



**National Report: United States of America:
preliminary**

PREPARED BY: NOAA FISHERIES (24 DECEMBER 2024)

PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the fisheries and removals of Pacific halibut during 2024 from the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of the United States of America.

Contracting party: United States of America

Reporting agency: NOAA Fisheries; Alaska and West Coast Regions

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IPHC-2025-AM101-NR02 which provides the Commission with an overview from the United States of the Pacific halibut fisheries in 2024 in the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of the United States of America.

U.S. WEST COAST (OREGON, WASHINGTON, AND CALIFORNIA) – IPHC REGULATORY AREA 2A

Summary

The 2024 Area 2A Pacific halibut (halibut) Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield (FCEY) of 1,470,000 pounds (lb) was divided among sectors according to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A (Table 1). The preliminary Area 2A harvest estimate is 1,302,308 lb (as of December 9, 2024). The preliminary non-Tribal harvest estimate is 816,754 lb and the Tribal harvest was 485,554 lb (not including the Tribal customary and subsistence (C&S) fishery).

All weights in this report are net weight (gutted, head-off, and without ice and slime), unless otherwise noted.

Table 1. Area 2A allocations and harvest by sector (pounds), 2024.

		Allocation	Harvest	Percent Harvested
Tribal 35%	C&S ¹	20,220	NA	0.0%
	Commercial	494,280	485,554	98.2%
	Total	514,500	485,554	94.4%
Non-Tribal 65%	Directed	249,338	237,164	95.1%
	Incidental to salmon troll	44,001	30,363	69.0%
	Commercial Total	293,339	267,527	91.2%
	Incidental to sablefish ²	50,000	34,624	69.2%
	Total (including incid. to sablefish)	343,339	302,151	88.0%
	Washington ^{2,3}	290,158	292,482	100.8%
	Oregon ³	283,784	201,695	71.1%
	California	38,220	20,427	53.4%
	Recreational Total	612,162	514,603	84.1%
	Total	955,500	816,754	85.5%
Total	1,470,000	1,302,308	88.6%	

¹ The 2024 C&S projected harvest, based on the 2023 C&S harvest, was adjusted after allocations were adopted by the IPHC. The adjusted C&S projection was 21,305 lb, leaving 493,196 lb for the Tribal commercial fishery. The 2024 C&S harvest estimate will be available in January 2025.

² The allocation for the commercial fishery incidental to sablefish is derived from the Washington recreational fishery allocation. In this table, the incidental fishery is not included with the Washington recreational fishery.

³ On September 20, 2024, 12,000 lb were reallocated from Oregon to Washington. Initial allocations are shown.

Enforcement Overview



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. 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. The 2024 Pacific Halibut Area 2A Enforcement Report summarizes the collective effort, actions, and results of the IPHC Area 2A cooperating federal and state entities. Tribal enforcement activities and compliance data are not provided in this report.

Tables 3 through 5 (pages 7, 8, and 10) present a consolidated summary of IPHC Area 2A Commercial-Directed, Commercial- Incidental and Recreational enforcement statistics for 2024 using available 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 fisheries enforcement that broadly include the two other fishing sectors that catch Pacific halibut: Commercial-Incidental (incidental to the salmon troll fishery and the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis), and Recreational. Effort data provides a measure of fisheries-related enforcement presence and capacity. The Actions and Results sections presents an overview of regulatory compliance and enforcement issues of concern associated with the fishing sectors.

AREA 2A TRIBAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Regulatory framework

The Tribal allocation was set at 35% of the Area 2A FCEY. There were two components of the Tribal fishery:

- 1) a commercial fishery, which was managed as an unrestricted fishery, a restricted fishery, and a late season fishery; and
- 2) a ceremonial and subsistence (C&S) fishery

The Tribal commercial fishery allocation was set by subtracting the projected C&S fishery projection, which was based on the prior year C&S harvest, from the total Tribal allocation.

Fishery statistics

The Tribal allocation was 514,500 lb. The preseason projected C&S harvest was 20,220¹ lb and the remaining 494,280 lb were available to the commercial fishery.

- The unrestricted fishery was open 55 hours for all Tribes between March 15 and June 19. Inside Tribes could choose to convert some or all of their hours to restricted fishing (24 hours unrestricted and 52.7 hours restricted fishing with a 500-pound daily limit, or 93.5 hours restricted fishing with a 500-pound daily limit). The unrestricted fishery landed 222,216 lb.
- The restricted fishery was open between March 15 and June 19 for 122 hours (not to exceed 6 days), with a 500-pound daily limit. The restricted fishery landed 96,414 lb.
- The first late fishery was open between June 24 and July 31, and Tribes could choose to fish 24 hours unrestricted or 41 hours (not to exceed 2 days) with a 500-pound daily limit. The first late fishery landed 105,794 lb.
- The second late fishery was open between August 9 and September 30 and 61,130 lb were landed. Tribes could choose between three options:
 - One 24-hour opener with a 2,000-pound limit
 - Three 24-hour openers with a 1,000-pound daily limit
 - Six 24-hour openers with a 500-pound daily limit
- The total landings for all Tribal commercial fisheries was 485,554 lb, or 98 percent of the Tribal commercial allocation.
- The C&S fishery closed on December 31, harvest estimates are compiled at the end of the year and will be available in January 2025.

¹ The C&S projected harvest, based on the 2023 C&S harvest, was adjusted after allocations were adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. The adjusted C&S projection is 21,305 lb, leaving 493,196 lb for the Tribal commercial fishery.

AREA 2A NON-TRIBAL COMMERCIAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Regulatory framework

There were three components of the non-Tribal commercial fishery:

- 1) a directed longline fishery targeting halibut south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53.30' N. lat.); and
- 2) an incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California; and
- 3) an incidental catch fishery during the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis.

The allocations for the directed commercial fishery and the incidental catch fishery during salmon troll fisheries were set at 85 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of the non-Tribal commercial fishery allocation (30.7% of the non-Tribal allocation). The allocation for the incidental catch fishery during the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA came from the portion of the Washington recreational allocation over 214,110 lb, with a 10,000-pound minimum and 70,000-pound maximum allocation.

Vessels permitted in the directed commercial fishery were prohibited from landing halibut as incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery and from participating as a charter vessel in the recreational fishery.

