



# Canada's Recreational Halibut Fishery

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IPHC Special Session 12 (SS012)

25 February 2022



# Presentation Overview

1. General overview of the Canadian recreational halibut fishery
2. Catch monitoring program(s) :
  - Creel Surveys
  - Logbooks
  - Internet Recreational Effort and Catch (iREC) Survey
3. Canadian regulatory framework
4. Management process overview – how it all comes together
5. Catch overage provision
6. IPHC Amendment Proposal B4 – what we're asking for
7. Summary



# Executive Summary

- Canada is seeking to amend section 28 of the *IPHC Fishery Regulations* to allow up to a maximum daily limit of three (3) fish per day in our recreational fishery
- The default IPHC daily bag limit of two (2) fish per day constrains Canada's flexibility to make critical in-season changes to the fishing plan to support meeting TAC goals and Canadian domestic fishery objectives
- There are several features of how the fishery is managed that give us confidence that this sort of flexibility is viable
- The Canadian recreational fishery has:
  - A defined allocation
  - Defined daily limits, possession limits, annual limits, size limits
  - Comprehensive and timely in-season catch monitoring through a variety of programs
    - Independent validation of catch estimates
  - In-season, proactive and responsive management flexibility
    - Can vary daily limits in-season to manage catch
  - Ability to generate a comprehensive catch estimate on a monthly basis
  - A catch overage provision



# Overview of BC Recreational Halibut Fishery

- Access to recreational Halibut is provided through BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences (TWSFLs)
- Annually approx. 275,000 BC TWSFLs are issued
- Fishery occurs throughout BC tidal waters
  - minimal catch and effort in the Strait of Georgia
- Fishery managed as one coast-wide fishery, roughly divided into four sub-regions:
  - Haida Gwaii, North Coast, Central Coast and South Coast
- Do not differentiate between guided and unguided components
- Domestic 2B allocation sharing arrangement
  - Of annual Canadian FCEY, 85% commercial and 15% recreational



# Overview of BC Recreational Halibut Fishery

- Federal regulations that manage fishery
  - Define daily and possession limits
  - Define typical season opening/closing
  - Closed areas
  - Can be legally varied by DFO in-season through a Variation Order
- Other Management conditions set annually via Conditions of Licence
  - Define size and annual limits
  - Catch recording and reporting requirements
  - Once printed on licence, cannot be varied in-season
- Primary fishery objective is a full calendar season (February through December)



# Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB)

- Primary advisory body to DFO on recreational issues since 1964
  - responsible for providing formal advice and recommendations to DFO on recreational fisheries issues
- Membership represents recreational fishing interests from across BC and is comprised of both guided and non-guided representation
- The SFAB Halibut Committee provides formal recreational halibut advice on various management options typically including:
  - Minimum and Maximum size limits
  - Individual annual limits
  - Daily and total possession limits
  - Season length
  - Time and area closures



# Catch Monitoring Overview

- Catch monitoring of the recreational fishery in BC occurs over large geographic areas (numerous remote areas) and encounters both guided and non-guided anglers.
- DFO invests significantly in staff and resources dedicated towards recreational catch monitoring and reporting.
- DFO obtains **monthly** recreational catch and effort data from the following sources:
  - Creel surveys
  - Logbooks
  - Internet surveys
- DFO compiles recreational catch and effort data into comprehensive area-based catch estimates on a **monthly** basis
- DFO is continually working with the SFAB on plans to strengthen recreational fishery monitoring and catch reporting in the Pacific Region.
  - The SFAB has a Catch Monitoring Work Group that meets regularly with DFO catch monitoring experts and Fishery Managers throughout the year.



