



HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED

It only took 20 years (!) but an effective halibut catch sharing plan (CSP) is now in place. The halibut CSP establishes percentage based allocations for charter and commercial fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A, ensuring allocations for both sectors will fluctuate directly in response to changes in halibut abundance. The CSP also establishes a mechanism for limited transfer of halibut IFQ from commercial to individual charter operators, which will allow charter clients to catch an extra halibut when bag limits are set at one fish. The CSP allows charter operators to identify management measures that restrain their sector's harvest to annual allocations, and tasks the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) with reviewing and recommending those management measures to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). The IPHC annually reviews and adopts charter management measures, which creates a responsive system designed to prevent charter overages while minimizing disruption to charter businesses.

In this first year of the CSP, the process worked without a hitch. The IPHC identified preliminary allocations, the charter stakeholders developed preferred management measures, the Council reviewed and recommended the measures, and the IPHC adopted charter/Council recommendations. Good process, good management. Finally!

The limited transfer provision of the CSP allows charter operators to lease 1500 pounds or 10%, whichever is greater, of a 2C commercial fishermen's annual IFQ; and 1500 pounds or 15%, whichever is greater, of a 3A commercial fishermen's IFQ. A 10% agreement negotiated in the beginning of the season would allow a charter operation access to IFQ at a prearranged price and roll unused IFQ back to the commercial QS holder in the fall. This would allow charter operators to meet client need without paying for any extra quota while allowing the commercial QS holder to harvest the IFQ remainder prior to the season closure or in the following year—a win: win.

The Boat Company, an eco-tour business that operates in Southeast Alaska, is interested in leasing some IFQ in 2014. The Boat Company has actively advocated for halibut bycatch reductions in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea, and filed a lawsuit against the restructured observer program largely in protest of inadequate bycatch monitoring on trawl boats. If you are interested in leasing quota to the Boat Company, please let ALFA know and we will facilitate.



Join ALFA today!

www.alfafish.org

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Southeast Board of Fisheries Proposals are due **April 10th!** Call the ALFA office if you need help writing a proposal.

WANT TO DONATE?

ALFA makes it easy to support our projects!
Here's How:

- Click the "DONATE" option on our website: www.alfafish.org
- Call the office: 747-3400
- Mail in a donation:
PO Box 1229
Sitka, AK 99835
- You can also support ALFA buy purchasing merchandise like T-shirts, hats, and bumper stickers. You will find them at Murray Pacific or our office, located on the second floor of the Sitka Sound Science Center. Stop on by!



Note: We will be temporarily housed on the SJC Fine Arts Camp in March/April during SSSC renovations.



CHARTER "GUIDE" DEFINITION REVISITED

Because fishermen are endlessly innovative, the charter limited entry program and the CSP led to a new "assisted unguided" version of chartering that includes clients receiving fishing assistance from a not-a-guide operating a separate boat, and even went so far as clients being set adrift in unpowered boats to fish. These clients were not limited by the charter halibut bag limit, and the charter operations did not hold charter halibut limited entry permits. The loophole was created by the discrepancy between federal and state definitions of "guide;" under federal definitions a guide is only a guide if s/he is on the same boat with the clients. The Council addressed this issue at their February meeting by modifying the federal definition to match the state definition and adding a compensation and assistance criteria—i.e., if a client pays for assistance and that assistance is provided while the client is fishing, then that client is a guided sport or charter client and must abide by the charter limited entry and CSP rules. Nicole Kimball, representing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, decisively led the Council through this issue despite objections from the charter industry to closing the loophole. Council action must be followed by rule making and review by the Secretary of Commerce but, assuming the redefinition prevails, this reconciliation of competing guide definitions is yet another improvement in halibut charter management!

BERING SEA HALIBUT BYCATCH

In some parts of the Bering Sea (Area 4CDE) halibut bycatch is now **FOUR TIMES** the directed fishery catch limit. Halibut fishermen living in Area 4 communities face the very real possibility of a future directed fishery closure while the trawl fisheries continue to kill halibut off their shore. A year ago the Council initiated a discussion paper to evaluate Bering Sea halibut bycatch, and reviewed that discussion paper at the February Council meeting. Despite compelling testimony from fishermen and Bering Sea communities, the Council choose only to expand the discussion paper and to request reports from Bering Sea sectors on their voluntary efforts to reduce halibut bycatch. The reports will be made to the Council in June, at which time the Council can initiate a regulatory amendment to reduce bycatch or decide the voluntary industry efforts are sufficient. ALFA will continue to work with other concerned organizations and communities to convince the State of Alaska and the Council that rebuilding halibut stocks demands reductions in halibut bycatch. The small halibut are the rebuilding potential of the stock and **MUST** be protected.