Closed Areas

Vessels in the directed fishery were prohibited from fishing within closed areas as defined in [50 CFR 300.63\(f\)](#), including the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs). RCAs are depth-based areas closed to fishing with certain gear types. The RCA boundaries are lines that connect a series of latitude and longitude coordinates and are intended to approximate particular depth contours. Coordinates that define the RCA boundary lines are listed at [50 CFR 660.71\(e\)](#), [50 CFR 660.73\(a\)](#), and [50 CFR 660.72\(j\)](#). All vessels were required to comply with halibut RCA regulations regardless of groundfish retention. Vessels that retained groundfish in state waters of California were also subject to [California RCA regulations](#).

Vessels that incidentally caught halibut while fishing in the salmon troll fishery were prohibited from fishing within a closed area known as the Salmon Troll Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA), defined in the groundfish regulations at [50 CFR 660.70](#) and in the salmon regulations at [50 CFR 660.405\(c\)](#). Vessels that incidentally caught halibut while fishing in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington were required to comply with groundfish closed area regulations.

See [Pacific halibut regulations](#) and the [NOAA Fisheries West Coast Groundfish Closed Areas](#) page for more information on closed areas, including Essential Fish Habitat Conservation areas and Yelloweye RCAs.

Changes for 2024

The Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended that the third fishing period occur no sooner than three weeks after the second fishing period in order to provide sufficient advance notice.

Fishery statistics

Directed Fishery Targeting Halibut (South of Pt. Chehalis)

- The allocation was 249,338 lb.
- The estimated harvest was 237,164 lb.
- The fishery was open for five, 58-hour fishing periods: June 25-27, July 9-11, August 6-8, August 27-29, and September 24-26.
- Catch limits by fishing period, based on vessel length / size class are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. 2024 fishing period limits (dressed weight, head-on with ice and slime, in pounds per vessel) by vessel size class.

Vessel Length	Size Class	Jun 25–27	Jul 9–11	Aug 6–8	Aug 27-29	Sept 24-26
0–25	A	1,800	1,800	1,000	1,400	1,800
26–30	B	1,800	1,800	1,000	1,400	1,800
31–35	C	1,800	1,800	1,000	1,400	1,800
36–40	D	3,000	3,000	1,000	1,400	1,800
41–45	E	3,000	3,000	1,000	1,400	1,800
46–50	F	3,800	3,800	1,000	1,400	1,800
51–55	G	3,800	3,800	1,000	1,400	1,800
56+	H	4,500	4,500	1,000	1,400	1,800

Incidental Catch during the Salmon Troll Fishery

- The allocation was 44,001 lb.
- The estimated harvest was 30,363 lb.
- Halibut retention during salmon troll fisheries was allowed beginning in April until the end of the salmon season on September 30.
- The landing limit was one halibut per two Chinook salmon, except that one halibut could be possessed or landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut could be possessed or landed per trip.

Incidental Catch during the Primary Sablefish Fishery (North of Pt. Chehalis)

- The allocation was set at 50,000 lb.
- The estimated harvest was 34,624 lb.
- Halibut retention was allowed during the primary sablefish fishery, from the primary sablefish season opening date of April 1 until the commercial halibut season closure on December 7.
- The landing limit was 130 lb of halibut (in dressed weight, meaning eviscerated, head on) for every 1,000 lb of sablefish (dressed weight), plus up to 2 additional halibut. At the September 2024 Council meeting, the Council increased the landing limit to 150 lb of halibut for every 1,000 lb of sablefish, plus up to 2 additional halibut.

Area 2A Commercial Fisheries Compliance with Regulations and Enforcement

Table 3. 2024 IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics – Directed Commercial Fisheries.













2024 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS							
<i>COMMERCIAL - DIRECTED</i>							
	USCG D-13 	USCG D-11 	NOAA OLE 	WDFW 	OSP - ODFW 	CDFW 	
EFFORT							CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS							
Number of Air Patrols	20	8	2	2			32
Air Patrol Hours	45	32	5	5			87
Air Patrol Personnel Hours			5	5			10
VESSEL PATROLS							
Number of Vessel Patrols	28	7	4	5	25	15	84
Vessel Patrol Hours	487	67	17	31	92	43	737
At-Sea Personnel Hours			33	61	92	91	277
Number of Boardings	8	1	7	12	68	45	141
SHORESIDE PATROLS							
Number of Shoreside Patrols			24	1	30	3	58
Shoreside Personnel Hours			174	1	88	10	273
Number of Contacts			24		66	6	96
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS							
Number of Assigned Personnel	56	38	9	12	8	9	132
ACTIONS							CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance			2				2
Written Warnings			1		4		5
Referral to OLE				1		*2	3
Criminal Citations					2		2
RESULTS (Violations)							CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Logbook/Record Keeping					6	2	8
Restricted/Closed Area				1		2	3
Vessel Marking			1				1
Boarding Ladder			1				1
**Seabird Avoidance Gear			1				1
*2 violations for each OLE referral.							
**Groundfish violation that was documented during a combined Directed Halibut/Open Access groundfish trip.							

Table 4. 2024 IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics – Commercial-Incidental.

2024 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS							
COMMERCIAL - INCIDENTAL							
	USCG D-13	USCG D-11	NOAA OLE	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
							
EFFORT							CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS							
Number of Air Patrols	164	125					289
Air Patrol Hours	361	214					575
Air Patrol Personnel Hours							
VESSEL PATROLS							
Number of Vessel Patrols	275	52				15	342
Vessel Patrol Hours	4371	972				43	5,386
At-Sea Personnel Hours						91	91
Number of Boardings	24	18				45	87
SHORESIDE PATROLS							
Number of Shoreside Patrols						3	3
Shoreside Personnel Hours						10	10
Number of Contacts						6	6
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS							
Number of Assigned Personnel	56	38				9	103
ACTIONS							CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
							None
RESULTS (Violations)							CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
							None

AREA 2A RECREATIONAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Recreational Fishery Regulatory Framework

The recreational fishery allocation was divided among the three states: Washington, Oregon, and California.

- 1) The Washington allocation was 35.6 percent of the non-Tribal allocation, minus the allocation made available for incidental harvest in the primary sablefish fishery;
- 2) The Oregon allocation was 29.7 percent of the non-Tribal allocation;
- 3) The California allocation was set at 4 percent of the non-Tribal allocation.

State allocations were further divided into subareas and season dates were established pre-season for each subarea, with additional dates added in-season for some subareas. Oregon and Washington allocations both contributed to the Columbia River subarea allocation.

