



NOAA FISHERIES

Sustainable Fisheries Alaska Region

CHARTER HALIBUT STAMP PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

And

Small Entity Compliance Guide

February 2, 2026

This Small Entity Compliance Guide satisfies the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 that requires a plain language guide to assist small entities. If you are required to comply with the regulations, you should consult and rely on the actual regulatory text. We cite the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) throughout this document, and provide citations for specific regulations for your reference. These regulations are available online at the [electronic CFR \(eCFR\) website](#), which is updated more frequently. The Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) regulations and charter halibut stamp regulations can primarily be found under 50 CFR 679.7 and 679.46, but also at 50 CFR 300.61, 300.65, 300.67, 679.2, 679.4.

The regulations in the CFR take precedence if a discrepancy occurs between them and the information in this guide.

This is a summary of regulations governing a charter halibut stamp program for charter (sport) halibut fishing in International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Regulatory Areas 2C and 3A. This summary only provides information on the charter halibut stamp program and does not provide information on other requirements of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the IPHC, United States Coast Guard, or State of Alaska regulations governing the halibut fisheries. Charter vessel operators should consult these agencies for information on other applicable regulations.

Quick Reference Guide

General Program Overview

1. Who is required to have a charter halibut stamp and how much do they cost? 3
3. I own a Charter Halibut Permit (CHP). How do I create an account so I can purchase charter halibut stamps? 4
4. If I own more than one CHP, do I create an account for each CHP? 4
5. How do I pay for charter halibut stamps?..... 4
6. How many charter halibut stamps do I have to buy? 5
7. After I buy charter halibut stamps, how do I use them?..... 5
8. How do I keep track of the number of charter halibut stamps that I purchase, along with the number of stamps that are validated for use on vessels with my CHPs? 5
9. What happens if I have stamps remaining in my account at the end of the year?..... 5
10. What happens if I validate stamps on my boat, but I don't have enough stamps in my account to cover those validations? For example, I only have 5 stamps in my account but I validate 6 stamps for anglers on my boat? 6
11. If I transfer my CHP to someone else and I have stamps remaining in my account, can I be reimbursed for the remaining stamps?..... 6
12. I own and sometimes lease my CHP to another business. Who is responsible for buying the stamps for charter halibut trips that use my CHP? 6
13. Can I transfer some or all of my charter halibut stamps to another person's account?..... 6
14. How do I manage charter halibut stamp validations if our charter fishing trip lasts more than one day? 6
15. Do I need to validate charter halibut stamps for catch and release fishing of halibut? 7
16. What happens if we are fishing for some other fish species besides halibut, but we catch a halibut? 7
17. Do I need to validate a charter halibut stamp if a charter vessel angler on my boat uses Guided Angler Fish (GAF) to keep a halibut? 7
18. I am selling my CHP and retiring from charter fishing. How do I close out my RQE halibut stamp account?..... 7

Program Description

NMFS requires a charter halibut stamp for sport fishermen on charter vessels for each fishing trip in a given calendar day, who intend to catch and retain halibut in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Southcentral Alaska). Stamps are required for charter vessel anglers who are 18 years of age or older. A stamp is not required for any charter vessel angler who retains halibut as Guided Angler Fish (GAF) on days that are otherwise closed to halibut retention by the annual management measures. The fee for the daily stamp is \$20.00. Persons who hold Charter Halibut Permits (CHPs) will purchase the charter halibut stamps from NMFS. Charter vessel operators are responsible for validating stamps for each charter vessel angler that needs one before the start of a charter vessel fishing trip.

The stamps will be electronic and will be held in accounts maintained by NMFS. The stamps will be validated for use by charter vessel guides in their Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Saltwater Sport Fishing Trip Logbook (ADF&G logbook). Validation of charter halibut stamps must occur before a charter fishing trip begins. A charter vessel fishing trip begins with the first deployment of fishing gear into the water on a trip (or the beginning of each calendar day for a multi-day charter halibut trip).

ADF&G will share the ADF&G logbook information with NMFS, and NMFS will add the stamp validation information to each CHP holder's charter halibut stamp eFISH account. This will allow CHP holders to view a record of all their stamp purchases and stamp validations. CHP holders are responsible for maintaining their eFISH accounts so that the number of stamp validations does not exceed stamp purchases at the end of each year.

Purchased stamps fund the RQE, which is a non-profit entity that represents the charter halibut fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A. The RQE will use the funds to purchase halibut Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) shares from persons in the commercial fishery. The pounds of halibut from the RQE's purchases will be added to the pounds of halibut that is currently allocated to the charter fishery each year. This additional RQE poundage may help relax charter halibut management measures, such as bag limits, size limits, and day of the week closures. In other words, the intent of this program is to help provide more charter halibut fishing opportunity over time.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of frequently asked questions to assist you in understanding the Charter Halibut Stamp Program. For specific regulatory requirements, see regulations at [50 CFR 300.61, 300.65, 300.67, 679.2, 679.4, 679.7, and 679.46](#); and [annual management measures](#) published in the *Federal Register* pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62. The proposed rule for this action provides a comprehensive history of management of the guided sport fishery for halibut off Alaska (89 FR 86772, October 31, 2024). NMFS is publishing the final rule on July 7, 2025 and a link to the final rule can be found [here](#).

