



# NOAA FISHERIES

Sustainable Fisheries Alaska Region

## Guided Angler Fish Program Frequently Asked Questions

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If you are required to comply with the regulations, you should consult and rely on the actual regulatory text the electronic Code of Federal Regulations ([eCFR](#)). GAF Program regulations can be found under Title 50, Part 300, Section 300.65.

**The regulations in the CFR take precedence if a discrepancy occurs between them and the information in this guide or the version on the Alaska Region website.**

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## General Program Overview

### **1. What is the Guided Angler Fish or GAF Program?**

The Catch Sharing Plan authorizes transfers of commercial halibut individual fishing quota (IFQ) as guided angler fish (GAF) to qualified charter halibut permit holders for harvest by charter vessel anglers in Areas 2C and 3A. 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. See the following sections for more information about the GAF Program. More information on the Catch Sharing Plan is available on NMFS' [website](#).

## GAF Eligibility

### **2. Who is eligible to transfer IFQ to GAF?**

A person who holds at least one unit of halibut quota share and has received an annual IFQ permit authorizing harvest of IFQ in either the Area 2C and Area 3A commercial halibut fishery is eligible to transfer IFQ to an eligible charter halibut permit holder.

### **3. Who is eligible to receive IFQ as GAF?**

A charter halibut permit holder is eligible to receive IFQ as GAF if he or she holds one or more charter halibut permits in the management area that corresponds to the IFQ permit area from which the IFQ would be transferred. Holders of military charter halibut permits and Community Quota Entities holding community charter halibut permits also are eligible to receive IFQ as GAF.

### **4. How do I obtain GAF?**

For transfers between IFQ and GAF, the IFQ holder and charter halibut permit holder receiving GAF are required to submit an application to NMFS (see GAF Transfers section below).

## GAF Transfers

### **5. How do I apply for a transfer of IFQ to GAF?**

Transfers of IFQ to GAF must be approved by NMFS. Applications for GAF transfers are available on the NMFS [website](#). Both the IFQ holder and the Charter Halibut Permit holder must complete, sign, and submit an application to NMFS, Restricted Access Management (RAM) Program for review and approval. For assistance in completing the transfer application call RAM at 1-800-304-4846 (select option #2) or in Juneau at 907-586-7202.

### **6. How are GAF issued?**

NMFS will issue GAF in numbers of halibut. NMFS will post the conversion from IFQ net pounds to numbers of GAF for Area 2C and Area 3A for each fishing year on the NMFS Alaska Region website. NMFS will post the conversion factor for the current fishing year before the beginning of the commercial halibut fishing season each year. A table of current and past IFQ to GAF conversion factors is available on the NMFS [website](#).

**7. Are there limits on how much IFQ a person may transfer?**

Yes. IFQ holders in Area 2C may annually transfer up to 1,500 lb or 10%, whichever is greater, of their start year fishable pounds for use as GAF. IFQ holders in Area 3A may annually transfer 1,500 lb or 15%, whichever is greater, of their start year fishable pounds for use as GAF. Community Quota Entities (CQEs) that hold quota share are allowed to transfer IFQ as GAF. The limits on these transfers depend on whether the GAF permit holder is a CQE, an eligible community resident, or a non-resident.

**8. Are there limits on how many GAF a charter halibut permit holder may be issued?**

Yes, there are limits on the number of GAF a CHP holder may be issued. No more than 400 GAF may be assigned to a GAF permit associated with a CHP that is endorsed for six or fewer anglers. No more than 600 GAF may be assigned to a GAF permit associated with a CHP that is endorsed for more than six anglers. The Catch Sharing Plan does not limit the amount of GAF that may be transferred to military charter halibut permits.

**9. I have halibut quota share and a charter halibut permit. Can I lease IFQ to myself as GAF?**

Yes! You may transfer your IFQ to yourself as GAF, subject to the transfer limits described above.

**10. I've submitted my completed application for transfer of IFQ to GAF, now what?**

Upon approval of the application for transfer between IFQ and GAF, NMFS will issue a GAF permit to the holder of a charter halibut permit. The GAF permit will be assigned to the charter halibut permit specified by the GAF permit holder on the transfer application. The GAF permit holder may offer GAF for harvest by charter vessel anglers on board the vessel on which the operator's GAF permit and the assigned charter halibut permit are used.