Watch for June
bycatch action alert!

IPHC SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABLE

The International Pacific Halibut Commission is currently accepting applications for their scholarship program. The scholarship provides funding for students with a connection to the halibut fishery pursuing undergraduate or technical degrees. Generally, a single new scholarship valued at \$2,000 per year is awarded. The scholarships are renewable annually for the four-year period of undergraduate education. Applications must be postmarked by June 30, 2014. For more information visit the IPHC website: <http://www.iphc.int/opportunities/scholarship.html>

THE HALIBUT CATCH PROGRAM

A group of charter operators have developed a plan that would authorize commercial halibut quota to be purchased from willing halibut QS sellers and reserved for use by charter clients. The plan, titled the Catch Accountability Through Compensated Halibut or CATCH, proposes options for procuring the necessary funds, including “loans, grants or other sources.” Proposers of the plan suggest that the CATCH quota pool would be held and managed by an “entity” established and authorized by the Council. The CATCH quota share acquisition goal for Area 2C is a half million pounds, which is roughly 15% of the area commercial catch limit .

The Council reviewed the draft plan at the February meeting and encouraged CATCH proposers to work with Council staff on the plan. The Halibut Coalition and ALFA are monitoring development of the CATCH plan closely. While compensated reallocation is preferably to attempted political reallocation, the CATCH plan could negatively affect coastal fishing communities, halibut processors, and the public’s access to halibut. The Halibut Coalition has asked that the Council include in the review consideration of a charter halibut permit buy-back and a full charter IFQ program as two alternatives to the CATCH system, but to date the Council has not been receptive to those requests. We will continue to work to broaden the analysis and will keep you informed.



NEW T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST!



As much as we love our last T-shirt, it is time for a new design. ALFA will award \$100 to whoever comes up with the design we choose.

So put on your creativity caps and get to work! What would you like to wear? What would you be eager to gift to someone else? How can we best advertise and gain support for ALFA in the form of a comfortable shirt...? Think about it, design it, then submit it via email: alfastaff@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATE SPONSORS

BE SURE TO THANK THESE BUSINESSES WHEN YOU SHOP LOCALLY:

Seafood Producers Cooperative (Highliner Member)

Precision Boatworks — Murray Pacific — Channel Club — Coastal Collision Repair

Sitka Sound Seafoods — First Bank — Sitka Salmon Shares — Petro Marine Services — Sitka Boat Watch

Foreign Automotive Repair — Sea Mart Quality Foods — Serka’s Welding & Fabrication — Hoonah Cold Storage

Contributing: ALPS Federal Credit Union — Fishermen’s Eye Gallery — Shaffer & Co. CPAs, Inc — City of Port Alexander

FISHERY CONSERVATION NETWORK PROJECTS

FCN PROJECTS

- Rockfish bycatch mapping
- Bathymetric mapping
- Whale deterrents
- Electronic monitoring/
data loggers
- Fuel Efficiency

All FCN projects share core goals of promoting productive fisheries and successful fishermen.

Get Involved!

We are always eager to involve more fishermen in ongoing projects.