General Program Questions

1. Who is required to have a charter halibut stamp and how much do they cost?

Charter halibut stamps are required for charter vessel anglers, 18 years of age or older, for each charter vessel fishing trip in a given calendar day, or each calendar day during a charter vessel fishing trip that spans multiple days, that the charter vessel angler intends to catch and retain halibut on a charter vessel in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Southcentral Alaska), unless that charter vessel angler retains halibut as GAF on days that are otherwise closed to halibut retention by the annual management measures published pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62. A charter halibut stamp is valid for one day.

The cost of the daily stamp is \$20.

2. Who buys the charter halibut stamps?

CHP holders are responsible for purchasing halibut stamps from NMFS. The stamps are electronic and will be held in accounts created by CHP holders and maintained by NMFS.

3. I own a CHP. How do I create an account so I can purchase charter halibut stamps?

You will create your account on a NMFS online platform called eFISH. Instructions for setting up and activating a NMFS online eFISH account are found at this link:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/resources-fishing/alaska-online-services>

Many CHP holders already have an eFISH account, and they use eFISH to register their CHP(s) each year or to manage their GAF. If you already have an online eFISH account, you do not need to create a new one; the features that let you buy halibut stamps will be added to your account.

4. I don't see a way to purchase stamps in eFish, how do I do that?

The final rule implementing the stamp program is not yet effective so the option to purchase stamps is not yet available. The ability to purchase stamps will be available in eFISH by the final rule effective date of January 1, 2026.

5. If I own more than one CHP, do I create an account for each CHP?

No. All your CHPs and all the charter halibut stamps you purchase will be under one eFISH account. Similarly, all the stamps that are validated for use on charter vessels that use your CHPs will be drawn from that account.

6. How do I pay for charter halibut stamps?

To purchase charter halibut stamps, you will sign into your eFISH account, and when it is available, you will see the option to purchase stamps with a link a website called Pay.gov. When you enter Pay.gov, you must use a credit or debit card to buy charter halibut stamps. Cards that are accepted are Visa, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express. Checks, bank transfers, or other forms of payment are not accepted.

After you make your purchase of charter halibut stamps, the stamps will be immediately deposited in your eFISH account.

7. How many charter halibut stamps do I have to buy?

You may purchase as many charter halibut stamps as you like, and you may purchase them at any time.

As an owner of a CHP, you have a responsibility to maintain an account that contains enough charter halibut stamps to cover all the anglers who intend to catch and retain halibut on charter vessels that use your CHP(s). Some CHP holders might decide to purchase a larger number of stamps based on the number of anglers they expect to serve in the future. Other CHP holders might decide to purchase stamps more frequently, and in smaller batches. Either way, the stamps will be held in the CHP holder's account until they are used.

8. After I buy charter halibut stamps, how do I use them?

Charter halibut stamps will be validated using ADF&G logbooks.

ADF&G and Federal regulations require charter vessel guides (i.e., the person on the charter vessel who provides sport fishing guide services) to enter the names and sport fishing license numbers of charter vessel anglers on the ADF&G logbook before a charter trip begins. The charter guide will validate on the ADF&G logbook a charter halibut stamp for each angler who intends to catch and retain a halibut on that charter vessel trip.

To perform the validation, the charter vessel guide will answer two questions on the ADF&G logbook: "Do you intend to keep halibut Yes/No?" and "If Yes, how many RQE stamps are being used?"

The charter vessel guide must validate halibut stamps before the first deployment of fishing gear into the water from the charter vessel.

9. How do I keep track of the number of charter halibut stamps that I purchase, along with the number of stamps that are validated for use on vessels with my CHPs?

Your eFISH charter halibut stamp account will indicate the number of stamps you purchased and the dates of the purchases. Similarly, your eFISH account will show the specific dates and the number of stamps that were validated on ADF&G logbooks for charter fishing trips where your CHP(s) was being used. This will be updated at periodic intervals.

There may be a gap between the time when charter halibut stamps are validated on a charter vessel and when that same information will appear in a CHP holder's account. For a more precise indication of charter halibut stamp validations, the charter operator can review the entries in their logbook. It is expected that a charter operator will be able to use the logbook query function to download the number and dates of charter halibut stamp validations that came from the ADF&G logbook at any time.

10. What happens if I have stamps remaining in my account at the end of the year?

Charter halibut stamps are not tied to a particular year. If stamps are purchased but not used, they will carry over and may be used in the next fishing year. Stamps never expire until validated.

11. If I have used more stamps than I have purchased, when is deadline to purchase them?

December 31 of the year the stamps were used.

12. What happens if I validate stamps on my boat, but I don't have enough stamps in my account to cover those validations? For example, I only have 5 stamps in my account but I validate 6 stamps for anglers on my boat?