NMFS will issue a revised GAF permit to the GAF permit holder each time during the year that it approves a transfer between IFQ and GAF for that GAF permit. Each GAF permit will be assigned to only one charter halibut permit in Area 2C or Area 3A, specified on the application for transfer between IFQ and GAF. That assignment cannot be changed during the year. Once GAF is transferred to a charter halibut permit holder and assigned to a specified charter halibut permit, it may not be transferred to another charter halibut permit holder.

**11. Can I transfer GAF after a charter fishing trip for halibut that were caught on that trip?**

No. Charter operators will be required to possess GAF in their GAF permit accounts prior to allowing charter vessel anglers to retain halibut as GAF. Transfers cannot occur after the fish have been caught.

**12. What happens if all the GAF assigned to a GAF permit are not harvested?**

Unused GAF will be transferred back to the IFQ permit from which it originated fifteen days prior to the end of the commercial IFQ halibut season. It will transfer as IFQ pounds using the same conversion factor that converted the IFQ to GAF. NMFS will round up to the nearest whole pound when transferring GAF to IFQ. On and after the automatic return date, unused GAF will no longer be authorized for use in the charter fishery in the current year. Applications for transfer

of IFQ to GAF will not be accepted during the one month prior to the automatic return date, to ensure that all GAF transactions are completed before the automatic return date. No application is required for the automatic return of unused GAF. NMFS will return any remaining unharvested GAF to the IFQ holder from whom it was derived on or as soon as possible after the automatic GAF return date.

**13. What if I won't use all of my GAF before the end of the season? Can I transfer it back to the IFQ permit holder?**

Yes, if both parties in the transaction agree, GAF may be voluntarily transferred back to the IFQ permit from which it was derived. However, applications for voluntary return of GAF to IFQ are accepted only during the month of August. The same application form used for the initial transfer of IFQ to GAF will be used for returns of GAF to IFQ. On or as soon as possible after September 1, NMFS will convert GAF in number of fish to IFQ in net pounds using the conversion factor for that year and return the converted IFQ to the IFQ holder's account. Unused GAF that are not voluntarily returned to the IFQ holder in September will automatically be returned to the IFQ holder 15 days before the end of the commercial fishing season (see question 12 above).

**14. Can GAF be transferred from one GAF permit to another GAF permit?**

No. GAF may not be transferred or sub-leased.

## GAF Availability

**15. How can I find IFQ that is available for lease as GAF?**

A list of halibut quota share holders is available on the NMFS [website](#). You may wish to contact quota share holders directly or there are a variety of brokers who may be able to connect you with a quota share holder with IFQ available for transfer as GAF. Transfers of IFQ to GAF may be agreed upon directly between halibut quota share holders and CHP holders, or brokers who currently facilitate transfers of halibut IFQ and charter halibut permits may act as intermediaries in transactions. Note: A transfer of IFQ to GAF is not valid until NMFS has approved the application for transfer.

**16. How much will it cost a charter halibut permit holder to lease GAF? What is the basis for GAF prices and will the price for GAF vary annually?**

NMFS will not participate in price negotiations for GAF. Those negotiations are private, voluntary, market-based transactions between halibut quota share holders and charter halibut permit holders.

The number of GAF transactions and the prices for those transactions will be determined by the supply of and demand for GAF. NMFS expects the cost of GAF to charter vessel anglers will vary annually because it will depend on a number of factors, including the supply of halibut IFQ for lease as GAF, the demand for GAF, the average weight of GAF used to convert pounds of IFQ to number of GAF, and the charter harvest management measures in place that year. Reports on the number and price of GAF transfers are available on the NMFS [website](#).

**17. How much will a charter vessel angler have to pay to catch and keep a GAF halibut?**

NMFS anticipates that the cost of GAF to charter vessel anglers will vary annually because it will depend on a number of factors, including the supply of halibut IFQ for lease as GAF, the demand for GAF, the average weight of GAF used to convert pounds of IFQ to number of GAF, and the charter harvest management measures in place that year.

Charter vessel anglers should note that not all charter vessel guides will have GAF to offer their clients for harvest. If a charter vessel angler is interested in harvesting GAF halibut, he or she should confirm with the charter operator before the trip begins that GAF are available. The charter vessel operator must have a positive balance in his GAF permit account before allowing clients to retain halibut as GAF.

**18. May I purchase my own IFQ for use as GAF in the charter fishery?**

Yes, if you are eligible to receive halibut quota share by transfer. To be eligible to purchase halibut quota share, a person must have 150 or more days of experience working as part of a harvesting crew in any U.S. commercial fishery. Work in support of harvesting but not directly related to it is not considered harvesting crew work. Charter halibut permit holders interested in obtaining halibut quota share should complete and submit to NMFS an [Application for Eligibility to Receive QS/IFQ](#).

**19. Isn't selling a sport-caught fish illegal?**

Yes, current regulations prohibit any person from selling sport-caught fish. Sale, trade, or barter of all sport-caught halibut by a charter vessel angler is prohibited under State of Alaska regulations and section 25(6) of the [IPHC annual management measures](#). Charter vessel operators may offer a charter vessel angler the opportunity to harvest additional or larger halibut up to the unguided sport limits for the area. Since retained GAF are sport-caught halibut, they may not be sold, traded or bartered.

**20. Are there any cost recovery fees associated with GAF?**

Yes, GAF are subject to cost recovery fees under the IFQ Program. The IFQ permit holder is responsible for paying of cost recovery fees. A standard price will be assigned to all IFQ transferred as GAF for purposes of calculating any cost recovery fees owed by the IFQ permit holder. The standard price applied to IFQ converted to GAF is not subject to challenge.

## [GAF Permits and Accounts](#)

**21. What is a GAF Permit?**

A GAF permit is an annual permit issued by NMFS that authorizes a charter halibut angler to retain GAF that are caught in the regulatory area specified on the GAF permit during the sport halibut fishing season.

**22. How do I get a GAF Permit?**

A GAF Permit is issued to a charter halibut permit holder when NMFS approves the transfer of halibut IFQ from the commercial IFQ sector to the charter halibut sector.

**23. How can I check my GAF or IFQ balance?**

GAF and IFQ account balances are available online at [eFISH](#). Alternatively, you may request a permit balance in writing by contacting the NMFS, Restricted Access Management Program (RAM) by fax at (907) 586-7354 or e-mail at [RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov](mailto:RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov). RAM staff are only available during business hours Monday through Friday; therefore, we strongly encourage you to use our on-line services to obtain your permit balances.

## GAF Use

### **24. How can GAF be used with the current annual management measures?**

GAF may be used to harvest halibut in the charter fishery up to the limits in place for unguided sport anglers; currently 2 fish of any size per day. For example, if a 1-fish per day limit were in place for charter vessel anglers, 1 GAF could be used to catch and retain a second halibut of any size. The current annual management measures for charter vessel anglers are available on the NMFS [website](#).

Charter vessel anglers and guides must ensure that there is sufficient GAF available in the GAF permit holder's account prior to harvest of GAF and must comply with all reporting requirements described below.

### **25. Who holds the GAF permit?**

The GAF permit holder will be required to have the GAF permit and the assigned charter halibut permit on board the vessel on which charter vessel anglers retain GAF, and to present the permits for inspection on the request of any authorized officer.

### **26. Will all charter vessels offer GAF to their anglers?**

Participation in the GAF program is voluntary. NMFS anticipates that not all charter operators will choose to participate. If a charter guide does not have GAF available for use, the charter angler will be limited to the bag and size limits in place for charter anglers.

### **27. What happens if I harvest a GAF halibut that is bigger than the average used for the GAF conversion? Do I have to pay extra?**

NMFS does not participate in price negotiations for GAF, those negotiations are private, voluntary, market-based transactions between charter operators who hold GAF and charter vessel anglers using their services. NMFS anticipates that charter operators could use different pricing methods to accommodate different sizes of retained GAF.

### **28. How is a halibut retained as GAF distinguished from a halibut retained under the regular charter bag limit?**

Charter guides are required to mark retained GAF by removing the tips of the upper and lower lobes of the caudal (tail) fin. Additionally, charter vessel guides are required to retain the carcass showing caudal fin clips until the halibut fillets are offloaded so that enforcement can verify the length and that the fish was retained as GAF. For each halibut retained as GAF, charter vessel guides are required to immediately record on the GAF permit log (on back of the GAF permit) the date and total halibut length in inches. GAF permit holders landing GAF on private property will be required to allow authorized officers access to the point of landing.

## Reporting GAF

### **29. Where do I record GAF landings?**

The Catch Sharing Plan includes new recordkeeping and reporting requirements for GAF in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) saltwater charter logbooks. The logbook will continue to be used as the primary reporting method for operators in the charter halibut fishery. The person whose business was assigned an ADF&G saltwater charter logbook is required to retain and make available for inspection by any authorized officer the completed original logbooks for two years following the charter vessel fishing trip.

