 on the October NPFMC meeting agenda at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2352>.

Halibut Abundance Based Management

The NPFMC took final action on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the abundance-based management (ABM) of the Amendment 80 (A80) halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limit. The Council has been considering this action iteratively for 6 years. The core concept of the action is linking PSC limits in the A80 commercial groundfish trawl fleet in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) to estimated halibut abundance. The current PSC limit is set as a fixed amount at 1,745 mt, which becomes an increasingly larger proportion of total halibut removals in the BSAI when halibut abundance declines. The Council and its advisory bodies, fishery stakeholders, and the public have considered several approaches for an ABM program consistent with Council fishery management objectives and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Council heard extensive public testimony during this and previous meetings over both the importance of providing flexibility to the A80 fleet to prosecute their quotas as well as concerns from the directed halibut users that their directed fishery catch has declined as a result of a decline in halibut abundance while fixed PSC limits have further reduced the proportion of halibut available for harvest in the directed halibut fisheries.

The preferred alternative (PA) selected determines the A80 PSC limit annually based on the most recent survey values and the associated PSC limit value from the following table:⁸

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,745 mt (current limit)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,571 mt (10% below current)
	Low 6,000-7,999	1,309 mt (25% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Very Low < 6,000	1,134 mt (35% below current)	1,134 mt (35% below current)

If approved, implementation of this action would occur in either 2023 (mid-year) or for the beginning of the 2024 fishing year.

The DEIS, other documents, and public comments considered by the Council in recommending their PA are available under item C2 on the December NPFMC meeting agenda at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2713>.

Observer and Electronic Monitoring Coverage Rates

Overall, for all federal fisheries off Alaska, 4,072 trips (44.8%) and 375 vessels (38.2%) were monitored by either an observer or electronic monitoring (EM) system in 2020.⁹ A total of 373 individual observers were trained, briefed, and equipped for deployment to vessels and processing facilities operating in the BSAI and GOA groundfish and halibut fisheries.

In 2020, observers collected data on board 259 fixed gear and trawl vessels and at 11 processing facilities for a total of 40,838 observer days (39,153 full coverage days on vessels and in processing plants; and 1,685 partial coverage days on vessels and processing plants).

Starting in March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created limitations on available air travel and “shelter in place” restrictions, particularly in many remote Alaskan communities. Under the emergency rule signed on March 24, 2020, NMFS temporarily waived the requirement for vessels in the partial coverage category to carry a fishery observer from March 27 through April 19, 2020. On April 18, 2020, NMFS announced a limited extension of the temporary waiver of observer requirements, which narrowed the scope and reinitiated deployment of observers on trips

⁸ The Council motion is available at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=96ecabd8-0395-48e4-b04a-f91034ef1da9.pdf&fileName=C1%20Council%20Motion.pdf>

⁹ The North Pacific Observer Program 2020 Annual Report is available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/north-pacific-observer-program-2020-annual-report>

departing from the port of Kodiak, Alaska (the majority of GOA trawl fisheries occurred out of Kodiak during this timeframe). On June 28, 2020, NMFS expanded observer deployment in the partial coverage category to include 13 ports in addition to Kodiak, which further reduced the scope of waivers issued.

The largest component of the Alaskan groundfish fisheries, vessels, and processors in the full coverage category (including catcher processors and participants in limited access privilege programs), were not issued waivers in 2020 and 2021. Additionally, requirements for deployment of EM was not waived for trawl catcher vessels fishing under the trawl EM exempted fishing permit and only a few trips were released from coverage under the fixed gear EM portion of the partial coverage category for circumstances when an EM service technician was unable to travel.

A summary of the number of vessels and trips in each stratum and realized coverage rates in 2020 were as follows:

Coverage category	Strata	Total vessels	Total trips	Sampled trips	Coverage rate	
Full coverage	Full	143	2,864	2,856	99.7	
	Trawl EM (BSAI)	21	494	494	100.0	
Partial coverage	Hook -and- Line	Jan. 1 - Mar. 25	50	82	11	13.4
		Mar. 26 - Jun. 30*	180	547	6	
		Jul. 1 - Dec. 31	239	849	87	10.2
	Pot	Jan. 1 - Mar. 25	64	161	25	15.5
		Mar. 26 - Jun. 30*	38	152	5	
		Jul. 1 - Dec. 31	80	295	25	8.5
	Trawl	Jan. 1 - Mar. 25	45	392	88	22.4
		Mar. 26 - Jun. 30*	20	171	16	
		Jul. 1 - Dec. 31	29	347	56	16.1
		EM Hook-and-Line	126	643	193	30.0
		EM Pot	30	194	60	30.9
		Trawl EM (GOA)	31	477	153	32.1
No selection	Zero Coverage	320	1,403	0	0.0	
	Zero Coverage- EM Research	2	22	0	0.0	

*Partial Coverage rates were not evaluated between March 26 – June 30 due to waivers related to COVID-19 restrictions.