As noted above, as a CHP holder, it is your responsibility to maintain an account that contains enough charter halibut stamps to cover all the anglers who intend to catch and retain halibut on charter vessels that use your CHP(s). If you validate more stamps than you have purchased, you must purchase enough stamps to make up the difference before the end of the year.

13. If I transfer my CHP to someone else and I have stamps remaining in my account, can I be reimbursed for the remaining stamps?

No. NMFS does not issue reimbursements for charter halibut stamps that have been purchased. You will be responsible for all the validations of charter halibut stamps that are associated with your CHP during the period when you own the CHP. After the CHP is transferred, the new owner will be responsible for maintaining an account for that CHP, and under that account, the new owner must maintain enough stamps in the account to cover all the stamp validations that occur each fishing year.

14. I own and sometimes lease my CHP to another business. Who is responsible for buying the stamps for charter halibut trips that use my CHP?

NMFS does not have regulations that govern the leases of CHPs. As the owner of the CHP, you are responsible for ensuring that charter halibut stamps are purchased for anglers who intend to catch and retain halibut on charter vessel(s) that use your CHP. The charter vessel guide on those vessels is responsible for validating the stamps on an ADF&G logbook.

If you own a CHP and you lease or lend your CHP to another person, it will be important to have a clear understanding of the financial responsibilities between you and the person who leases or borrows your CHP.

15. Can I transfer some or all of my charter halibut stamps to another person's account?

No, charter halibut stamps are not transferable. The stamps are not intended to be traded, bartered, sold, or otherwise transferred to someone else. Charter halibut stamps will be permanently assigned to the CHP holder's eFISH account under which they were purchased.

16. How do I manage charter halibut stamp validations if our charter fishing trip lasts more than one day?

By regulation, charter halibut stamps must be validated for each day, prior to the first deployment of gear, for each adult angler who intends to catch and retain halibut. This holds true for single-day charters as well as charter trips that span more than one day.

The stamp validation works together with the ADF&G logbook. On a multi-day charter trip, charter guides must complete a separate logbook page for each day of the trip. Among other things, the logbook page for that day should be used to validate charter halibut stamps for that day prior to the first deployment of fishing gear.

17. Do I need to validate charter halibut stamps for catch and release fishing of halibut?

No. The regulations specify that charter halibut stamps apply to anglers who intend to catch and retain halibut. If all halibut are carefully released and are not retained, then a charter halibut stamp is not required.

18. What happens if we are fishing for some other fish species besides halibut, but we catch a halibut?

As noted above, charter vessel guides must validate charter halibut stamps before the first deployment of fishing gear from a charter vessel. Therefore, if a halibut stamp was validated for an angler before the deployment of fishing gear on that trip, and the angler incidentally catches a halibut (for example, while fishing for salmon), then the angler may keep the halibut. If a charter halibut stamp was not validated before deploying fishing gear on that trip, then the angler must carefully release the halibut.

19. Do I need to validate a charter halibut stamp if a charter vessel angler on my boat uses GAF to keep a halibut?

It depends. If a CHP holder holds a GAF permit, then charter vessel anglers may retain halibut up to the limit allowed for unguided anglers. This means that in some years when charter regulations normally prevent the retention of halibut on certain days of the week, a charter angler may use GAF to keep a halibut. Under these circumstances, a charter halibut stamp does not have to be validated; that is, a charter halibut stamp does not have to be validated for a charter vessel angler who uses GAF to retain halibut on a day of the week that would otherwise be closed to halibut retention.

However, if a charter vessel angler uses GAF to retain halibut on a day of the week when halibut retention is allowed for charter vessel anglers (for example, halibut retention is allowed on that day, and a charter vessel angler uses GAF to retain a halibut that would otherwise be outside of the charter size limit), then a charter halibut stamp is required for that angler.

20. I am selling my CHP. How do I close out my RQE halibut stamp account?

No action is needed. Unused stamps can either be depleted prior to transferring the permit (a lease of the permit prior to transfer may be one approach if you are unable to use them yourself) or unused stamps can remain in the account indefinitely. If another CHP is later transferred to the existing account, any remaining stamps could be used with the new CHP.

For More Information

If you are required to comply with charter halibut fishery regulations in Alaska, you should consult and rely on the actual regulatory text. Please refer to the [IPHC annual management measures](#) and regulations in the eCFR at [50 CFR 300.61, 300.65, 300.66, 300.67, 679.2, 679.4, 679.7, and 679.46](#), or contact NMFS directly.

For more information about the Recreational Quota Entity, charter halibut stamp program, and the annual management measures, please see our [website](#) or contact: Office of Sustainable Fisheries NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Regional Office (Juneau) 907-586-7228

To purchase charter halibut stamps or view your stamp account balances, login to [eFISH](#). Your eFISH account will also allow you to register your CHP(s) or submit an electronic GAF report.

For information or issues regarding charter stamp purchases in eFish, please contact the NMFS Restricted Access Management Division at (800) 304-4846 option #2 or (907) 586-7474. For information or issues regarding ADF&G logbooks, please contact ADF&G at (907) 267-2299 or 907-267-2337.