

Halibut Catch Record Card Frequently Asked Questions

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) would like to provide the following responses to some questions that we have received from stakeholders on the implementation of Senate Bill 6127. This legislation, which was introduced by Senator Van de Wege, allows WDFW to charge a fee of up to \$5.00 for the halibut catch record card (CRC). These responses are based on our understanding of the intent of the legislation and the final bill language, in the context of the international and federal management processes for Pacific halibut.

1. When will the halibut CRC fee be charged, and what is the fee?

Beginning with the 2019-20 license year, WDFW will charge a fee for the halibut CRC for certain license types (see below). Those licenses will have a total (out-the-door) fee of \$5.50 (\$5.00 for the CRC plus \$0.50 for the wild transaction fee).

2. Which license types will be assessed a fee for the halibut CRC?

The following license types will have a fee for a halibut CRC:

- Annual saltwater licenses and annual combination (saltwater + freshwater) licenses for:
 - Residents
 - Non-residents
 - Seniors
 - Disabled reduced-fee

The following license types will continue to receive a halibut CRC free of charge:

- Temporary licenses for one-day, two-days, and three-days
- Charter one-day stamp
- Youth (under 15)

3. Will the halibut CRC improve the precision of WDFW's halibut CRC catch estimate?

Yes—Under the current licensing system, all licensed anglers (except those purchasing a charter one-day stamp) receive an annual CRC, which includes halibut. As a result, the CRC is not a good tool to estimate the number of anglers intending to fish for halibut. Contributing to the problem is that anglers can continue to receive CRCs even after the halibut season has closed.

Beginning with the 2019 license year, while we still will not know the full “universe” of halibut anglers because of the various license types that will still receive it free of charge, we will be able to identify the subset of annual license holders that purchased the CRC. Additionally, sales of the halibut CRC will end once the season has closed, which will also help improve the CRC catch expansion.

While there is a high degree of uncertainty associated with using the CRC to generate a precise catch estimate, using the CRC as another data collection method to compare the catch estimates generated through our rigorous port sampling program has been useful. When

comparing methods, the CRC is consistently higher, but displays the same trend as the port sampling estimate.

4. Are we going to have a separate CRC for halibut? Will it have a different deadline?

No—The legislation does not require a separate CRC for halibut and because we will not be able to identify the full “universe” of halibut anglers, there really is no need to create a separate CRC for halibut and require anglers to submit it by a different deadline. We have also heard from many stakeholders that they are frustrated with keeping track of multiple pieces of paper, so we wanted to avoid adding to that frustration.

Creating a separate CRC and having a different deadline would also increase costs for WDFW. There would be costs associated with creating a new form, sending reminder notices to anglers to submit their CRC by the different deadline, and hiring additional staff to enter the halibut CRC data on a different schedule than the general CRC.

In summary, having a separate CRC would not result in benefits to the fishery, but would have additional costs.

5. Will the format of the CRC for halibut change? Can anglers get additional CRCs or replacement CRCs?

Yes—We modified the CRC format to be consistent with the adoption of an annual bag limit of four halibut per angler to reduce the number of fields for recording halibut to four.

Anglers may not purchase additional CRCs that include halibut; however, anglers who legitimately lose or misplace their CRC may purchase a replacement CRC.

6. Are we going to use the CRC as the “official” catch estimation methodology, rather than the port sampling program?

No—WDFW has a robust port sampling program, particularly during the halibut fishery. Because halibut fisheries are subject to federal catch limits or quotas, WDFW must collect and report recreational catch data to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for quota-monitoring purposes on a “real-time” basis.

Additionally, port samplers measure the length of the halibut landed to estimate an average weight as the halibut quota is in pounds of fish.

Recreational catch updates are submitted to IPHC and NMFS about 1-2 days after an opener, and attainment of the recreational subarea quotas is monitored inseason. When a specific subarea (i.e., Puget Sound, North Coast, South Coast, and Columbia River) is projected to reach its quota, WDFW consults with IPHC and NMFS, and schedules the season closure accordingly.

7. Are we going to use the CRC catch estimates for setting halibut seasons?

No—There is a high degree of uncertainty with the halibut CRC catch estimate, and quota attainment needs to be monitored on a “real-time” basis. However, we will continue to use the CRC to monitor daily catch limits and as a mechanism to monitor compliance with the annual bag limit. Anglers are required to record their catch of halibut on their CRC immediately after retaining a fish. Therefore, anglers who have already recorded a halibut on a particular day should no longer be fishing for or retaining halibut on that day, and those who have filled their CRC with four fish should not be fishing for retaining halibut for the remainder of the year.

8. How much revenue will the halibut CRC generate? How will the funds be spent?

Using an estimate of 10,000 anglers, depending on the number of anglers purchasing an annual license vs. a temporary license and the halibut quota for a particular year, the halibut CRC could generate about \$25,000 in annual revenue. A portion of these funds would be used for a one-time rulemaking process to implement the fee requirement, and the remainder of the funds would be used to offset the recreational halibut port sampling costs.