# Creel Surveys

- Creel surveys continue to be the main tool to estimate catch of halibut in BC
- Surveys are conducted in the following areas:
  - South Coast (run by DFO)
  - North Coast (run by North Coast Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society)
  - Haida Gwaii (run by Haida Fisheries Program through LGM)
  - New First Nations led Creel Surveys are being developed
- Surveys are conducted in select fishery strata based on:
  - the highest catch of halibut and chinook
  - the highest effort
  - in-season management requirements
  - potential impact on stocks of concern (primarily Salmon)





# Creel Surveys

- Creel surveys consist of effort surveys and an estimation of catch per boat trip
  - Catch data is primarily collected by fishery observers at selected ramps and marinas. It may also include some lodge logbook data
  - Effort data is primarily derived from aerial effort counts, but also includes effort data from angler interviews, boat trailer census, and/or lodge logbooks
  - Average catch per day is multiplied by effort
  - Catch estimates are generated monthly
- Over 13,000 halibut were biologically (length & weight) sampled by creel observers in 2021



# Logbooks

- Logbook programs collect catch, effort and biological data from fishing guides, lodges, and volunteers from throughout BC
- Logbook data helps fill in data gaps in the Creel Survey and connect biological sampling with catch data
- Logbooks are also used to reduce bias in creel survey estimates by providing a census of guided/lodge catch in certain areas
- Logbook estimates are typically provided monthly
- DFO is exploring opportunities to improve how logbook data is collected and is exploring means to electronically exchange data
  - E.g. partnering with external groups, like the Sport Fishing Institute of BC to explore opportunities to use new electronic tools, like the Fishing BC smart phone application, to exchange electronic data.



# Internet Survey - iREC

- To address gaps in creel survey coverage, the Department has been using and enhancing the Internet Recreational Effort and Catch (iREC) survey since 2012. The iREC survey methodology was successfully [peer reviewed](#) by the Canadian Scientific Advisory Secretariat (CSAS) in 2015
- The iREC survey compiles recreational catch and effort data into comprehensive area-based catch estimates on a **monthly** basis
- A rigorous data quality assurance/control process exists for identified species of importance (e.g. Halibut)
- DFO uses data from traditional catch monitoring (eg. Creel and lodge logbooks) where available, in priority of iREC survey data.
- In 2021, approximately 86% of the catch estimate was derived from traditional catch monitoring sources, and only 14% from iREC survey estimates



# Canadian Regulatory Framework

- Tidal waters fisheries are governed and managed by the Federal Government (DFO)
- The Canadian *Fisheries Act* provides a framework for:
  - the proper management and control of fisheries; and
  - the conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat
- Other fisheries regulations relevant to the BC recreational fishery:
  - *Fishery (General) Regulations*
  - *BC Sports Fishing Regulations, 1996*



# Canadian Regulatory Framework

- *The various Acts and regulations govern multiple aspects of fisheries throughout Canada, including setting specific rules for recreational fisheries (e.g. daily limits, open times)*
- DFO can only vary management conditions that are fixed in regulation (via Variation Orders), and the rest are annually managed/set via conditions of licence (CoLs)

## For Pacific Halibut:

- What DFO **can** vary in-season, via Variation Order:
  - Daily limits, open/close times
- What DFO **cannot** vary in-season, and are annually set in CoLs:
  - Size limits, possession limits, gear restrictions



# Licencing & Conditions of Licence

- Recreational fishing access is managed via a BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences (TWSFL)
- There are separate licence categories for resident and non-resident fish harvesters with distinct COLs
- Annual licences are valid from April 1<sup>st</sup> until March 31<sup>st</sup>
- DFO reviews and updates TWSFL COLs on an annual cycle
  - COLs cannot be amended/varied in-season