In December, 2020, NMFS released the final 2021 ADP with the following strata and deployment rates:¹⁰

- No Selection – 0%
- Trawl – 16%
- Hook-and-line – 15%
- Pot – 15%
- Fixed-Gear EM – 30%
- Trawl EM EFP–100% at-sea EM; plus: 30% shoreside monitoring in GOA or 100% shoreside monitoring in BS

In December, 2021, NMFS released the final 2022 ADP with the following strata and deployment rates:¹¹

- No Selection – 0%
- Trawl vessels not participating in the EM EFP – 30%
- Hook-and-line – 19%
- Pot – 17%
- Fixed-Gear EM – 30%
- Trawl EM EFP–100% at-sea EM; plus: 30% shoreside monitoring in GOA or 100% shoreside monitoring in BS

Improvements in Discard Estimates of Halibut in the Directed Halibut Fishery

January 2013 marked the beginning of a new method of deploying at-sea observers into the Federal groundfish and Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) fisheries off Alaska. The new program provided for at-sea data collection on longline vessels participating in the Pacific halibut fishery. Previously, data collections on these boats was not authorized and had severely limited the NMFS's ability to estimate incidental catch and at-sea discard of halibut and groundfish species. The Pacific halibut fishery is the only federally managed groundfish fishery off Alaska with a regulatory minimum size limit and any halibut intended for commercial sale must be at least 32 inches (~81 cm) in total length.

The minimum size limit complicates estimation of halibut discard due to the limited amount of disposition-specific data collected by observers available to calculate mean weights. Observers collect fish weights that are used to estimate the mean weight per fish from the unsorted (retained and discarded) catch. They also collect counts of retained fish to estimate the percent of the catch retained. The calculation of the mean weight per fish using observer data may overestimate the mean weight of discarded fish and underestimate the weight of retained fish. While estimates of retained catch are based on landings data and thus are not biased, the haul-specific estimates of at-sea discards of halibut in the halibut fishery are biased. To correct for this bias, NMFS has developed an analytic method to mitigate the bias by adjusting the percentage of halibut retained to reflect the differences in mean weight for retained (and discarded) halibut. A NOAA Technical Memorandum describing the change is forthcoming.

¹⁰ The 2020 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska is available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/2020-annual-deployment-plan-observers-and-electronic-monitoring-groundfish-and>

¹¹ The 2021 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska is available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/2021-annual-deployment-plan-observers-and-electronic-monitoring-groundfish-and>

Commercial Halibut IFQ Program

On February 10, 2021, the NPFMC recommended two emergency or expedited changes to regulations governing the Commercial Halibut IFQ Program.

Effective March 30, 2021 through September 27, 2021, IFQ Temporary Transfers were available to individuals holding B, C, or D class QS ([86 FR 16542](#), March 30, 2021).

Effective May 26, 2021 through December 31, 2021, limits are removed on the maximum amount of halibut IFQ that may be harvested by a vessel, commonly known as vessel use caps, in IFQ regulatory areas 4A (Eastern Aleutian Islands), 4B (Central and Western Aleutian Islands), 4C (Central Bering Sea), and 4D (Eastern Bering Sea) for the 2021 IFQ fishing year ([86 FR 28294](#), May 26, 2021).

IFQ Omnibus Analysis

The NPFMC is considering several revisions to the Halibut and Sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program regulations. This action evaluates five elements relevant to pot gear used to fish IFQ, including gear specifications and configuration requirements, pot limits, and gear retrieval requirements, and one element to authorize jig gear as a legal gear type for the harvest of sablefish IFQ. The Council's motion also included an alternative to temporarily remove the Adak community quota entity (CQE) residency requirement for five years, in response to public comment.¹² The NPFMC is scheduled to review this action again at its meeting in April 2022.