Call 747- 3400
or email
alfastaff@gmail.com



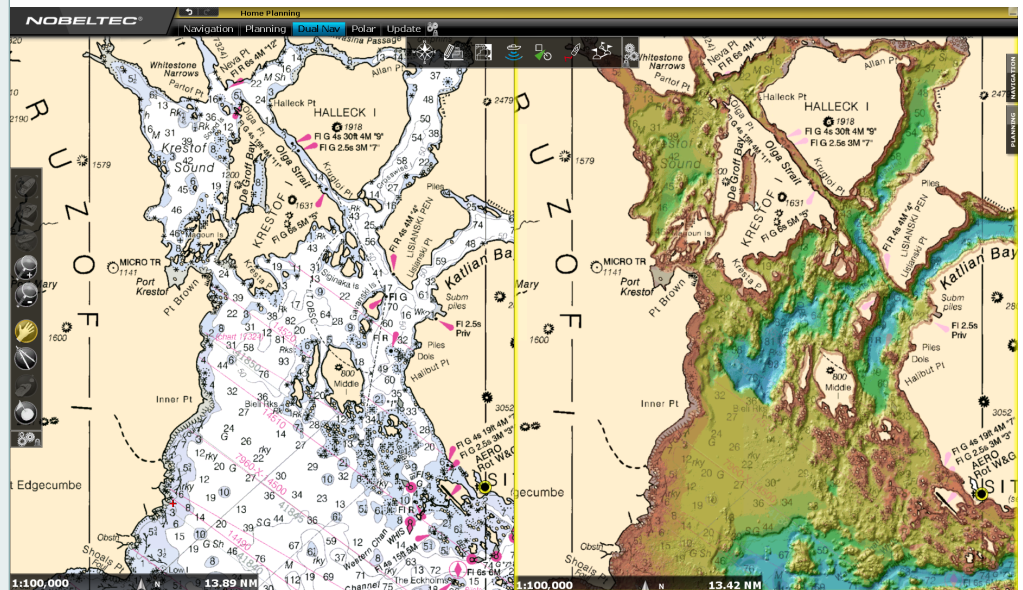
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Phil Wyman

Rockfish bycatch and bathymetric mapping

Over the past six years, FCN members have collected rockfish bycatch rate data and provided that data to ALFA. Three years ago ALFA compiled and mapped that data to identify areas with consistently high bycatch rates. ALFA also collected and compiled bathymetric data from FCN members. Bathy data was overlaid with set data, mapped and then provided to fishermen to help them identify the reefs and other benthic structures that concentrate rockfish in a given areas. These tools help fishermen efficiently target halibut or sablefish while controlling rockfish bycatch to allowable retention levels. The data quickly established that fishermen are moving away from areas with high bycatch rates, which prevents rockfish overages and protects the resource. We hope to contract with a Global Information System (GIS) expert in the next year to include survey catch and bycatch data as well as additional commercial data, and then provide these enhanced maps to FCN members.

The bathymetry maps that ALFA has created from fleet bathy data and from multi-beam sonar are a powerful tool and likely to improve with the new Nobletec Catch program (not to be confused with the charter CATCH program!). The image below provides a glimpse of what these maps can do for you.



ALFA's FCN: Empowering stewardship innovation through research and collaboration.

FCN projects would not be possible without the generous support of the Oak Foundation, the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the North Pacific Research Board.

FISHERY CONSERVATION NETWORK PROJECTS

Fuel Efficiency

ALFA is entering year two of a fuel use awareness and efficiency project. We have assisted fishermen with purchasing and installing fuel flow meters to help fishermen identify trade-offs between running fast and saving fuel. For more information or if you could use some assistance supporting your fuel efficiency experiments, call Dan Falvey(907-738-8710). ALFA has also partnered with the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) to develop fuel efficiency audits on boats characteristic of the fleet. When finished, these audits will provide fishermen a way to calculate fuel costs associated with common electronics like radars and sodium lights. It will also provide a means for understanding the effect of hull speed on fuel use. Fishermen with fuel flow monitors can enter their data and get information specific to their vessel. More detail on these energy audits is available on the ALFA website at: <http://www.alfafish.org/fuel-efficiency-project.html> Call Dan today about a fuel flow meter for your boat!

We still have stipends available to help ALFA members purchase fuel flow meters!

SEASWAP Goes to Hollywood (or rather London...)

The BBC will be filming sperm whales and longliners off Sitka this spring and featuring the unique collaboration between scientists and fishermen that forms SEASWAP, the Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project. The BBC will provide SEASWAP with GoPro cameras and waterproof cases to deploy on blackcod gear in hopes of capturing footage of sperm whales depredating. The film crew will also film on board a longliner and from a chase boat on the cod grounds. We expect this story to highlight the SEASWAP work in a positive way, supporting both the collaboration and the progress that has been made to understand whale behavior and predation. The GoPro cameras will also increase our understanding of sperm whale -longline stripping techniques which will help SEASWAP improve deterrents and protect longline gear from these hungry whales.

We are looking for boats willing to deploy the GoPros this spring as well as fisherman willing to be filmed hauling gear.

Other whale work scheduled for this spring includes additional decoy buoy deployments and, hopefully, new device testing. The decoy buoy is deployed 6-7 miles from an active set and a playback recorder emits the whale dinner bell—a recording of a boat shifting in and out of gear. Results from last summer indicate the decoy buoy can effectively distract whales from active longlines for up to four hours.