# Conditions of Licence (Cont.)

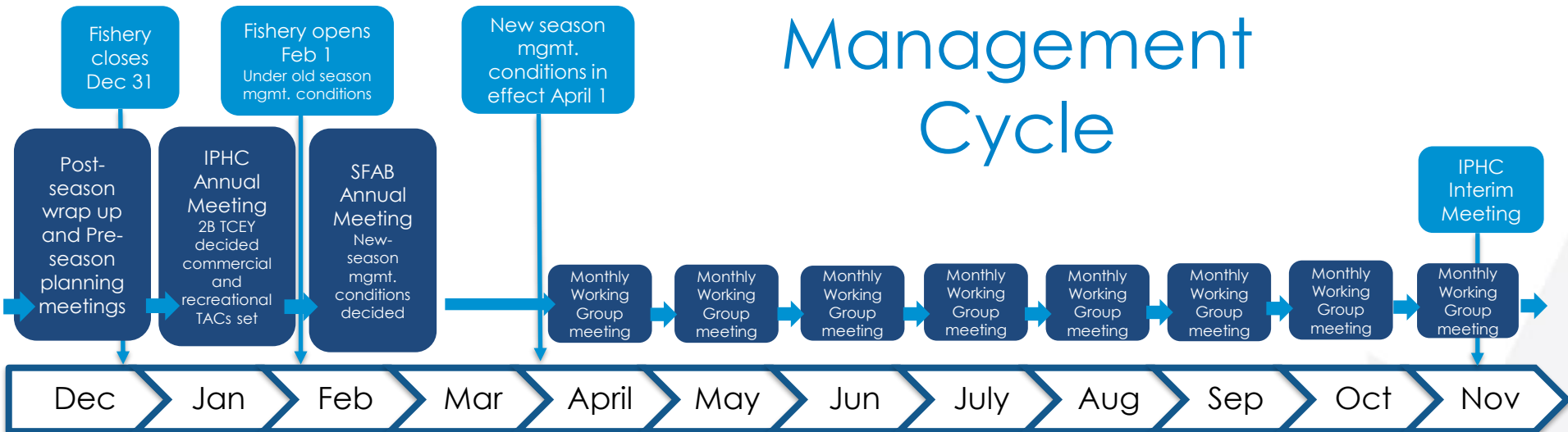
Reminder: DFO sets and varies the daily limit in-season

## The current 2021/22 Conditions of Licence (simplified):

- If the daily limit is 1:
  - Can catch daily 1 big (max of 133cm) **OR** 1 small (max of 90cm)
- If the daily limit is 2:
  - Can catch daily 1 big (max of 133cm) **OR** 2 small (max of 90cm)
- If the daily limit is 3:
  - can catch daily 1 big (max of 133cm) **OR** 3 small (max of 90cm)
- Possession limits of either 1 big fish OR 2-3 small fish (varies with daily limit)
- An annual limit of ten (10) fish
- All halibut retained must be recorded on the TWSFL along with the date, area and length from which each halibut is caught
- Mandatory to report catch when surveyed
- The SFAB has recommended a similar approach for the 2022-23 COLs



# Annual Management Cycle



**Pre-season Planning**  
Evaluate potential management options for upcoming season

**In-season Management**  
Monthly meetings to evaluate in-season catch estimates and decide on appropriate management actions to take (e.g. status quo, vary daily limit, close season early)