Closed Areas

The "C-shaped" North Coast Recreational YRCA, southwest of Cape Flattery, was closed to recreational halibut fishing.

Changes for 2024

The California recreational fishery was split into two subareas, divided at Point Arena (38°57.5' N lat.).

Recreational Fishery Statistics

Washington

- The allocation was 290,158 lb (not including the allocation for the commercial fishery incidental to the primary sablefish fishery).
- The estimated harvest was 292,482 lb.
- Discard mortality was estimated to be 2,858 lb.
- The bag limit was one halibut per person per day.
- Season dates varied by subarea. The earliest open date was April 4 and the last open date was September 30.
- The Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea allocation and harvest estimates are included above.
- This fishery is closed; however, catch estimates are not yet finalized.

Oregon







- The allocation was 283,784 lb.
- The estimated harvest was 201,695 lb.
- Discard mortality was estimated to be 1,617 lb.
- The bag limit was two halibut in the Central Coast and Southern Oregon subareas and one halibut in the Columbia River subarea.
- Season dates varied by subarea. The earliest open date was May 1 and the last open date was October 31.
- The Oregon portion of the Columbia River subarea allocation and harvest estimates are included above.
- This fishery is closed and catch estimates are final.

California

- The allocation was 38,220 lb.
- The estimated harvest to-date was 20,427 lb.
- Discard mortality was estimated to be 53 lb.
- The bag limit was 1 halibut per person per day.
- Season dates varied by subarea. The earliest open date was May 1 and the last open date was December 31.
- Catch estimates are preliminary as the fishery was ongoing when this report was finalized.

Recreational Fisheries Compliance with Regulations and Enforcement

Table 5. 2024 IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics – Recreational.

2024 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS							
<i>RECREATIONAL</i>							
	USCG D-13 	USCG D-11 	NOAA OLE 	WDFW 	OSP - ODFW 	CDFW 	
EFFORT							CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS							
Number of Air Patrols	125	86					211
Air Patrol Hours	296	159					455
Air Patrol Personnel Hours							
VESSEL PATROLS							
Number of Vessel Patrols	201	47	7	23	19	15	312
Vessel Patrol Hours	3116	895	73	124	81	43	4,332
At-Sea Personnel Hours			83	284	81	91	539
Number of Boardings	136	4	15	181	107	45	488
SHORESIDE PATROLS							
Number of Shoreside Patrols			6	56	13	64	139
Shoreside Personnel Hours			12	235	28	139	414
Number of Contacts				990	35	206	1,231
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS							
Number of Assigned Personnel	56	38	3	7		9	113
ACTIONS							CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Written Warnings			8		9		17
Citations				65	29	2	96
Verbal Warnings				15		5	20
RESULTS (Violations)							CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Permit/License			8	9	10	6	33
Gear Violation				17	1	1	19
Fail to Validate Tag					19		19
Illegal Harvest					1		1
Restricted/Closed Area				4	6		10
State Violations - Halibut Fishery				46			46

AREA 2A NON-DIRECTED COMMERCIAL DISCARD MORTALITY OVERVIEW

Pacific Halibut Bycatch in U.S. West Coast Groundfish Fisheries, 2002 – 2023, was reported to the Pacific Fishery Management Council in November 2024 and can be accessed online at: <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2024/10/i-1-b-nwfsc-report-1-pacific-halibut-bycatch-in-u-s-west-coast-groundfish-fisheries-2002-2023.pdf>.

ALASKA – IPHC REGULATORY AREAS 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4CDE

ALASKA DIRECTED HALIBUT FISHERIES OVERVIEW

The Pacific Halibut and Sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program is the largest catch share program in the U.S., and was implemented for the 1995 fishing season. Participation in the IFQ Program is limited to persons (natural persons or non-individual entities) that hold Quota Share (QS), although there are several very limited provisions for “leasing” of annual IFQ. Quota Share is issued as a transferable permit that was initially issued to persons who owned or leased vessels that made legal commercial fixed-gear landings of Pacific halibut or sablefish in the waters off Alaska during 1988-1990.

Annually, NOAA Fisheries issues eligible QS holders an IFQ fishing permit that authorizes participation in the IFQ fisheries. Persons with IFQ permits may harvest their annual allocation at any time during the eight plus-month IFQ halibut and sablefish seasons. QS are assigned to a specific species (either halibut or sablefish), management area, and vessel class. For halibut, IFQ management areas correspond to the IPHC regulatory areas. Vessel classes assigned to QS are based upon the overall length of the vessel that the qualifying person used for harvesting during the qualifying years. A catch sharing plan allocates the fishery limits among Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E

Table 6 provides a summary of the 2024 halibut IFQ catch in the respective management areas and vessel classes. Note the table breaks out the portions of the commercial harvest allocated to the IFQ program and to the Western Alaska Community Development (CDQ) Program.

The CDQ Program was established in 1992 for the purpose of developing the economy in western Alaska. Some 65 coastal communities in western Alaska are organized into six CDQ groups and are allocated shares of allowable harvests in the major Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish and crab fisheries. Among other things, the program provides the opportunity for the CDQ communities to participate and invest in the BSAI fisheries and to support economic and social benefits to the region. CDQ groups are allocated the following percentages of the halibut fishery limits: 20% in Area 4B, 50% of the Area 4C, 30% in Area 4D, and 100% in Area 4E.

Section 303A(c)(1)(G) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires period reviews of all limited access programs in the U.S., specifically to evaluate the programs’ performance in meeting its goals and objectives. In November 2024, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council issued a program report for Sablefish and Halibut IFQ fisheries. The report provides abundant information on the program, including time-series data on a wide range of topics. The report is available on the Council’s web site; see: [2024 IFQ Program Review Report](#)

Table 6. 2024 Alaska Halibut IFQ and CDQ Catch and Allocations by Area

IFQ Area	Vessel Class	Vessel Count	Landing Count	Total Catch in Net (H&G) Weight (lb)	IFQ Allocation
2C	A C/P	19	30	72,275	
2C	B > 60'	27	57	133,794	
2C	C 35 – 60'	261	816	2,529,664	
2C	D <= 35'	86	311	331,334	
	Total	331	1,137	3,067,067	3,500,000
3A	A C/P	27	47	187,739	
3A	B > 60'	183	532	2,605,742	
3A	C 35 – 60'	275	1,017	3,654,665	
3A	D <= 35'	63	250	420,960	
	Total	349	1,567	6,869,106	7,560,000
3B	A C/P	14	19	73,146	
3B	B > 60'	96	200	1,496,426	
3B	C 35 – 60'	101	188	984,883	
3B	D <= 35'	22	30	77,622	
	Total	141	328	2,632,077	2,980,000
4A	A C/P	10	14	42,766	
4A	B > 60'	31	73	415,952	
4A	C 35 – 60'	24	44	218,666	
4A	D <= 35'	4	13	29,238	
	Total	37	109	706,622	1,280,000
4B	A C/P	1	**	**	
4B	B > 60'	9	17	235,600	
4B	C 35 – 60'	2	**	**	
4B	D <= 35'	1	**	**	
	Total	9	18	273,449	872,000
4C/4D	A C/P	1	**	**	
4C/4D	B > 60'	16	24	333,426	
4C/4D	C 35 – 60'	4	**	**	
4C/4D	D <= 35'	7	29	82,936	
	Total	18	48	473,792	1,104,000
Total		639	3,133	14,022,113	17,296,000

CDQ Area	Total Catch in Net (H&G) Weight (lb)	CDQ Allocation
4B	**	218,000
4C	**	460,000
4D	143,391	276,000
4E	**	220,000
Total	351,312	1,174,000

1) Source: NMFS Alaska Region IFQ System; Data as of 12/17/2024.

2) IFQ from Area 4C may be fished in Area 4D.

3) Total vessel count reflects unique vessels; individual vessels may record IFQ landings from separate vessel categories

4) Summaries flagged as confidential (**) reflect <3 vessels.

ALASKA RECREATIONAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

In October 2024, the Department provided final estimates of the 2023 sport halibut removals and preliminary estimates of the 2024 removals for Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, and 4, including information on estimation methods. Additional details on estimation methods are available in Webster and Buzzee (2020).

2023 Regulations Overview and Final Harvest Estimates; Charter and unguided fishing

The Area 2C charter fishery Regulations included a one-fish bag limit, a reverse slot limit of less than or equal to 40 inches or greater than or equal to 80 inches, and Monday closures beginning July 24. The Area 3A charter regulations included a two-fish bag limit with a maximum size of one fish of 28 inches, a limit of one trip per charter vessel per day (on which halibut are harvested), a limit of one trip per Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) per day, a closure of halibut retention on all Wednesdays, and nine closed Tuesdays. Charter fishery regulations in the remainder of the state and unguided fishery regulations statewide included a daily bag limit of two fish of any size.

The 2023 Area 2C estimated sport harvest (excluding release mortality) was 162,821 fish, for a yield of 2.050 Mlb (million pounds). The Area 3A estimated sport harvest was 238,538 fish, for a yield of 2.479 Mlb. The final harvest estimates for western Areas were 254 halibut in Area 3B and 585 halibut in Area 4. Applying the Kodiak unguided average weight of 11.36 lb resulted in yield estimates of 0.003 Mlb in Area 3B and 0.007 Mlb in Area 4 (Table 7).

Area 2C charter removals (including release mortality) were estimated to be 0.832 Mlb, approximately 4.0% over the allocation. Area 3A charter removals were estimated to be 1.588 Mlb, approximately 16.0% under the allocation. Areas 3B and 4 do not have separate charter allocations.

Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 2C were 77,910 fish and 1.277 Mlb. Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 3A were 83,892 fish and 0.922 Mlb.

Table 7. Final estimates of the 2023 sport halibut harvest (numbers of fish), average net weight (pounds), and yield (millions of pounds net weight) in Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, and 4. "NA" indicates no estimate is available.

IPHC Area	Sector	Harvest (no. fish)	Average Net Wt. (lb) ^a	Yield (Mlb)	95% CI for Yield (Mlb)	
					Lower	Upper
Area 2C	Charter	84,911	9.41	0.799	0.751	0.846
	Unguided	77,910	16.06	1.251	1.071	1.432
	Total	162,821	12.59	2.050	1.822	2.278
Area 3A	Charter	154,646	10.17	1.572	1.418	1.727
	Unguided	83,892	10.81	0.907	0.716	1.098
	Total	238,538	10.39	2.479	2.134	2.824
Area 3B	Total	254	11.36 ^a	0.003	NA	NA
Area 4	Total	585	11.36 ^a	0.007	NA	NA

^a – No size data were available from Areas 3B and 4, so the unguided average weight from Kodiak was substituted.

2024 Regulations Overview and Preliminary Harvest Estimates: Charter and unguided fishing

The Area 2C charter fishery allocation for 2024 was 0.810 Mlb. Regulations included a one-fish daily bag limit and reverse slot (or “protected slot”) limit that allowed harvest of halibut less than or equal to 40 inches and halibut greater than or equal to 80 inches, February 1 through July 14. From July 15 through December 31, the slot limit was less than or equal to 36 inches and halibut greater than or equal to 80 inches. Fridays were closed July 19 and through September 13. The Area 3A charter allocation was 1.89 Mlb. Regulations included a two-fish bag limit with a maximum size on one of the fish of 28 inches, a limit of one trip per charter vessel per day and per CHP per day, and a closure to halibut retention on all Wednesdays. 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 preliminary estimates for charter harvest and removal in Area 2C were 89,303 halibut and 0.843 Mlb, respectively, 4.0% over the 2024 allocation. The preliminary estimates of charter harvest and removal in Area 3A were 161,439 fish and 1.607 Mlb, respectively, approximately 15% under the allocation. The preliminary harvest estimates for 2024 were 340 halibut in Area 3B and 488 halibut in Area 4. Applying the unguided average weight from Kodiak of 13.25 lb resulted in removal estimates of 0.005 Mlb in Area 3B and 0.006 Mlb in Area 4 (Table 8).

Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 2C were 71,658 fish and 1.010 Mlb. Unguided harvest and removal estimates in Area 3A were 85,638 fish and 0.878 Mlb.

Table 8. Preliminary estimates of the 2024 sport halibut harvest (numbers of fish), average net weight (pounds), and yield (millions of pounds net weight) in Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, and 4. “NA” indicates no estimate is available.

IPHC Area	Sector	Harvest (no. fish)	Average Net Wt. (lb) ^a	Yield (Mlb)	95% CI for Yield (Mlb)	
					Lower	Upper
Area 2C	Charter	89,303	9.07	0.810	0.781	0.840
	Unguided	71,658	13.85	0.992	0.830	1.154
	Total	160,961	11.20	1.803	1.611	1.994
Area 3A	Charter	161,439	9.85	1.591	1.333	1.848
	Unguided	85,638	10.06	0.862	0.604	1.119
	Total	247,077	9.93	2.452	1.938	2.967
Area 3B	Total	340	13.25 ^a	0.005	NA	NA
Area 4	Total	488	13.25 ^a	0.006	NA	NA

^a – No size data were available from Areas 3B and 4, so the unguided average weight from Kodiak was substituted.

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. This analysis is a key component of the Area 2C and 3A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan, which 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.

Analyses were requested by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council's Charter Halibut Management Committee on 25 October 2024. Results were presented at the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting in December. Projected removals in 2025 under status quo regulations are 0.862 Mlb in Area 2C and 1.764 Mlb in Area 3A. Under the suite of management measures recommended by the Council at the December 2024 meeting, removal projections range from 0.608 to 1.013 Mlb for Area 2C and from 1.425 to 2.079 Mlb for Area 3A.

Updates to Data Collection and Estimation Methods for Alaska's Recreational Fisheries

Electronic logbooks became mandatory for charter operators in Southeast Alaska in 2021, and will become mandatory in Area 3A in 2025. Beginning in 2021, 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 15. Preliminary logbook data for trips taken through August 31 were used to project harvest for the year in Area 3A. Starting in 2025, electronic logbooks will be mandatory for all businesses and vessels operating in salt water in Alaskan waters.

Starting in 2022, ADF&G began collecting additional biological data from recreationally caught Pacific halibut in 2C, including age (otoliths) and sex data. In 2024, halibut were sampled for age and sex information in 2C from the ports of Elfin Cove, Ketchikan, and Sitka. Age and sex data continued to be collected in 3A. Otoliths were shipped to the IPHC at the completion of the season for aging. Removal estimates and biological data were provided to the IPHC for the stock assessment.

Other Updates

In March 2023, NOAA approved a collaborative multi-agency effort led by the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) to develop an implementation plan designed to support and improve upon Alaska recreational fisheries data collection programs. Later in 2023 and through 2024, agency partners have focused on key areas of focus to modernize the statewide harvest survey, which is the tool used to estimate all freshwater and unguided saltwater recreational fisheries harvests. Fundamental planning objectives for the modernization include converting from paper to electronic data collection, increase the frequency of data collections to address several issues, including recall and prestige bias, improve the timeliness of data estimates, evaluate the estimation procedures and/or any changes to the sampling design, increase the response rate, and reduce costs through greater efficiencies.

Guided Angler Fish Program- 2024 Summary

In 2014, NMFS implemented the guided angler fish (GAF) program to authorize limited annual transfers of commercial halibut Individual Fishing Quota (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 operators an opportunity for their client anglers to retain up to two halibut of any size per day, and to retain GAF halibut on days that are closed to halibut retention.

Table 9 summarizes IFQ to GAF transfers for 2018 through 2024. From the outset of the program, GAF has been used much more frequently in Area 2C than 3A, and its use in Area 2C has generally increased each year. For example, in Area 2C in 2024, 175,070 pounds of IFQ was transferred as GAF to the charter fishery; this translated into 2,870 harvestable halibut,

which is the highest over the 2014-2024 period. Of the number of harvestable halibut in 2024, 2,504 (87%) of the Area 2C GAF was taken. This contrasts with Area 3A, where 20,677 pounds of IFQ was transferred as GAF in 2024, resulting in 899 harvestable fish. However, only 39% (337 fish) of the Area 3A GAF was taken.²

Table 9. Summary of IFQ to GAF transfers 2019-2024

Year	IPHC Regulatory Area	Number of GAF transferred	Number of GAF Harvested (% of amount transferred)	Actual Net Pounds of IFQ Harvested as GAF	Average Length in Inches (range)	Number of GAF Permits Issued	Number of GAF Permit Holders
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
2022	2C	1,971	1,548 (79%)	99,962	55 (24-81)	459	67
	3A	499	277 (56%)	6,487	39 (25-70)	29	12
	Total	2,470	1,825 (74%)	106,449		488	79
2023	2C	2,208	1,794 (81%)	109,952	54 (17-83)	560	77
	3A	743	364 (50%)	8,430	39 (22-76)	40	19
	Total	2,951	2,158 (73%)	118,382		600	96
2024	2C	2,870	2,504 (87%)	147,739	53 (21-87)	732	106
	3A	899	337 (39%)	5,509	35 (22-69)	37	16
	Total	3,769	2,851 (76%)	153,248		769	122

² GAF Program annual reports are available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/guided-angler-fish-gaf-program-annual-reports>.

PRELIMINARY ALASKA NON-DIRECTED COMMERCIAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW**Current Halibut Non-Directed Catch 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 (i.e. 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 preliminary estimated halibut PSC use for 2023 and 2024 is shown in Table 10, complete figures for Table 10 will be updated in early January.**

Halibut Bycatch Management Actions in Progress*BSAI Pacific Cod Trawl Catcher Vessel Cooperative Program*

In January 2024, new regulations became effective for the Pacific cod Trawl Catcher Vessel Cooperative Program (PCTC) Program, which created a new limited access program for the directed Pacific cod trawl fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI). Among other things, the program allocates Pacific cod harvest quota shares to qualifying groundfish trawl license holders and to qualifying processors. It requires participants to form cooperatives to harvest the quota in two of the three regulatory Pacific cod trawl seasons. The third trawl season (C season) remains a limited access fishery without assigned quota or mandatory cooperatives, and is open to all trawl catcher vessels with BSAI license endorsements to harvest Pacific cod.

Some benefits of the PCTC program include more efficient coordination of fishing operations, potential to reduce operational expenses, and increased quality and revenue from the product. Cooperatives are responsible for tracking the cooperative quota and prohibited species catch among their vessels. Catch is monitored through required recordkeeping, reporting, and observer monitoring. Participating vessels are required to have 100% fishery observer coverage. The PCTC program also reduces the halibut prohibited species catch limit by 25 percent; there is a 12.5 percent reduction in the halibut PSC limit in each of the first two years of the program.

More information on the PCTC Program may be found at: [Amendment 122, PCTC Program](#).

Preliminary – to be updated					
Table 10: Final Estimates of Non-directed Commercial Fishing Halibut Mortality in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (nearest metric ton) by Area and Gear (Target). Data generated January xx 2025.					
Area	2023 Total (as of 10/8/24)		2024 Projected, 10/8/24	2024 Actual	Difference, Actual - Predicted
2C	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	0	1	n.a.	n.a.
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	2	2		
	Pot	2	2		
	Total	4	5		
3A	Trawl	179	293		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	19	23		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	1	3		
	Pot	11	8		
	Total	210	327		
3B	Trawl	99	140		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	12	12		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	1	1		
	Pot	3	3		
	Total	115	156		
4A	Trawl	205	197		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	25	24		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0		
	Pot	6	12		
	Total	236	233		
4B	Trawl	94	65		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	0	1		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0		
	Pot	1	1		
	Total	95	67		
4CDE	Trawl	862	557		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	90	87		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0		
	Pot	1	1		
	Total	953	645		
4 – closed	Trawl	562	632		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	38	42		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	0	0		
	Pot	2	2		
	Total	602	676		
All Areas	Trawl	2,001	1,884		
	Hook-and-line (non-sablefish)	184	190		
	Hook-and-Line (sablefish)	4	6		
	Pot	26	29		
	Total	2,215	2,109		

*Note: Prepared by NMFS Alaska Region.
Table 10 includes estimates of Pacific halibut mortality from Federally managed groundfish fisheries and also for the groundfish fisheries managed by the State of Alaska. Pacific Halibut mortality is estimated for each gear type and is apportioned by IPHC Regulatory Area.*

Halibut Bycatch Management Actions in Progress (cont.)

Trawl Electronic Monitoring

In July 2024, NMFS adopted rules to implement an electronic monitoring (EM) program for pelagic trawl pollock catcher vessels and tender vessels delivering to processors in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska. The EM systems use cameras, video storage devices, and associated sensors to record and monitor at-sea fishing activities. This information provides a means to monitor vessels for compliance with management objectives designed to achieve maximized retention and to electronically report catch and discard information. Shoreside observers monitor the bycatch and collect biological information.

This program expands upon the EM program established by NMFS and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in 2018 in the partial coverage category for fixed gear vessels. Trawl EM program development was been guided by the Council's Trawl EM Working Group, which developed a collaborative research program to evaluate multiple EM design options and consider various approaches to achieve management needs. The program evolved through pilot projects in 2018 and 2019 and under an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) from 2020 through 2024.

Ultimately, the EFP data indicated the objectives for trawl EM were met by: (1) improved salmon and halibut bycatch accounting, specifically in the Western Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery; (2) reduced monitoring costs; (3) improved quality of monitoring data; and (4) improved retention with limited changes in catcher vessel activities. In addition, it was also clear that EM is effective in capturing at-sea discard events to support catch accounting and may capture marine mammal incidents. Finally, EFP data showed some biological sampling can be accomplished at processing plants by observers with effective communication from vessels and processors.

More information for this program, which implemented Amendment 126 and Amendment 114 to the respective Fishery Management Plans for Groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands and the Gulf of Alaska are available online.³

Additional Information on 2024 Non-directed Commercial Halibut Mortalities

For additional information on halibut PSC mortality in the Alaska groundfish fisheries, please refer to the December 2024 NMFS inseason management reports to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council; specifically: slides 47 – 50 of the Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands report⁴ and slides 45 – 51 of the Gulf of Alaska report.⁵

Detailed information on current observer coverage and electronic monitoring of the Federal fisheries off Alaska, please reference the 2025 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska⁶ and the North Pacific Observer Program 2023 Annual Report.⁷

³ See: [Amendment 126 and Amendment 114 to the Groundfish FMPs in the BSAI and GOA](#)

⁴ Available at: [NMFS 2024 Inseason Management Report: Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands](#)

⁵ Available at: [NMFS 2024 Inseason Management Report: Gulf of Alaska](#) ⁶ Available at: [2025 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska](#)

⁶ Available at: [2025 Annual Deployment Plan for Observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska](#)

⁷ Available at: [The North Pacific Observer Program 2023 Annual Report](#)

ALASKA SUBSISTENCE HALIBUT FISHERY OVERVIEW

Subsistence Harvests of Pacific Halibut in Alaska, 2022

Through a grant from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (NA22NMF4370240), 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 2022. This project occurs biennially; as a result there are no updated data for 2023. However, data will be collected for the 2024 year. The full results from 2022 will appear in a forthcoming technical paper with a planned publication date of December 2024.

To estimate the 2022 harvests, a one-page survey form was mailed to holders of NMFS Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates (SHARC) in early 2023. ADF&G staff and local contractors also administered surveys in person in three communities: Nightmute and Tununak in western Alaska and Ketchikan in Southeast Alaska. Additionally, researchers conducted comprehensive household harvest surveys in Port Lions, Ouzinkie, Kake, and Unalaska for the 2022 study year; for each community, federal subsistence halibut harvest questions were asked of responding households. After three mailings and community visits, 3,727 of 6,712 potential subsistence halibut fishers (56%) responded. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

An estimated 2,968 individuals subsistence fished for halibut in Alaska in 2022, about 21% lower than the 2020 fishing year and 41% lower than the long-term average since 2003. The estimated subsistence harvest was 20,896 halibut or 401,603 pounds net weight. This harvest estimate continues a generally decreasing trend in estimated harvests and was the lowest harvest estimate since the federal regulations were adopted in 2003. As expressed in pounds net weight, the 2022 harvest was 24% below 2020 harvests and 54% below the previous 14-year average. It remains unclear whether this decrease is due to actual harvest declining or a decrease in participation in the SHARC program or reporting, or some other factor.

Of the 2022 total subsistence halibut harvest, 73% was harvested with setline (stationary) gear (longline or skate) and 27% was harvested with hand-operated gear (handline or rod and reel). A total of 30 hooks was the most common number of hooks set by halibut fishers who used setline gear (43% of fishers). This pattern was similar to other, earlier study years.

Also similar to all other years, in 2022, the largest subsistence harvests of halibut occurred in Southeast Alaska (Halibut Regulatory Area 2C), with 63% of the total, followed by Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A) at 30%, and East Bering Sea Coast (Area 4E) and Alaska Peninsula (Area 3B) each at 3%. The remaining areas combined accounted for less than 1% of the state total. The majority harvest in Southeast Alaska (63%) in 2022 was an increase from 2020 estimates of 55% of the statewide total.

Based on data from the International Pacific Halibut Commission and the 2022 study year, subsistence harvests accounted for 1% of the 2022 total Alaska halibut removals.

This study was the third year of inclusion of a new question about whether survey respondents had met their needs for halibut; in 2022, there was nearly an even split between those that reported meeting their needs and those that did not, with 49% and 51% respectively. Lack of effort, lack of equipment, and family or personal reasons were the most-cited reasons for not meeting needs.

The 2022 data collection effort was a success, with acceptable response rates and a reliable estimate of subsistence halibut harvests in Alaska for 2022. However, additional outreach and in-person surveys could not be conducted in Sitka, which has historically been one of the

communities with the largest population of SHARC holders and highest subsistence halibut harvests. The lack of outreach in the community is evident in the reduced response rate in 2022 (56% compared to >70% in prior study years). Outreach continues to be necessary to maximize enrollment of fishers in the SHARC program and participation in the voluntary harvest survey. Additional research continues to be needed to understand trends in the fishery. Budget constraints dictate that a survey to estimate subsistence halibut harvests in Alaska in 2023 will not take place.

NOAA FISHERIES LAW ENFORCEMENT - ALASKA

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement - Alaska Enforcement Division



The Alaska Enforcement Division (AKD) utilizes Enforcement Officers (EOs), Special Agents (SAs), 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 2024, there were 3,300 Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) halibut permits issued in Alaska and 31 IFQ landing ports. There were 955 charter halibut permits issued, 104 Charter Halibut Permit – Community Quota Entity (CQE), 7 Charter Halibut Permit - Issued to Military Welfare/Recreational Programs, and 4,538 Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates (SHARCs).

Patrol and Boardings

In 2024, AKD personnel spent over 3,628 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. AKD boarded 653 vessels with 443 of those boardings being related to halibut.

Table 11. Results of Vessel Boardings

	2022	2023	2024
	Vessel Boardings	Vessel Boardings	Vessel Boardings
Subsistence Halibut	11	14	12
Commercial Halibut	306	361	256
Charter Halibut	108	169	114
Sport Halibut	97	62	61
Total	522	606	443

Compliance Assistance, Outreach, and Education

In 2024, AKD personnel spent over 670 hours providing outreach and education to marine resource users. The goal of OLE outreach efforts is to ensure the most current and accurate regulatory information is widely distributed and understood. In addition to providing on-the-water and dockside outreach to stakeholders through daily interactions, OLE attended and presented at eight community and industry education and outreach events in 2025, focused on informing the public about commercial, charter, and recreational halibut fishing in Alaska.

Incidents

In 2024, AKD opened 748 halibut-related incidents, including outreach, vessel boardings, dockside monitoring, and compliance assistance. Of those incidents, agents and officers identified 394 halibut-related violations, which were resolved by the following action levels, in order from least to most punitive: Compliance Assistance, Summary Settlement, Notice of Violation Assessment (NOVA).

Table 12. Alaska Halibut Violations

	2022	2023	2024
Subsistence Halibut	6	4	5
Commercial Halibut	287	129	255
Charter Halibut	38	65	86
Sport Halibut	26	10	29
Commercial Groundfish Involving Halibut	22	19	19
Total	<u>354</u>	<u>303</u>	<u>394</u>

*Several cases are waiting for NOAA Fisheries General Counsel Enforcement Section to issue NOVAs.

2024 Halibut-Related Violations documented by NOAA in Alaska:

5 Subsistence halibut fishing violations; most common violations include:

- Unqualified person applied for a SHARC
- Subsistence halibut with sport-caught halibut
- Subsistence halibut fishing without a SHARC
- Gear marking

255 Commercial IFQ/CDQ halibut violations; most common violations include:

- IFQ halibut overages greater than 10%
- Recordkeeping and reporting violations (fail to submit/timely submit a Prior Notice Of Landing (PNOL), Landing Report, Logbook, PTR, or Production Reports)
- Gear marking violations

(cont.)

2024 Halibut-Related Violations documented by NOAA in Alaska (cont.)

- 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).
- 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
- Unreported halibut found after offloads.
- Class D vessel size limit violations (vessels over 36 ft. LOA fishing D class quota).

19 Commercial groundfish violations involving halibut; most common violations include:

- Failure to carefully release halibut or allow halibut to contact a crucifier or hook stripper
- Puncture halibut with a gaff or other device

29 Sport halibut violations; most common violations include:

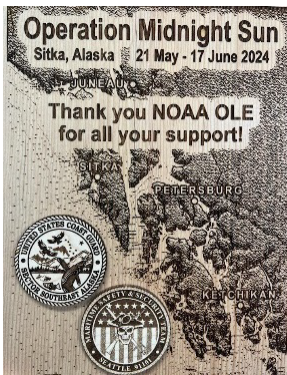
- Sale or attempted sale of sport-caught halibut
- Exceeding bag and/or possession limits
- Filleting, mutilating or skinning halibut onboard a vessel, other than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with a patch of skin on each piece, naturally attached
- Sport-caught halibut onboard with commercial caught salmon

86 Charter halibut fishing violations; most common violations include:

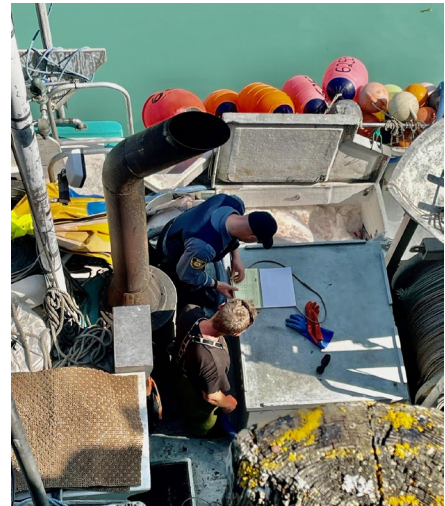
- Failure to report GAF in the required time period or submitting inaccurate information
- Logbook violations
- Fishing on closed days
- Unreported halibut
- Illegal guiding - no CHP or Guide permits
- Filleting, mutilating or skinning halibut onboard a vessel, other than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with a patch of skin on each piece, naturally attached
- Not retaining carcasses for size restricted halibut
- Exceeding bag limit, possession limit, size limits, or annual limits
- Charter fish without a CHP/without an original copy of CHP
- Halibut retained not within slot limit size

2024 Partnerships & Patrols Highlights

The Office of (OLE) and Alaska Division (AKD) conducts 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 May and June, EOs partnered with the USCG Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST)-Seattle for a joint operation focused on halibut. During operation Midnight Sun, there were 16 individual joint patrols conducted. They deployed multiple assets, including the NOAA P/V OOXJA, USCGC KUKUI, and two 29ft Metal Sharks, with rotary-winged aerial support. During the course of the operation, 120 commercial, Charter, and recreational vessels were boarded. Ten North Pacific Halibut Act violations were discovered related to recordkeeping and reporting (logbook), improper permit/license, and mutilated halibut, in addition to many maritime safety infractions.



In June and July, EOs conducted four multi-vessel and multi-day patrols. The first, along the Canadian border in Southeast Alaska, concentrated on foreign and domestic recreational and commercial fishing vessels adjacent to and within disputed zones. Twenty charter halibut and recreational halibut vessels were boarded throughout the week, and ten violations were discovered. Multiple violations were found on foreign and domestic vessels, including illegal harvest in US waters. During the second, two EOs and an SA conducted a patrol in southeast Alaska, boarding eight vessels and discovered three violations related to recordkeeping and reporting. On the third, a joint patrol between OLE and the USCG MSST, 13 vessels were boarded and found to be in compliance, with a single violation referred to another agency. In July, two EOs and a SA conducted a patrol in Southeast Alaska. During the fourth, two EOs and one SA boarded five vessels and found two violations related to recordkeeping and reporting.

In August, OLE conducted multiple patrols. In one, two EOs conducted a multiday patrol in Southeast Alaska. During the patrol, 40 vessels were boarded, and 22 violations were found, including recordkeeping and reporting (charter logbook) and chunked halibut. They contacted four lodges, stopped in seven small communities, and visited one processor, providing regulatory outreach and education to stakeholders. In the second, two EOs patrolled Southcentral Alaska, boarding eight commercial, charter, and recreational vessels, documenting five violations of improperly marked gear, failure to produce required documents (permits, Vessel Monitoring Plans), and recordkeeping and reporting issues.



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ENFORCEMENT REPORT – ALASKA REGION

Coast Guard Resources in Alaska

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

Cutters:

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

Aircraft:

- Fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft are based out of Air Stations in Kodiak and Sitka. Both conduct routine law enforcement patrols across the Alaska Exclusive Economic Zone.
 - Five C-130 fixed wing aircraft
 - Nine MH-60 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 most enforcement inside of 50 nautical miles from shore and along the 100-fathom curve. This role is filled by 154-foot FRCs, 110-foot patrol boats, and 87-foot patrol boats. Patrol boats provide regular law enforcement presence in the commercial, charter, subsistence, and recreational fishing fleets closer to shore. By 2025, D17 anticipates the addition of three more 154-foot FRCs to greatly enhance boarding capabilities.

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 local regions. This does not preclude them from boarding larger commercial vessels operating closer to shore.

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. These flights provide sightings of vessels while fishing and in transit. Additionally, queries by the aircraft record target species, permits, and status of catch onboard.

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.

Halibut Enforcement

In Calendar Year 2024, the USCG distributed its enforcement assets throughout the Alaska IPHC Areas, with boarding numbers listed in Table 13. 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 13. 2022, 2023 & 2024 Geographic Distribution of Boardings on Vessels Targeting Halibut

IPHC Area	2022 Boardings	2023 Boardings	2024 Boardings
2C	413	307	370
3A	112	68	177
3B	0	0	0
4A	1	6	5
4B	1	0	1
4C	0	7	0
4D	0	0	0
4E	0	0	1
Total	527	388	554

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 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.

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. Recreational fishing activity is most prevalent from May to 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 85% of the halibut boardings in D17.

During recreational and charter boardings, the USCG places emphasis on (1) compliance with licensing and charter operation requirements, (2) size limits, (3) daily catch and trip limits, and (4) at-sea processing of halibut.

Violations and Enforcement Summary

In 2024, USCG assets boarded a total of 554 vessels and detected 15 violations on 6 vessels. The USCG documented these violations and referred them to NOAA OLE or Alaska Wildlife Troopers for final action as appropriate. Table 14 compares at-sea boardings and violations between 2023 and 2024.

Table 14. 2023 & 2024 Boarding and Violation Summaries by Industry Sector

2023 Boardings/Violations		2024 Boardings/Violations	
Total At-Sea Boardings.....	388	Total At-Sea Boardings.....	554
Commercial	97	Commercial	84
Charter	64	Charter	132
Recreational/Subsistence	227	Recreational/Subsistence	338
Fisheries Violations.....	15	Fisheries Violations.....	16
Commercial	12	Commercial	15
Charter	3	Charter	0
Recreational/Subsistence.....	0	Recreational/Subsistence.....	0
Fisheries Compliance Rates	96.9%	Fisheries Compliance Rates	98.9%
Commercial	89.7%	Commercial	92.9%
Charter	96.9%	Charter	100%
Recreational/Subsistence.....	100%	Recreational/Subsistence.....	100%

In Area 3A:

- One commercial vessel was cited for improper logbooks and failure to retain incidental rockfish while fishing for halibut.
- One commercial vessel was cited for not keeping a logbook.

In Area 4A:

- One commercial vessel was cited for failure to retain incidental Pacific Cod while fishing for halibut, failure to maintain proper logbooks, improper buoy markings, and failure to retain incidental rockfish.
- One commercial vessel was cited for improper logbooks and improper buoy markings.
- One commercial vessel was cited for failure to retain incidental Pacific Cod while fishing for halibut and failure to retain incidental rockfish.

In Area 4E:

- One commercial vessel was cited for not having a Limited License Permit (LLP) onboard and not having a hired master permit while commercially fishing for halibut.

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 14, USCG assets documented 95 safety violations on 65 vessels including insufficient fire extinguishers, expired visual distress signals, and expired hydrostatic releases for survival craft and/or EPIRB. Two commercial vessels' voyages, three charter vessels' voyages, and 13 recreational vessels' voyages were terminated for safety.

Enforcement Plans for 2025

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.

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. Additionally, the USCG will continue to examine the practice of unguided/bareboat charters and their effect on boating safety.

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. This will encourage compliance across fishing fleets to help management efforts sustain the fisheries.

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