The new device SEASWAP hopes to test this summer deploys a screen, web or chain over a fish when it strikes a longline hook. This new device is the result of a SEASWAP collaboration with Tasmanian researcher Derek Hamer. The device will initially be tested with halibut gear. More on that device if SEASWAP is successful in securing research and development funding!

Data Loggers

Because fishery managers and enforcement personnel continue to push for Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) on sablefish/halibut boats, ALFA secured research funding to test data loggers as a more cost effective alternative. Data loggers maintain a continuous record of the vessels GPS position; data can be downloaded when the vessel reaches port or automatically transmitted via cell or satellite systems once the vessel is within range. Data loggers do not require the costly monthly subscription service associated with VMS, hence are less expensive to operate. Data loggers are relatively small devices that can be mounted on the top of the wheel house or in the cabin area and, once mounted, require little or no operator maintenance. In 2013, three ALFA members carried data loggers on their boats. Initial tests of multiple systems compared reliability, operational efficiency, and fleet compatibility. ALFA's goal is to deploy an additional three data loggers in 2014. **If you are willing to carry a data logger on your boat, please call the ALFA office.**

OBSERVER PROGRAM AND ELECTRONIC MONITORING

At the June Council meeting, NMFS is scheduled to provide a year one observer program performance review. The review should include meaningful observer coverage rates such as the amount of catch observed instead of the percentage of trips observed, which has been the metric used to date. The Council has asked for cost data and strategies for increasing cost efficiency, but the Council is also expected to consider raising the observer fee assessment above the current 1.25%. Watch for an action alert on this issue!

At the February Council meeting, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on a number of observer program amendments requested by the industry. The Council only assigned staff time to two proposals: adjusting observer coverage requirements for small fixed gear catcher processors and reassigning the Bering Sea catcher vessels trawling for pacific cod to full coverage. Other proposals (e.g., establishing one fee collection system for the IFQ halibut and sablefish fleet) have been placed on hold.

On the observer lawsuit: the judge recently scheduled oral arguments for late April, and is expected to rule on the case either from the bench or shortly after the hearing. The lawsuit against the observer program was filed by The Boat Company, a southeast eco-tour company. The Fixed Gear Alliance intervened in opposition to a number of observer program issues, including high costs and the absence of an electronic monitoring (EM) alternative.

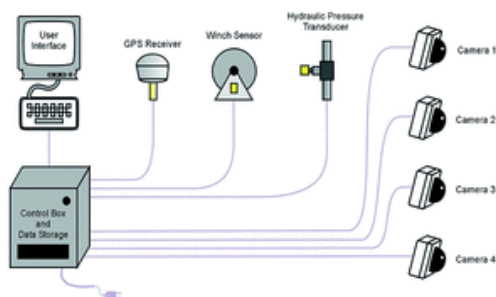


Electronic Monitoring:

Thanks to unyielding perseverance and the relentless support of Senator Murkowski and her outstanding staff member Jay Sterne, we are making progress on EM. Senator Murkowski included the following language in the NMFS 2014 appropriations bill:

“Electronic Logbooks -The agreement reiterates Senate language that NOAA shall maintain full funding for the continued installation of electronic logbooks and monitoring systems, which are both inherent to NOAA’s core mission and essential to the implementation of current fishery regulations. The electronic monitoring systems shall be part of an integrated at sea monitoring program and shall serve as an alternative to observers for vessels carrying such electronic monitoring systems. The agreement clarifies that NMFS shall work in fiscal year 2014 with the small boat fixed gear fleet to implement a cooperative research program designed to test the functionality of available electronic monitoring systems.”

With this directive, NMFS has agreed to work with Alaska’s fixed gear groups to design and implement EM cooperative research in 2014 (and hopefully beyond). ALFA and NMFS will co-host an EM fixed gear workshop in Juneau February 17th-18th to collaboratively develop multiple EM approaches and the essential steps to integrating EM as an alternative to observers. ALFA has applied for grant funding to support EM planning, development and coordination to advance EM and will continue to work toward providing EM as a less onerous and costly at sea monitoring alternative.



ALFA’s other political hero in the observer program/EM effort is Alaska State Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, who has testified to the Council on this issue, provided a letter in support of ALFA’s EM grant proposal, and recently submitted his name for the soon to be appointed Council EM Workgroup. We are fortunate to have such hard working political leaders **working with us**. Please thank Senator Murkowski and Representative Kreiss-Tomkins when you see them!