Subsistence

Through a grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (NA18NMF4370086), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Subsistence Section conducted a study to estimate the subsistence harvests of Pacific halibut in Alaska in 2020. The full results appear in Technical Paper No. 485, "Subsistence Harvests of Pacific Halibut in Alaska, 2020" (Sill and Koster 2022).¹³

In May 2003, the NMFS published final federal regulations for a subsistence halibut fishery in Alaska. Residents of 118 rural communities and designated rural areas, and members of 123 tribes are eligible to participate. Fishers must obtain a subsistence halibut registration certificate (SHARC) from NMFS before fishing.

To estimate the 2020 harvests, a one-page survey form was mailed to SHARC holders in early 2021. Staff also remotely administered surveys in four communities using modified methods due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After three mailings and community outreach, 5,127 of 8,135 potential subsistence halibut fishers (63%) responded. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

An estimated 3,777 individuals subsistence fished for halibut in Alaska in 2020, about 8% below the 2018 fishing year and 26% below the long-term average since 2003. The estimated subsistence harvest was 27,241 halibut or 530,757 pounds net weight. This was the lowest harvest estimate since the new regulations were adopted in 2003 and, as expressed in pounds net weight, nearly 14% below 2018 harvests and 41% below the previous 13-year average. It is important to note that the 2020 study year included the unusual circumstances of the COVID-19

¹² The initial review draft analysis and Council motion are available under item C2 on the October 2021 NPFMC meeting agenda: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2352>.

¹³ Sill, L. A. and D. Koster. 2021. Subsistence Harvests of Pacific Halibut in Alaska, 2020—DRAFT. Alaska *Department* of Fish and Game Division of Subsistence, Technical Paper No. 485, Anchorage. Retrieved 14 December 2021, from <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/techpap/TP485.pdf>

global pandemic and it is unclear exactly how this pandemic affected subsistence harvesting activities. Of the 2020 total subsistence halibut harvest, 75% was harvested with setline (stationary) gear (longline or skate) and 25% was harvested with hand-operated gear (handline or rod and reel). This pattern was similar to other study years.

Also similar to all other years, in 2020, the largest subsistence harvests of halibut occurred in Southeast Alaska (Halibut Regulatory Area 2C), with 55% of the total, followed by Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A) at 33%, and East Bering Sea Coast (Area 4E) at 6%. Remaining areas combined accounted for about 6% of the state total.

Based on data from the International Pacific Halibut Commission and this study, the estimated halibut removal in Alaska in 2020 was 27.093 million pounds, net weight. Subsistence harvests accounted for 2% of this total.

In response to a new question first asked in 2018, 51% of survey respondents said they had met their needs for halibut in 2020, and 49% said they had not. Family or personal reasons, lack of effort, inoperative equipment, and time constraints were the most-cited reasons for not meeting needs. As noted above, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on subsistence harvesting activities remains unknown; however, approximately 10% of survey respondents who reported that their needs were not met indicated that the pandemic was the reason.

The 2020 data collection effort was a success, with good response rates and a reliable estimate of subsistence halibut harvests in Alaska for 2020. Outreach continues to be necessary to maximize enrollment of fishers in the SHARC program, as is additional research to understand trends in the fishery. However, section staff were limited in their outreach capacity because of limitations on travel to rural Alaska due to the pandemic. Budget constraints dictate that a survey to estimate subsistence halibut harvests in Alaska in 2021 will not take place. The report recommends that monitoring of the Alaska subsistence halibut harvest resume in the future.

NOAA Fisheries Law Enforcement - Alaska

Alaska Enforcement Division

The Alaska Enforcement Division (AKD) utilizes enforcement officers, special agents, and partnerships with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers and the U.S. Coast Guard to enforce federal fishing regulations in Alaska, covering over 1.4 million square miles of ocean, 66,000 miles of Arctic and Subarctic coastline, and 2,690 named islands. Compliance is achieved by providing outreach and education, conducting patrols, monitoring offloads, and investigating violations of civil and criminal marine resource laws, including the Northern Pacific Halibut Act.

In 2021, there were 3,375 Individual Fishing quota (IFQ) halibut permits issued in Alaska and 30 IFQ landing ports. There were 1067 charter halibut permits issued (578 for IPHC Area 2C; 488 for IPHC Area 3A), and 6,394 subsistence halibut permits.

Patrol and Boardings

In 2021, AKD personnel spent over 3,093 hours conducting patrols to deter potential violators, monitor fishing and other marine activities, detect violations, provide compliance assistance, and provide outreach and education to halibut fishery participants. OLE boarded 964 vessels with 692 of those boardings being related to halibut.

Table 8 Results of NOAA OLE AKD Vessel Boardings

	2019	2020	2021
	Vessel Boardings	Vessel Boardings	Vessel Boardings
Subsistence Halibut	14	27	14
Commercial Halibut	216	314	334
Charter Halibut	302	136	149
Sport Halibut	261	171	195
Total	<u>793</u>	<u>648</u>	<u>692</u>

Compliance Assistance

In 2021, AKD personnel spent over 1,632 hours providing outreach and education to marine resource users. Outreach efforts at a number of organized events were canceled due to COVID-19. The goal of OLE outreach efforts is to ensure the most current and accurate regulatory information is widely distributed and understood.

Incidents

In 2021, AKD opened 1,010 halibut-related incidents, including outreach, vessel boardings, dockside monitoring, and compliance assistance. Of those incidents; agents and officers identified 500 halibut-related violations, which were resolved by Compliance Assistance, Summary Settlement, or a Written Warning.

Table 9. NOAA Fisheries OLE Alaska Halibut Violations

	2019	2020	2021
Subsistence Halibut	29	14	18
Commercial Halibut	250	197	123
Charter Halibut	159	50	133
Sport Halibut	57	51	54
Commercial Groundfish involving Halibut	60	84	52
Total	<u>555</u>	<u>396</u>	<u>380</u>

***Not all violations resulted in an enforcement action. This table does not include ongoing or NOVA adjudicated cases.**

2021 Halibut-Related Violations documented by NOAA in Alaska:

18 Subsistence halibut fishing violations; most common violations included:

- Unqualified person applied for a SHARC

- Subsistence halibut with sport caught halibut.
- Improperly or unmarked subsistence halibut fishing gear
- Subsistence halibut fishing without a SHARC
- Exceeding vessel hook limit
- Fillet, mutilate, or otherwise disfigure subsistence halibut in any manner that prevents the determination of the number of fish caught, possessed, or landed
- Non-resident pulling subsistence halibut gear
- Subsistence halibut offered for sale.

123 Commercial IFQ/CDQ halibut violations; most common violations included:

- IFQ halibut overages greater than 10%
- Record keeping or reporting violations (PNOL, Landing Report, Logbook, PTR, Production Reports)
- Gear marking violations
- Failure to release undersized halibut with a minimum of injury by allowing fish to hit the crucifier, remain on deck for a prolonged period of time, and other mishandling issues (e.g. lifting fish solely by caudal peduncle).
- Retain undersized halibut, or discarding legal sized halibut
- Hired master and permit holder violations
- Vessel cap overages
- Misreporting IFQ area fished or fishing in an area with no IFQ available
- Fishing without an FFP

52 Commercial groundfish violations involving halibut; most common violations included:

- Failure to carefully release halibut or allow halibut to contact a crucifier or hook stripper
- Release halibut caught with longline gear by any method other than— positioning the gaff on the hook and twisting the hook from the halibut, straightening the hook by using the gaff to catch the bend of the hook, and bracing the gaff against the vessel or any gear attached to the vessel
- Puncture halibut with a gaff or other device
- Failure to have an IFQ hired master permit, as appropriate, in the name of the individual making the landing

54 Sport halibut violations; most common violations included:

- Sale or attempted sale of sport caught halibut
- Exceeding bag and/or possession limits

- Filleting, mutilating or skinning halibut onboard a vessel, other than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with a patch of skin on each piece, naturally attached
- Fishing without a license/permit
- Using illegal gear
- Sport caught halibut onboard with commercial caught salmon

133 Charter halibut fishing violations; most common violations included:

- Logbook violations-
 - Failure to ensure charter halibut anglers sign the logbook
 - Failure to record CHP in the ADFG logbook/invalid CHP
 - Report inaccurate information
- Failure to report GAF in the required time period or submitting inaccurate information
- Illegal guiding - no CHP
- Filleting, mutilating or skinning halibut onboard a vessel, other than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with a patch of skin on each piece, naturally attached
- Exceeding bag limit, possession limit, size limits, or annual limits
- Charter fish without a CHP

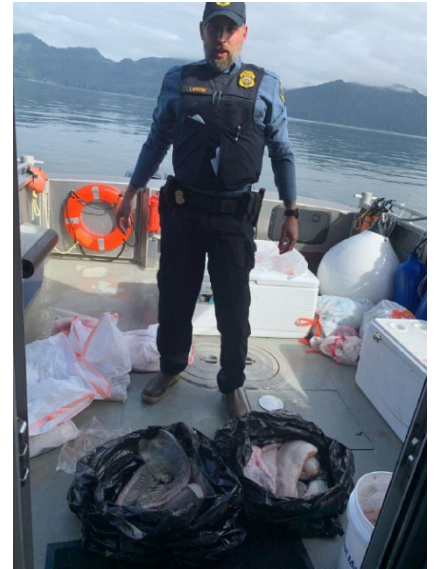


Photo: OLE checking to see if Halibut fillets were in a condition other than whole filets with skin on, in violation of IPHC Fishery Regulations §26(1)(d).

Partnerships & Patrols Highlights

During 2021, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Alaska Division (AKD) conducted extensive patrols for the purposes of enforcement and education. In addition to daily dockside and vessel patrols, AKD conducted several multi-day patrols. Patrols were often coordinated with partners including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT), and National Park Service (NPS). Partnering with multiple agencies broadens enforcement and outreach opportunities and allows for shared knowledge across agencies.

In April, a team of four Enforcement Officers along with USCG and AWT boarding officers conducted boardings and surveillance in Southcentral Alaska during the 2021 Homer King Salmon Derby. Teams conducted 66 boardings and identified 16 violations including two failure to sign logbooks, four chunked halibut, eight state violations, and two USCG safety violations.

In June, a team consisting of three Enforcement Officers and one Alaska Wildlife Trooper completed a three-day patrol from Seward to Whittier, AK on the PV Kingfisher. A USCG Boarding officer joined on day two. 20 boardings were completed and 25 violations were discovered. The violations consisted of four North Pacific Halibut Act violations, 18 State of Alaska violations, and three Coast Guard violations. Over 100 pounds of illegally processed halibut, 11 non-pelagic rockfish, and one lingcod were seized.



In June, OLE and AWT completed a patrol of Prince of Wales (POW) Island and surrounding communities onboard PV Gowtauakan. During the sea-based joint patrol, multiple strings of unmarked commercial shrimp gear were pulled, recorded, and deck loaded. Unmarked longline gear was also discovered. Officers provided outreach to the Thorne Bay Charter Association and to the community of Hollis during a town meeting. Multiple dockside boardings resulted in outreach with halibut charter operators to discuss and assist with eLogBooks.

In September, an Enforcement Officer completed a two-week patrol with AWT on the PV Enforcer in Southeast AK with a total of 92 vessels boarded and 18 state and federal citations. Four federal citations were issued, one fix-it for subsistence gear markings, and three unreported Guided Angler Fish (GAF).

Case Updates

Notice of Violation and Assessment

The NOAA Office of General Counsel, Enforcement Section (GCES) issued Notices of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) in the following civil administrative cases. A NOVA is not evidence of liability; it is only an allegation. A respondent is entitled to a fair hearing before an administrative law judge at which the government must prove liability by a preponderance of the evidence.

AK1906496; Keta Seafoods, L.L.C. and Gregory V. McMillan – Shoreside processor Keta Seafoods, LLC, and owner Gregory V. McMillan were charged jointly and severally under the Northern Pacific Halibut Act (NPHA) with failing to submit a required IFQ Registered Buyers ex-vessel Volume and Value Report. A \$1,500 NOVA was issued.

AK2003816; F/V Gulf Maiden – Owner Gulf Maiden Corporation and operator Randall Shears were charged jointly and severally under the NPHA and MSA with failing to return Pacific halibut to the sea with a minimum of injury, unlawful discard of rockfish and Pacific cod, and failure to record discards. A \$22,800 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$20,250.

Cases Settled

AK1905767 and AK1905392; F/V Anita – Owner F/V Anita LLC and operator Jay Gillman were charged jointly and severally under the MSA and the NPHA with discarding IFQ sablefish and IFQ halibut, failing to report discards, and failing to register an IFQ fishing trip in the Observer Declare and Deploy System. A \$78,250 NOVA was issued. The case settled for \$55,270.

AK2003816; F/V Gulf Maiden – Owner Gulf Maiden Corporation and operator Randall Shears were charged jointly and severally under the NPHA and MSA with failing to return Pacific halibut to the sea with a minimum of injury, unlawful discard of rockfish and Pacific cod, and failure to record discards. A \$22,800 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for \$20,250.

Default

AK1906496; Keta Seafoods, L.L.C. and Gregory V. McMillan – Shoreside processor Keta Seafoods, LLC, and owner Gregory V. McMillan were charged jointly and severally under the Northern Pacific Halibut Act (NPHA) with failing to submit a required IFQ Registered Buyers ex-vessel volume and Value Report. A \$1,500 NOVA was issued.

Criminal Sentencing

NOAA OLE and GCES assisted the U.S. Attorney's Office in Anchorage with the following criminal prosecution in U.S. District Court:

United States v. Stevens, No. 3:20-cr-00773-JMK-DMS (D. Alaska 2021). On August 5, 2021,

James A. Stevens, vessel owner, operator, fleet manager, and IFQ permit holder was sentenced for violating the Lacey Act's felony false labeling provision. Stevens must pay a \$1,000,000 fine, serve six months in federal prison, 126 days in a halfway house, and perform 80 hours of community service. During the three years that he is supervised by the United States Probation Office after he is released from prison, Stevens will be subject to VMS and EM conditions, drug testing, and other standard conditions. Stevens pled guilty to knowingly submitting false information concerning the locations and regulatory areas where 903,208 pounds of IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish were harvested on IFQ landing reports, ADF&G fish tickets, and in his logbooks. His crime spanned four IFQ fishing seasons (i.e., 2014–2017). He is currently serving his prison sentence.

United States Coast Guard Enforcement Report – Alaska Region

I. Coast Guard Resources in Alaska

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) 17th District (D17) covers the U.S. waters of Alaska out to 200 nautical miles, and encompasses the IPHC Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E. Resources used for fisheries enforcement include cutters, aircraft, and boats from coastal stations.

Cutters:

- The 282-foot Medium Endurance Cutter USCGC ALEX HALEY home-ported in Kodiak regularly patrols the Bering Sea and North Pacific waters.
- 418-foot National Security Cutters (NSCs) from California and Hawaii are assigned to patrol D17 waters throughout the year.
- Four 225-foot Buoy Tenders conduct law enforcement throughout Alaska and are home-ported in Sitka, Cordova, Kodiak, and Homer.
- Two 154-foot Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) home-ported in Ketchikan conduct routine law enforcement throughout Southeast and South Central Alaska.
- Five 110-foot patrol boats conduct routine law enforcement and are home-ported in Petersburg, Juneau, Valdez, Seward, and Homer.
- Four 87-foot Coastal Patrol Boats located in Washington State home-ports make occasional patrols in Southeast Alaska.

Aircraft:

- Fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft are based out of Air Stations in Kodiak and Sitka.
 - Five C-130 fixed wing aircraft
 - Nine MH-60 rotary wing aircraft
 - Four MH-65 rotary wing aircraft

Stations:

The three coastal small boat stations operating 29-foot and 45-foot boats are located in Ketchikan, Juneau, and Valdez.

D17 routinely deploys Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs) to specific locations for safety and law enforcement during periods of high commercial, charter, and recreational fishing activity.

The primary at-sea fisheries enforcement assets are our cutters, ranging in size from the 87-foot patrol boats up to 418-foot NSCs. Patrol boats are limited in sea keeping abilities, and conduct the majority of enforcement inside of 50 nautical miles from shore. This role is fulfilled by 154-foot FRCs and 110-foot patrol boats in Alaskan waters with occasional deployments from 87-foot cutters from Washington State, which provide regular law enforcement presence in the commercial, charter, subsistence, and recreational fishing fleets. By 2024, D17 anticipates the

addition of four more 154-foot FRCs and two 87-foot patrol boats permanently stationed throughout Alaska that will eventually replace the 110-foot patrol boat fleet and greatly enhance boarding capabilities both inshore and offshore.

Beyond 50 nautical miles, we rely on our larger cutters to enforce federal fisheries regulations, with USCGC ALEX HALEY and NSCs from throughout the west coast assigned to patrol Alaskan waters. Additionally, 225-foot Buoy Tenders effectively patrol both offshore and inshore waters.

Small boat stations primarily focus on recreational, subsistence, and charter halibut activity in their regions. This does not preclude them from boarding larger commercial vessels sighted in the course of their duties.

The USCG routinely conducts fisheries law enforcement flights from Air Stations in Kodiak and Sitka using a variety of fixed wing C-130 aircraft and rotary wing MH60 and MH65 helicopters.

All units involved in fisheries enforcement receive training from the Coast Guard's North Pacific Regional Fisheries Training Center in Kodiak prior to patrolling the region. NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) agents and state fisheries enforcement officers routinely participate in the training. The success of USCG fisheries enforcement operations is enhanced by collaboration with our enforcement partners from NOAA OLE and the state of Alaska, ensuring consistent presence on the fishing grounds and at landing sites.

II. Halibut Enforcement

In Calendar Year 2021, the USCG distributed its enforcement assets throughout the IPHC Areas, with boarding numbers listed in Table 10. The USCG's enforcement focus is to protect the resource in accordance with the Fishery Management Plan, to ensure equal economic opportunity for all participants, and to ensure safety of life at sea.

Table 10 2020 & 2021 Geographic Distribution of Boardings on Vessels Targeting Halibut

IPHC Area	2020 Boardings	2021 Boardings
2C	264	200
3A	134	251
3B	0	0
4A	16	10
4B	3	2
4C	0	0
4D	1	1
4E	0	0
Total	418	464

III. Commercial Halibut Enforcement

D17 law enforcement assets routinely patrolled the fishing grounds, often conducting joint boardings in collaboration with NOAA OLE throughout the season from the Bering Sea to Southeast Alaska. These operations included at-sea boardings, aircraft patrols, and dockside inspections. Joint agency efforts are a regular and important aspect of law enforcement coordination as they enable the broadest contact rate with the fishing fleets in order to ensure compliance with federal regulations while also providing the most accurate and complete picture of fishing activity on the fishing grounds and at catch landing sites.

The lack of a universal requirement for fishing vessels targeting halibut to be equipped with VMS onboard means there is not a centralized means to assess and monitor fishing activity in Areas 2C through 4E. Time intensive patrols by surface and aviation assets are the primary means to

identify where vessels are fishing for halibut. The need for patrols is amplified when market forces and/or fair weather conditions cause an increase in fishing activity.

During boardings of the commercial hook and line vessels, USCG enforcement efforts focus on (1) adherence to permit requirements for area and individual quota, (2) safe release of halibut bycatch by other commercial vessels, (3) consistent use of seabird avoidance gear, (4) indicators of high-grading catch, (5) retention of rockfish and Pacific Cod, (6) complete offload of catch, and (7) timely compliance with all recordkeeping requirements.

IV. Recreational and Charter Halibut Enforcement

Recreational activity most often occurs in Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B in the form of individual sport and charter fishing. The season lasts from 01 February to 31 December, but is most prevalent from May through September. USCG assets increase fisheries patrols during this time to focus on popular fishing grounds in Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, and the Gulf of Alaska. Recreational and charter vessels comprised 77% of the halibut boardings in D17.

During boardings, the USCG places emphasis on compliance with licensing and charter operation requirements, size limits, daily catch limits, trip limits, and at-sea processing of halibut.

V. Violations and Enforcement Summary

In 2021, USCG assets boarded a total of 464 vessels and detected 16 violations. The USCG documented violations and referred them to NOAA OLE or Alaska Wildlife Troopers (for violation detected on recreational vessels) for final action. Table 11 compares at-sea boardings and violations between 2020 and 2021.

Table 11 2020 & 2021 Boarding and Violation Summaries by Industry Sector

2020 Boardings/Violations	2021 Boardings/Violations
Total At-Sea Boardings418	Total At-Sea Boardings464
Commercial.....98	Commercial.....102
Charter.....73	Charter.....108
Recreational/Subsistence247	Recreational/Subsistence254
Fisheries Violations11	Fisheries Violations16
Commercial.....8	Commercial.....14
Charter.....3	Charter.....0
Recreational/Subsistence0	Recreational/Subsistence2
Fisheries Compliance Rates 97.4%	Fisheries Compliance Rates 96.6%
Commercial..... 91.8%	Commercial..... 86.3%
Charter..... 95.8%	Charter..... 100%
Recreational/Subsistence 100%	Recreational/Subsistence 99.3%

In Area 2C:

- Two commercial vessels were cited for failing to have permits onboard.
- One subsistence vessel was cited for not having a subsistence halibut license onboard.
- One commercial vessel was cited for not having sea bird avoidance gear onboard.