GAF permit holders are also required to record information on the GAF permit log (on the back of the GAF permit). Additionally, GAF permit holders are required to electronically report GAF harvests by 11:59 p.m. (Alaska local time) on the last day of the fishing trip in which GAF were retained and then record the electronic reporting confirmation number on the GAF permit log. The GAF permits and GAF permit logs must be retained for a period of two years. Electronic reports of GAF must be submitted via NMFS' integrated on-line system, [eFISH](#). To record GAF harvests and check GAF account balances, a GAF permit holder must set up an account in eFISH using his or her NMFS ID (which can be found on the GAF permit).

### **30. What information must be recorded in the logbook and on the GAF permit log?**

Complete logbook reporting requirements are described in the [eCFR](#) at 50 CFR 300.65(d)(4)(ii) and in the logbook. For charter halibut fishing, the guide is required to record the following information in the ADF&G logbook:

- Guide license number
- Date
- Charter halibut permit number
- GAF permit number (if applicable)
- Primary statistical area fished
- Angler sport fishing license numbers and names
- Number of halibut kept and released
- Number of GAF retained
- Guide signature
- Angler signature (if halibut are kept)

The charter vessel guide also must record the date the fish was caught and retained, the length of that fish, and the electronic GAF report confirmation number on the GAF permit log.

### **31. What information must be submitted electronically for GAF?**

Complete electronic GAF reporting requirements are described in the [eCFR](#) at 50 CFR 300.65(d)(4)(iii)(B). The information required to be submitted electronically through [eFISH](#) includes:

- Logbook number
- Vessel identification number
- GAF permit number under which GAF were caught and retained
- ADFG sport fishing guide license number held by the guide who certified the corresponding logbook data sheet

- Date GAF were caught and retained
- Number of GAF caught and retained
- Length of each GAF caught and retained
- For community charter halibut permits, the community or port where the charter vessel fishing trip began and ended

**32. How do I know my electronic report was submitted correctly?**

Upon completion of an electronic GAF report, you will receive a GAF report confirmation number. This number must be recorded on the GAF permit log. The electronic reporting system will also send a confirmation email to the email address associated with the GAF permit account.

**33. How can I correct a report if I have made a mistake?**

You may call the NOAA Data Clerks in Anchorage at 1-800-304-4846 (option #1) or (907) 586-7163 to correct mistakes in your electronic GAF reports. The data clerks will provide you with a manual report form that must be completed, signed, and returned by fax, email, or postal mail. The data clerk will send you a confirmation email once your report has been received.

**34. I can't access the Internet to submit my electronic GAF report. What should I do?**

You may call the NOAA Data Clerks in Anchorage at 1-800-304-4846 (select option #1) or (907) 586-7163 to obtain a manual report form that must be completed, signed, and returned by fax or postal mail. The data clerk will send you a confirmation email once your report has been received.

**35. I got back to the dock after midnight. How do I submit a late electronic report for GAF?**

GAF permit holders should report all GAF landings electronically, even if the report is submitted after 11:59 p.m. (Alaska local time). A charter vessel fishing trip begins when fishing gear is first deployed from a vessel and ends when any halibut or charter vessel anglers are offloaded from the charter vessel. Therefore, if the vessel did not return to the dock to offload until after midnight, it would be considered a multi-day trip and GAF could be reported by 11:59 p.m. on the day the trip ended.

**36. Where can I get additional GAF permit logs for recording harvested GAF?**

The GAF log is on the back of the GAF permit that is issued when a GAF transfer is approved. If more space is needed to record GAF harvested on a GAF permit, additional log pages are available on the [website](#). These additional GAF permit log pages should be retained with the GAF permit for 2 years after the fishing season in which GAF were harvested.

**37. What do I do with my GAF permit after the season ends?**

GAF permit holders will be required to retain all GAF permits and GAF permit logs for two years after the date of issuance and to make them available for inspection upon request of any authorized officer. GAF permit account balances can be checked online at [eFISH](#).



## 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](#), or contact NMFS directly.

For more information about the CSP, GAF, and the annual management measures, please contact:

Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Regional Office (Juneau)  
Telephone: 907-586-7228

For questions about your Charter Halibut Permit or GAF permit accounts, please contact:

NMFS Restricted Access Management Program  
Website: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/permits-licenses>  
Email: [RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov](mailto:RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov)  
Telephone (toll free): 800-304-4846 option 2  
Telephone (Juneau): 907-586-7202

To check account balances or submit an electronic GAF report, login to [eFISH](#).

To correct mistakes in your electronic GAF reports, you may call the NOAA Data Clerks in Anchorage at 1-800-304-4846 (option #1) or (907) 586-7163.