

HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED

It only took 20 years but an effective halibut catch sharing plan (CSP) is now in place. The halibut CSP establishes percentage based allocations for charter and commercial fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A, ensuring allocations for both sectors will fluctuate directly in response to changes in halibut abundance. The CSP also establishes a mechanism for limited transfer of halibut IFQ from commercial to individual charter operators, which will allow charter clients to catch an extra halibut when bag limits are set at one fish. The CSP allows charter operators to identify management measures that restrain their sector's harvest to annual allocations, and tasks the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) with reviewing and recommending those management measures to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The IPHC annually reviews and adopts charter management measures, which creates a responsive system designed to prevent charter overages while minimizing disruption to charter businesses.

In this first year of the CSP, the process worked without a hitch. The IPHC identified preliminary allocations, the charter stakeholders developed preferred management measures, the Council reviewed and recommended the measures, and the IPHC adopted charter/Council recommendations. Good process, good management. Finally!

The limited transfer provision of the CSP allows charter operators to lease 1500 pounds or 10%, whichever is greater, of a 2C commercial fishermen's annual IFQ; and 1500 pounds or 15%, whichever is greater, of a 3A commercial fishermen's IFQ. A 10% agreement negotiated in the beginning of the season would allow a charter operation access to IFQ at a prearranged price and roll unused IFQ back to the commercial QS holder in the fall. This would allow charter operators to meet client need without paying for any extra quota while allowing the commercial QS holder to harvest the IFQ remainder prior to the season closure or in the following year - a win: win.

Linda Behnken, February 2014