GRENADIERS ADDED TO GOA AND BSAI FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Recent review of Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea/Aleutian Island (BSAI) trawl survey data reveal that giant grenadier are the most abundant fish, in terms of weight, in depths from 600-3,000 feet, and that they are taken in significant numbers incidental to both trawl and longline (sablefish) fisheries.

Grenadier are slow to mature and reproduce, can live to be 58 years old, and most of the grenadier taken in the surveys and commercial fishery are females. Grenadier currently are not managed, hence no quotas are set and catch is not reported. This has become a cause for concern, particularly to some conservation groups, who are advocating for more active management. At their February meeting, the Council took final action to amend GOA and BS Fishery Management Plans to include grenadiers as “an ecosystem component,” which means record keeping requirements will increase, only very limited directed fishing will be allowed, but grenadier annual catch limits and allowable biological catch limits will not be set.



The Council also established the grenadier Maximum Retainable Allowance or MRA at 8%; i.e., only 8% of the fish on board can be grenadier. While few boats retain grenadier, please keep this limit in mind if you choose to do so for any reason.

SUMMER HOUSING NEEDED FOR ALFA INTERN. CALL THE OFFICE IF YOU CAN HELP OUT.

ALASKA SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES TRUST AND ALASKANS OWN

In 2009, ALFA helped launch the Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT), which is designed to invest in access opportunities for Alaska fishermen, support sustainable community-based fisheries, and promote sustainably sourced seafood. The ASFT is developing a quota share investment pool to assist new fishermen with access to the halibut/sablefish fisheries and provide a flexible quota share exit strategy for existing quota share holders. **If you are interested in selling or purchasing QS please call ALFA (907-747-3400 or ASFT (907 747-3477)).**

With ASFT project partners, ALFA launched Alaskans Own, the first Community Supported Fishery program in Alaska. AO sources seafood from Fishery Conservation Network members and through Sitka's processors: Seafood Producers Cooperative and Sitka Sound Seafoods. Residents of Sitka, Juneau, and now Anchorage purchase seafood subscriptions and receive AO premium quality seafood every month. Along with each seafood delivery, subscribers receive *Docklines*, the AO Newsletter that includes information on specific fish and fisheries, describes the conservation work of the FCN, profiles individual fishermen, and offers recipes to go with the fish of the month. *Docklines* is intended to promote sustainable fisheries and to connect Alaska residents with the commercial fishermen behind the AO product. We are fortunate to have the support of local processors, the engagement of local fishermen, and the enthusiasm of Alaska residents for this access to locally harvested and processed seafood.

Alaskans Own Seafood: the best investment you will ever taste!

Check out the AO website at:

<http://www.alfafish.org/alaskans-own.html>

or

<http://thealaskatrust.org/alaskans-own.php>



Alaskans Own

MISSION: Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA) is a non-profit association of independent commercial longline vessel owners and crewmembers who are committed to continuing the sustainable harvest of sablefish, halibut, and groundfish, while supporting healthy marine ecosystems and strong coastal communities through resource stewardship and participation in federal, state, and local forums.

BRIEF HISTORY: Founded in 1978, ALFA spearheaded efforts to eliminate foreign fishing on sablefish and rockfish stocks during the 70s, supported an aggressive rebuilding schedule for depleted sablefish stocks during the 80s, and lead the battle to eliminate trawling from Southeast Alaska waters during the 90s.

NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO JOIN OR GIVE!

Support our mission; stay up to date on fisheries news, meetings, and projects with an ALFA membership.

Mail the slip below with your dues to:

ALFA
PO Box 1229
Sitka, AK 99835

Or click "SUPPORT" on
our website:
www.alfafish.org

___ Basic \$250 ___ Deckhand \$100

___ Supporting \$600 ___ Business \$250

___ Highliner \$1,000

Name: _____

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Alaska Longline
Fishermen's Association
P.O. Box 1229
Sitka, AK 99835

Phone: 907-747-3400
Fax: 907-747-3462
E-mail:
alfastaff@gmail.com



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



MARCH

Halibut/Sablefish IFQ
Season Opens March 8

APRIL

Southeast Board of
Fisheries Proposals
due April 10th

North Pacific Fishery
Management Council
Meeting April 7-15

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE