

## **Guided Angler Fish (GAF) Program Preliminary 2014 Report**

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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 International Pacific Halibut Commission Regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (South Central Alaska). Using GAF, qualified charter halibut permit holders may 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.

For 2014, charter vessel anglers in Area 2C are limited to one halibut per day that is less than or equal to 44 inches or greater than or equal to 76 inches total length. In Area 3A, charter vessel anglers are allowed to keep two fish per day, one of which must be less than or equal to 29 inches total length. Using GAF, charter vessel anglers may harvest up to two halibut of any size per day.

As of September 15, 2014, NMFS Restricted Access Management Program processed 111 transfers totaling 41,152 lb of IFQ to 43 different charter halibut permit holders. These transfers allowed the harvest of up to 2,027 additional halibut as GAF by charter vessel anglers (Table 1). Overall, nearly 20% of all GAF transfers were “self-transfers,” i.e., the same person held both the IFQ and the charter halibut permit and transferred the IFQ to himself (Table 1). In Area 3A, 47% of all transfers were self-transfers, while only 14% were self-transfers in Area 2C.

GAF participants are given the option of self-reporting cost information for GAF transfers. Of the transfers for which price information was reported, and excluding self-reported prices for self-transfers, lease prices averaged \$5.62/lb in Area 2C and \$5.01/lb in Area 3A (weighted averages). The overall weighted average price per pound of IFQ leased was \$5.46.

Charter vessel anglers had harvested 1,067 GAF (53%) by mid-September, mostly in Area 2C (Table 2). The high percentage of self-transfers in Area 3A may partially explain why a lower proportion of GAF were harvested in Area 3A. The GAF/IFQ holder would still have an opportunity to harvest those pounds in the commercial fishery after the automatic return date. Unused GAF will be automatically returned to the IFQ account from which it originated on or around October 23, 2014. Three voluntary returns of GAF to IFQ were processed in September. Another six voluntary return applications were denied because they arrived after the August 31 deadline.

NMFS issues GAF in numbers of halibut based on a conversion factor from IFQ pounds. In this first year of the GAF program, the conversion factors were based on the average weight of charter halibut harvested by area in the most recent year without a size limit in effect. The 2014 conversion factors were 26.4 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 2C and 12.8 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 3A. For future years, the conversion factor will be based on the average net weight of GAF harvested by area. The average length of GAF harvested in 2014 is preliminarily estimated at 55 inches in Area 2C and 45 inches in Area 3A (Table 2 and Figure 1). Using the IPHC halibut length weight conversion table, these lengths translate into preliminary estimated average net weights of 67.4 lb in Area 2C and 38.5 lb in Area 3A. The 2015 conversion factors will increase in 2015 compared to 2014.

Table 1. Summary of IFQ to GAF transfers as of September 15, 2014

IPHC Regulatory Area	IFQ Pounds Transferred	Number of GAF Transferred	Number of Transfers (Permits Issued)	Avg. price per pound	Percentage of self-transfers
2C (Southeast)	29,498	1,117	92	\$ 5.62	14%
3A (South Central)	11,654	910	19	\$ 5.01	47%
Total	41,152	2,027	111	\$ 5.46	20%

Table 2. GAF harvest information, as of September 15, 2014

IPHC Regulatory Area	Number of GAF harvested (% of total)	Average Length in inches (range)	Estimated 2015 conversion factor (net lb)	2014 Conversion Factor (net lb)
2C (Southeast)	799 (72%)	55 (20-77)	67.4	26.4
3A (South Central)	268 (29%)	45 (30-75)	38.5	12.8
Total	1067 (53%)			

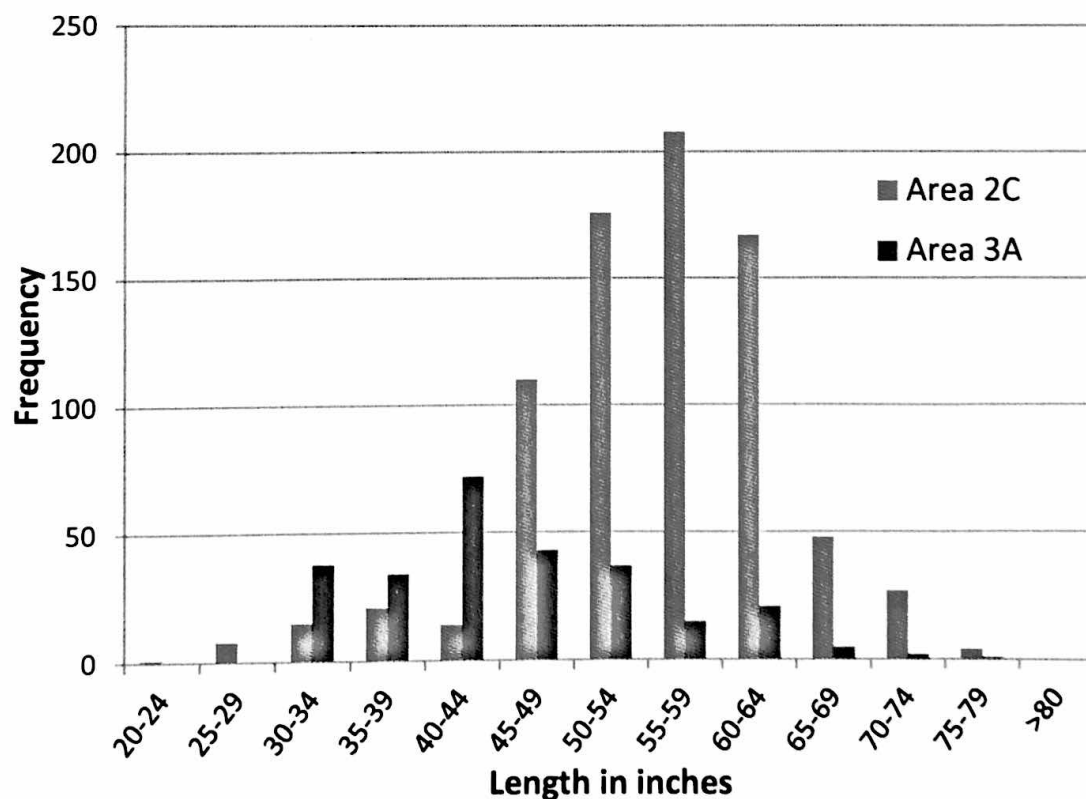


Figure 1. Length frequency histogram of GAF harvested by IPHC regulatory area as of September 15, 2014.