



CHANGES PROPOSED TO OBSERVER PROGRAM

The National Marine Fisheries Service recently released their proposed Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) for 2015 observer coverage in the groundfish and halibut fisheries. Changes **proposed** relative to the 2013/2014 include:

- Eliminate the “vessel selection pool”—i.e., no more two month selection.
- Create two “trip selection” pools:
 - Small vessel trip selection- vessels 40 to 57.5 feet LOA: 12% selection rate on a trip by trip basis. Vessel operators must register each trip at least 3 days in advance, and may register up to 3 trips at a time.
 - Large vessel trip selection- all catcher vessels fishing trawl gear and all catcher vessels fishing fixed gear that are 57.5 feet LOA and greater: 24% selection rate on a trip by trip basis.
- No observer releases issued to vessels in “large vessel” category.
- Releases ONLY issued to “small vessel” category boats with insufficient life-raft capacity—i.e., bunk space limitations WILL NOT be grounds for a release.
- Vessels selected by NMFS to participate in the electronic monitoring (EM) cooperative research will be in the non-selection pool for observer coverage (i.e., will not be assigned an observer).

NMFS’ rationale for eliminating the bunk space observer release are: 1) the trip by trip vs. two month selection at a 12% rate lessens the burden on small boats; 2) data obtained from these boats is important to management. In other words, NMFS expects owners of selected boats with insufficient bunk space to accommodate an observer by rearranging trips scheduled with an IFQ rider, or by leaving behind crew, creating an additional bunk, or directing one crew-member to sleep on the floor.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will take comment on the 2015 ADP at their October 8th meeting in Anchorage. ALFA has been a strong advocate for observer releases to boats that cannot readily accommodate an observer until NMFS can provide EM systems as an alternative. We also continue to object to the dramatically reduced coverage on the trawl fleet (50% since the observer program was restructured) and the inequitable financial burden placed on the hook and line fleet (72% of the program costs despite harvesting approximately 16% of the resource covered by the new program). ALFA will provide both written and oral testimony, but your comments are important! Comments on the ADP can be sent to: npfmc.comments@noaa.gov.



Join ALFA today!
www.alfafish.org

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DATES TO REMEBER

Deadline for comments on the 2015 ADP to the NPFMC is Tuesday, September 30

ALFA Member Meeting Thursday, October 2nd 5:30 at SSSC—snacks will be provided

WANT TO DONATE?

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Here's How:

- Click the “DONATE” option on our website: www.alfafish.org
- Mail in a donation:
PO Box 1229
Sitka, AK 99835
- Buy great merchandise, such as T-shirts, hats and bumper stickers.



You will find these at Murray Pacific and our office—located on the second floor of the Sitka Sound Science Center.



Stop on by!

CHANGES PROPOSED TO OBSERVER PROGRAM CONT'D

Some points to make in your comments:

- Observer deployment should be assigned by fishery or by gear type instead of by trip to ensure higher coverage in fisheries with a larger impact on the resource.
- Bunk space releases continue to be essential for small boats until EM is provided as a monitoring alternative. (Please explain why the release is necessary for your operation).
- Observer costs should be assigned by gear type—the hook and line fleet should not pay for observer coverage on the trawl fleet.

Deadline for comments to the Council for the October meeting is Tuesday September 30th but we can hand deliver comments if you drop them by the ALFA office after the deadline. You can find the draft ADP on NPFMC's website: <http://www.npfmc.org/observer-program/> It is in the first section under the *Observer Advisory Committee* heading.

Deadline for comments
is September 30th!

ELECTRONIC MONITORING

ALFA and other fixed gear groups continue to slog away in an effort to secure an electronic monitoring alternative to observers for our fleet. At this point EM Cooperative Research is moving forward on four tracks: Track 1: An industry-led integrated observer/EM approach based on Canadian EM program and designed to work on the hook and line halibut/sablefish fleet; Track 2: A side by side comparison of EM vs. observers on vessels large enough to accommodate both; Track 3: A stereo camera/discard chute/automated software approach that may work in the future on larger boats; Track 4: an electronic logbook program that could be incorporated into all of the above approaches.

The fixed gear groups continue to focus on Track 1 development, since systems deployed through this approach are compatible with our fleet. Unfortunately, NMFS continues to focus on Tracks 2 and 3 because they are committed to avoiding manual review of the collected EM footage. The Council has prioritized EM integration in the halibut/sablefish fleet, however NMFS' interpretation of “priority”, both in terms of timing and fleet compatibility, differs markedly from that of the fixed gear industry. The obvious disconnects are largely responsible for the painfully slow progress on EM implementation. The process would benefit from a hard shove via industry comments to the Council. In your comments please explain:

- The importance of rapidly developing an EM alternative **that is compatible** with small hook and line boats;
- The importance of keeping EM focused on collecting scientifically relevant data—i.e., catch and bycatch estimation.

Alaska's Congressional delegation continues to champion the EM cause, with **Senator Murkowski** providing clear directives to NMFS relative to bunk space releases and funding EM cooperative research. Alaska legislator **Representative Kreiss-Tomkins** has also provided strong support through testimony and political engagement.

GULF OF ALASKA TRAWL BYCATCH MANAGEMENT

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has taken a number of actions over the past two years to reduce trawl Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) caps for salmon, crab and halibut. When reached, PSC caps trigger fishery closures to protect salmon, halibut or crab stocks. Although the reductions have been hard fought, the magnitude is underwhelming when compared to reductions demanded by managers in the directed fisheries. For example, over the past 10 years GOA halibut catch limits in the directed fishery have been reduced by over 70%, yet GOA trawl PSC reductions total only 15%--and that reduction is still being phased in. The Council cited the lack of individual bycatch accountability as the obstacle to more aggressive bycatch reductions and allowed directed harvesters to bear the conservation burden.

In October the Council is scheduled to review a discussion paper that will form the basis for additional trawl bycatch management actions. It is essential that the goal of this action be meaningful reductions in bycatch. Unless the Council is reminded of this priority, this action can be expected to award trawl catch shares without securing additional meaningful bycatch reductions. You can help keep the Council focused on reducing bycatch by sending a letter on GOA Trawl Bycatch Management to the Council at npfmc.comments@noaa.gov. First, tell the Council how you depend on the halibut and salmon fisheries—do you subsistence, sport or commercial fish? Then, remind the Council that:

- The GOA trawl bycatch management program was started to reduce bycatch – **it is imperative that the program focus on bycatch reduction and achieve meaningful savings of Chinook salmon and halibut.**
- Commercial, sport, personal use and subsistence fishermen have all been forced to make extremely difficult sacrifices in their harvests to protect struggling Chinook salmon and halibut stocks.
- Commercial halibut catch limits in the GOA have been reduced 73% since 2005.
- Trawl bycatch has not been reduced by amounts comparable to catch limit reductions in the directed fisheries. **To rebuild stocks everyone must conserve.** The Council's Trawl Bycatch Management Action must achieve additional bycatch reductions.



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

BE SURE TO THANK THESE BUSINESSES WHEN YOU SHOP LOCALLY:

Seafood Producers Cooperative (Highliner Member)

Sitka Dental Clinic — Foreign Automotive Repair — Samson Tug & Barge Company

Sitka Boat Watch — Coastal Collision Repair— Sitka Bottling Co.— Hoonah Cold Storage

Delta Western— Sea Mart Quality Foods — Sitka Salmon Shares — First Bank Sitka—Sitka Sound Seafoods

Murray Pacific — Petro Marine Services — Precision Boatworks — Channel Club — Serka's Welding & Fabrication

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

Get Involved!



FCN PROJECTS

- Rockfish bycatch reduction
- Bathymetric mapping
- Whale deterrents
- Fuel Efficiency
- Electronic monitoring

We are always eager to involve more fishermen in ongoing projects. Call 747-3400 or email: alfastaff@gmail.com

Special Thanks

ALFA WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A HUGE "THANK YOU" TO

Phil Wyman— Archangel
Dick Curran — Cherokee
George Eliason—Tammy Lin
Kelsey Skordahl—Tamarack
Cal Robinson— Lady Jo
for generously donating the fish that will be quite a catch for the five lucky winners of ALFA's annual fish raffle
And
SPC and SSS for donating the processing of those fish donations.

More on the raffle on page 7.

SEASWAP TEAM GOES TO CHATHAM STRAIT

Whale depredation on longline gear was relatively light this spring, with the sperm whales arriving later than usual, but ramped up in the summer. Longliners reported up to eight whales diving on a set to skillfully remove sablefish during gear retrieval. The decoy buoy/playback device that the SEASWAP (the Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project) team developed distracted whales from a real set in some trials, but once the whales found boats hauling gear they were unstoppable. In September the SEASWAP team received reports of sperm whales in Chatham Strait taking sablefish from longlines as far North as Fredrick Sound. Lauren Wild, who has worked with the SEASWAP team for some years, travelled to Chatham with Dr. Russell Andrews from the Sealife Center and they successfully satellite tagged two sperm whales. The tags regularly beam the whales' position to a satellite and allow SEASWAP to map and track the whales. You can view the whales' track on the ALFA website:

www.alfish.org in the *Whale Predation* section of the FCN tab. Funding for the satellite tagging was provided by the Oak Foundation and Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association and the tags were provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.



This past week the SEASWAP team deployed a vertical array off Sitka that will record whale sounds for several weeks. This prototype could allow a similar device to be deployed in the spring and summer off Kruzof so ALFA members could check whale activity on the grounds prior to leaving town. SEASWAP also hopes to test a device developed by an Australian researcher to protect longline hooked billfish, and a playback recording of killer whales. We are always open to new ideas for deterrents and, provided they are legal (e.g. not lethal) and we have research funding, willing to develop and test new strategies.

ALFA wants to recognize the outstanding work of SEASWAP project leader **Jan Straley**. Jan is a world renowned scientist with an impressive career record whose deep respect for the knowledge and insight fishermen contribute to marine research sets the tone for the SEASWAP collaboration. Jan and her project leader Lauren Wild are a tremendous asset to longliners as we struggle with increasing whale predation. Please thank Jan when you see her!



FISHING COMMUNITY COALITION FORMED

ALFA and four other community-based fishing groups recently launched the Fishing Community Coalition (FCC). The FCC, which so far includes groups from Alaska, Cape Cod, Maine and the Gulf of Mexico, intends to play an active role in the ongoing effort to reauthorize and amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or MSA. The MSA established U.S. jurisdiction over fisheries in federal waters and created the regional fishery management councils to develop policy.

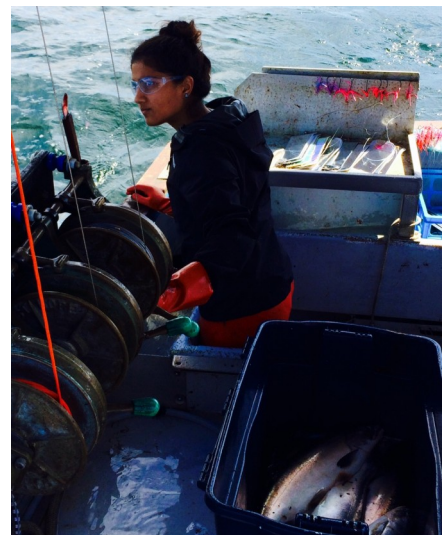
Originally passed in 1976, the MSA is periodically amended and reauthorized. As Congress works towards 2015 reauthorization, pressure is building to undo important conservation gains. The last two reauthorizations focused on rebuilding overfished stocks, protecting habitat, and reducing bycatch. Even though there is still much work to be done to achieve these objectives, Congress is instead being lobbied to compromise science-based management and be “flexible” about rebuilding timelines. The FCC intends to resist efforts to undermine sustainable fisheries and resource productivity while also pushing hard for legislation that promotes additional opportunity for community-based fishing fleets. Flexibility that compromises the resource is a giant step backwards for fishermen and fishing communities; flexibility that allows management objectives to be reached through strategies scaled to meet the needs of small, community-based fishing boats—for example, gathering fishery data from small boats with logbooks and electronic monitoring instead of observers—makes good sense and is endorsed by the new coalition.

Other players in the MSA reauthorization are focused on requiring the regional fishery management councils to regularly revisit and revise hard fought allocation decisions (e.g., the halibut Catch Sharing Plan, which took 20 years to develop and was only implemented this year). The FCC opposes mandates to revisit allocations, recognizing that such legislation would destabilize the fishing industry and paralyze the management process. Other issues are likely to arise as MSA reauthorization moves ahead, and the FCC will be ready to respond rapidly and effectively. Members of the Coalition currently include: ALFA, the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance, the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance and the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association. More on MSA reauthorization after the November elections!



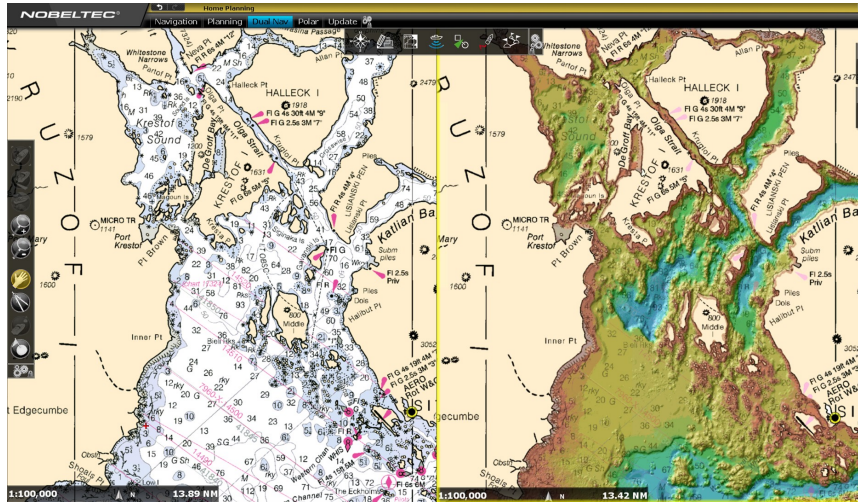
HELPING FISHERMEN SAVE FUEL

ALFA and the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) teamed up two years ago to address rising fuel costs in Alaska’s fisheries. The focus so far has been on helping fishermen understand vessel fuel consumption rates and how to reduce consumption with operational changes. In 2013, five Sitka boats participated in a fuel efficiency vessel study that provided surprising conclusions on engine efficiency curves –for example, most of the fleet operates most of the time at the most inefficient engine RPM. Using this data, our fuel efficiency intern **Kamya Jagadish** developed an online fuel efficiency audit form that fishermen can use to understand fuel saving strategies specific to their boat and fisheries. We need a few more fishermen to help us beta test the form before posting it on the web. If you are willing to help, call Dan Falvey (738-8710). After a half hour of entering parameters for your boat, the audit will provide insight into operational changes you can make to save fuel.



ALFA WELCOMES SITKA SERVICE FELLOW BEATA FISZER

You will find a new face in the ALFA office this fall. Beata Fiszer will be volunteering with ALFA for the next nine months. Beata recently graduated from Yale University and is part of a new program launched by Representative Jonathan Kriess-Tomkins and the Sitka Fine Arts Camp that draws motivated young people to Sitka to intern with local organizations. Beata will be updating ALFA's Fishery Conservation Network catch and bycatch maps by incorporating sablefish and halibut survey data and generating new expanded bathymetry maps for FCN members.



Beata is spending her first month in Sitka getting acquainted with the appropriate databases and programs, including Nobletec Catch and ArcGIS software. She is also learning about fishing in Sitka and is eager to get out on the water and try her hand at deckhanding. Call the office if you can take Beata fishing.

Stop by the office
to meet Beata!

LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST IFQ HIRED SKIPPER AMENDMENT

On August 28th a lawsuit was filed by two plaintiffs against the IFQ Hired Skipper Amendment. This Amendment, which was finalized in July of this year, requires any halibut or sablefish quota share (QS) purchased after February 12, 2010 to be fished with the QS holder on board the boat harvesting the quota, regardless of whether that QS holder is an “initial recipient” of quota. QS owned by initial recipients **prior** to February 12th in areas west of Southeast can still be harvested by “hired skippers.”

One of the Plaintiffs filing has a disability and among other complaints claims the Hired Skipper Amendment limits his ability to purchase and fish additional QS. The other plaintiff, Fairweather Fish, is a Washington corporation that claims the amended regulations limit the corporation's ability to obtain and harvest additional quota, since the corporation cannot be “on board the vessel.”

The primary objective of the Hired Skipper Amendment was to stop the trend toward absentee quota ownership that has driven up the price of quota. When the IFQ program was implemented in 1995, the halibut/sablefish fleet was an owner/operator fleet, with approximately 90% of the sablefish and halibut quota harvested with the QS holder on board the vessel. As of 2010, when the analysis for this amendment was conducted, over half the sablefish quota and close to half the halibut quota was harvested by “hired skippers.” Absentee ownership tends to reduce the availability of QS on the market, increase QS prices, and decrease the share paid to crew and skippers. ALFA and other Alaska fixed gear groups supported the hired skipper amendment and will carefully watch developments in this lawsuit.

CHARTER GROUP PROPOSES HALIBUT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Over the past three years, two guided sport organizations have researched market-based mechanisms to increase the guided sector's halibut allocation. The product of that research is the CATCH (Catch Accountability Through Compensated Halibut) program. In October the North Pacific Fishery Management Council will review the CATCH program and consider next steps towards analysis and possible action. You can read about the CATCH program here: <http://www.alaskacharter.org/docs/Catch%20Alaska%20Report%20Final%202014.pdf>

The concept behind CATCH is to increase the amount of halibut in the charter halibut common pool. As proposed, an organization or "holding entity" would be created to purchase and manage quota. The holding entity would obtain funds from a "loan, grant, or other funding source" and use these funds to purchase quota from commercial fishermen. The purchased quota would either increase the charter allocation immediately or be held in reserve for times of low abundance.

Although the CATCH proposal represents a substantial amount of work by the Alaska Charter Association and the Southeast Alaska Guide Organization, it seeks to accomplish a goal (increasing charter allocation) that has largely been addressed with the Guided Angler Fish program implemented in 2014. The critical differences are that the GAF program requires charter operators to individually invest in quota for their businesses whereas the CATCH program funds QS purchase for the common "pool" with outside funding. In short, the CATCH program potentially increases the charter allocation without costing the charter fleet any personal investment in QS, and, by employing outside funding such as grants or a tax revenue stream, CATCH would likely increase QS prices.

Other concerns with the CATCH program include: increased charter harvest near towns, which would further restrict harvesting opportunities for subsistence and resident sport fishermen; reduced consumer access to halibut; and socioeconomic impacts to communities. If the Council chooses to advance the CATCH program, the Halibut Coalition and members groups will ensure these aspects are considered and addressed. Please share your comments on the CATCH plan with the Council (npfmc.comments@noaa.gov), the Halibut Coalition (halibutcoalition@gmail.com) and ALFA (alfastaff@gmail.com).



ENTER FOR YOUR CHANCE TO REEL IN 10 POUNDS OF LOCAL SEAFOOD!



Tickets are on sale for ALFA's Annual Fish Raffle!

Five lucky winners will receive 10 pounds of locally caught King Salmon, Halibut, Black Cod, and Rockfish! Winnings include FREE Fed-ex shipping to any U.S. address.

Proceeds from the raffle ticket purchase directly support our work to continue the sustainable harvest of sablefish, halibut, and groundfish while supporting healthy marine ecosystems and strong coastal communities.

To purchase your \$10 ticket (11 for \$100) and enter to win, stop by the ALFA office or mail us a check. Tickets are available at Old Harbor Books and Murray Pacific. **Members, we need you to pick up tickets to sell!**

*The odds are good and
the cause is great!*

ALFA Board Members are also selling tickets. I encourage you to reach out to one of your local ALFA Board Members to learn more about ALFA's current work and purchase your ticket:

Dick Curran, President
Jeff Favour, VP
Stephen Rhoads, Treasurer
Terry Perensovich, Secretary

Steve Fish
Norm Pillen
Frank Balovich
Richie Davis
Phil Wyman

Drawing will be held November 9, 2014 at Centennial Hall

Need not be present to win

Permit #2655

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
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Or click "SUPPORT" on our website:
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Basic \$250 Deckhand \$100
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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
→

OCTOBER

October 2
 ALFA Member Meeting

October 6—13
 NPFMC Meeting
 Anchorage

October 27
 IPHC E.D. Bruce Leaman
 Sitka

DECEMBER

December 1
 Sablefish Summit
 Sitka

JANUARY

January 26—30
 Annual IPHC Meeting.
 Vancouver, BC

PLEASE
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