**Post-season Evaluation**  
Review performance of last season and produce final catch estimate

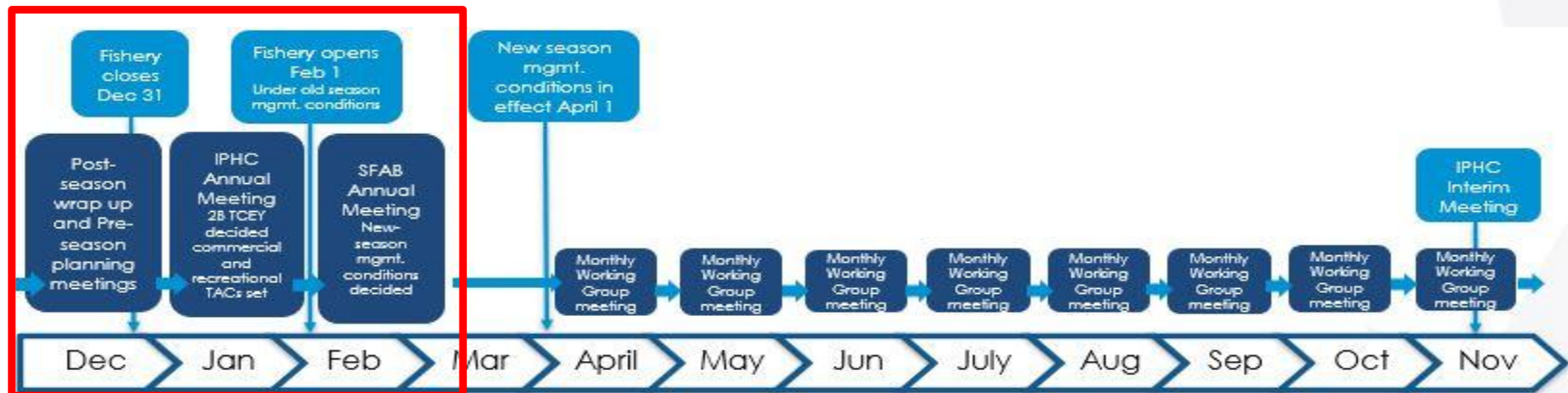




# Management Process

## Pre-season Planning:

- DFO models forecasted catch against the anticipated TAC under a range of potential management conditions
  - E.g.1: forecasted catch if limit was 1 fish daily, with a max size of 133cm
  - E.g. 2: forecasted catch if limit was 2 fish daily, with 1<sup>st</sup> fish a max of 133cm and 2<sup>nd</sup> fish a max of 90m
- IPHC Annual Meeting determines Canadian (2B) TCEY
  - Recreational TAC determined (15% of CDN FCEY)
- DFO meets with SFAB to evaluate forecasted options and decide on adopted conditions for the upcoming season





# Management Process

## In-season Management:

- DFO compiles monthly in-season catch data to produce monthly catch estimate
- Catch (pieces and pounds) are tracked against the recreational TAC
- DFO meets with SFAB Halibut WG monthly to review catch data and estimate
- DFO and SFAB decide on appropriate management actions
- Dependent on management priorities, catch estimate and annual forecast:
  - DFO can maintain status quo conditions
  - DFO can vary in-season daily limit in an effort restrict or expand proceeding months' catch, OR,
  - DFO can close fishery if catch is projected to exceed recreational TAC
- DFO notifies fishers of openings and restrictions through the online BC Sport Fishing Guide, Fishery Notices, and Public Notices





# Management Process

## Post-season Review:

- Evaluate the preceding season's management performance – lessons learned
- IPHC Annual Meeting process
- Generate and report final catch estimate





# Example: 2021 Recreational Halibut Catch Estimate

2021 Catch Monitoring Program ('creel') Data	2021i-Rec Data	Summary of the 2021 In-season Recreational Halibut Catch												Estimated Total Weight by PFMA	% of Total Weight by PFMA
		Net Weight of Retained Halibut by PFMA and Month (net lbs)													
PFMA	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec				
1	-	-	769	68	6,225	45,096	42,036	15,111	-	-	-	109,305	13.6%		
2	-	-	452	387	3,868	9,408	8,388	793	34	-	-	23,331	2.9%		
3	-	734	287	4,573	18,688	40,649	21,250	979	-	-	-	87,160	10.9%		
4	-	768	1,207	17,642	26,186	47,055	31,251	5,220	766	-	52	130,146	16.2%		
5/6	-	154	181	2,457	5,984	11,634	7,584	1,374	163	33	-	29,564	3.7%		
7	-	-	-	167	573	205	2,418	125	-	-	-	3,488	0.4%		
8	-	252	81	386	389	1,248	2,779	1,105	-	-	-	6,239	0.8%		
9	-	-	-	-	1,155	8,528	4,397	1,579	-	41	-	15,700	2.0%		
10/11	-	-	218	1,594	11,116	8,368	6,619	417	-	-	-	28,333	3.5%		
12	-	-	1,089	688	2,229	7,761	3,320	2,673	-	-	-	17,760	2.2%		
13/14	47	48	42	93	131	966	586	-	-	-	-	1,912	0.2%		
15-18/28/29	-	-	-	1,864	1,393	4,236	1,916	1,042	-	-	-	10,451	1.3%		
19	53	4,096	3,682	13,442	5,223	5,612	123	1,046	167	109	-	33,552	4.2%		
20	854	2,230	1,869	2,623	1,945	690	1,243	862	80	1,219	-	13,615	1.7%		
21/121	-	43	312	2,835	27,730	24,975	6,852	715	55	-	-	63,516	7.9%		
23/123	-	121	610	2,121	10,975	28,186	33,321	4,555	-	-	-	79,890	10.0%		
24/124	-	259	272	704	18,349	14,563	11,552	3,890	51	-	-	49,641	6.2%		
25/125	-	73	456	2,842	3,822	3,777	5,555	2,981	-	1,231	-	20,738	2.6%		
26/126	-	-	-	646	9,811	12,720	22,831	2,478	-	-	-	48,486	6.0%		
27/127	-	-	490	1,643	2,965	11,571	10,326	2,444	-	-	-	29,439	3.7%		
2021 Totals	Monthly	954	8,778	12,017	56,775	158,756	287,249	224,348	49,388	1,317	2,633	52	802,266		
	Cum.	954	9,732	21,749	78,524	237,280	524,529	748,877	798,265	799,581	802,214	802,266			





# Catch Overage Provision

- If despite in-season management actions (e.g. lower the daily limit), annual recreational catch is projected to exceed the annual recreational TAC, the fishery will be shut early via Variation Order
- Should annual recreational catch still exceed the annual recreational TAC, catch exceeding the TAC will be deducted from the following year's TAC pre-season
- Only recreational fishery in IPHC mandate to have this policy in place



# IPHC Regulations – Amendment Prop B4

## 28. Recreational (Sport) Fishing for Pacific Halibut—IPHC Regulatory Area 2B

(1) In all waters off British Columbia: <sup>6,7</sup>

(a) the recreational (sport) fishing season will open on 1 February unless more restrictive regulations are in place;

(b) the recreational (sport) fishing season will close when the recreational (sport) fishery limit allocated by DFO is taken, or 31 December, whichever is earlier; and

~~(c) the daily bag limit is two (2) Pacific halibut of any size per day, per person, except that between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 only, DFO may implement a daily bag limit of three (3) Pacific halibut per day, per person.~~

**(c) the daily bag limit is three (3) Pacific Halibut of any size per day, per person**

(2) In British Columbia, no person shall fillet, mutilate, or otherwise disfigure a Pacific halibut in any manner that prevents the determination of minimum size or the number of fish caught, possessed, or landed.

(3) The possession limit for Pacific halibut in the waters off the coast of British Columbia is three Pacific halibut

<sup>6</sup> DFO could implement more restrictive regulations for the recreational (sport) fishery, therefore anglers are advised to check the current Federal or Provincial regulations prior to fishing.

<sup>7</sup> For regulations on the experimental recreational fishery implemented by DFO check the current Federal or Provincial regulations.



# Example: Management Process

## Proposed 3/day daily limit –intended application

- A **late-season management tool that provides additional flexibility** for Canada to harvest its allocated TAC



### Typical application:

- Season opens on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> with either 1/day or 2/day daily limit and conservatively defined size limits
- By late-summer, catch to-date combined with year-end forecast indicates a high probability that the fishery is unlikely to meet its TAC under current management conditions
- In collaboration with SFAB, DFO issues variation order to allow 3/day to maximize domestic recreational opportunities under current TAC
- DFO continues to track catch against annual recreational TAC



# Why does Canada support the requested amendment flexibility to allow a daily limit of up to a maximum of a 3/day?

- Another tool in our management toolbox
- The Canadian recreational fishery has:
  - A defined allocation
  - Defined daily limits, possession limits, annual limits, size limits
  - Comprehensive and timely in-season catch monitoring through a variety of programs
    - Independent validation of catch estimates
  - In-season, proactive and responsive management flexibility
    - Can vary daily limits in-season to manage catch
  - Ability to generate a comprehensive catch estimate on a monthly basis
  - A catch overage provision