In Area 3A:

- One commercial vessel was cited for mutilated rec halibut catch onboard. The catch was seized and transferred to NOAA OLE.
- Two commercial vessels were cited for logbook discrepancies.

- One commercial Pacific Cod longliner was cited for illegally retaining halibut. The catch was seized and transferred to NOAA OLE.

In Area 4A:

- One commercial vessel was cited for improper seabird avoidance gear and longline buoy markings.
- One commercial vessel was cited for not having correct permits or hired master permits onboard.
- One commercial vessel was cited for improper longline buoy markings and noted for VMS not transmitting.

In Area 4D:

- One commercial vessel was cited for not retaining bycatch and logbook errors.

The USCG transferred detected violations to NOAA OLE for disposition, and outcomes included compliance assistance, summary settlements, or catch seizures.

In addition to the IPHC violations summarized in Table 11, USCG assets documented 32 safety violations including insufficient lifesaving equipment, improper navigation equipment, and missing documentation. The USCG continues to pursue increased at-sea boarding opportunities to promote compliance with both safety and fisheries regulations in all IPHC Areas and across all fishery sectors.

VI. Enforcement Plans for 2022

The USCG will continue joint pulse operations with NOAA and state partners to focus enforcement efforts across the commercial, charter, subsistence, and sport sectors of the halibut fishery.

The commercial and recreational halibut fisheries in Alaskan waters continue to draw high national and international interest. D17 will continue to actively patrol throughout the season and emphasize joint operations with our federal and state partners, NOAA OLE, and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers.

By sustaining efforts to monitor and patrol areas where halibut fisheries occur, the USCG will strive to continually promote a level playing field for all participants and enhance safety at sea. Our goal is a consistent and targeted enforcement presence applied fairly across all commercial, charter, subsistence, and recreational fleets.

With the continued replacement of the 110-foot cutters with Fast Response Cutters, there will be higher contact rates with the fishing fleets. The longer endurance and better sea keeping abilities will allow the 154-foot FRCs to stay on scene longer and more effectively monitor the fisheries. This will increase law enforcement presence and at-sea boardings in areas with historically low enforcement.

Point of Contact:
 LCDR Jedediah Raskie, USCG
 +1 907-463-2223
 Jedediah.A.Raskie@uscg.mil

Contacts

NOAA Fisheries Alaska Regional Office

Glenn Merrill
Assistant Regional Administrator for
Sustainable Fisheries
Glenn.merrill@noaa.gov
907-586-7228

Alicia M Miller
Sustainable Fisheries Divisions
Catch Shares Branch Chief
Alicia.m.miller@noaa.gov
907-586-7228

Kurt Iverson
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Recreational Fisheries Coordinator
Kurt.iverson@noaa.gov
907-586-7210

Doug Duncan
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Fishery Management Specialist
Doug.duncan@noaa.gov
907-586-7425

NOAA Fisheries West Coast Regional Office

Ryan Wulff
Assistant Regional Administrator
Sustainable Fisheries Division
ryan.wulff@noaa.gov
916-930-3733

Frank Lockhart
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Senior Policy Advisor
Frank.lockhart@noaa.gov
206-526-6142

Joshua Lindsay
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Branch Chief, CPS/Ecosystem/Halibut
Joshua.lindsay@noaa.gov
562-980-4034

Kathryn Blair
Contractor with Lynker Technologies in
support of Sustainable Fisheries Division
Kathryn.blair@noaa.gov
503-231-6858

United States Coast Guard

District 17
LCDR Jedediah Raskie, USCG
907-463-2223
Jedediah.A.Raskie@uscg.mil

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Sport Fish:
Sarah Webster
Fisheries Scientist
sarah.webster@alaska.gov
907-267-2212

NOAA Office for Law Enforcement

Alaska Enforcement Division
P.O. Box 21767
Juneau, AK 99802
907-586-7225

Subsistence Section:
Caroline Brown
Statewide Research Director
caroline.brown@alaska.gov
907-459-7317

West Coast Enforcement Division
7600 Sand Point Way Northeast
Seattle, WA 98115
206-526-6133

Lauren Sill
Subsistence Resource Specialist III
lauren.sill@alaska.gov
907-465-3617

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS:

Call 1-800-853-1964