



Alaska Longline

FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

April 2011



Council launches amendment to reduce Gulf of Alaska halibut bycatch

Fish Donations Needed for ALFA's Annual Seafood Raffle!

ALFA is gearing up for this year's annual seafood raffle fundraiser and we are in need of fish donations for the winning prize boxes. If you can donate 25 pounds of king salmon, sablefish, rockfish or halibut or a portion of that please let us know! Donations can be delivered to Seafood Processing Coop and Sitka Sound Seafoods anytime over the spring, summer, or early fall.

Also, Annual Seafood Raffle tickets are now available. Stop by the ALFA office to pick up your tickets to sell or try your own luck at winning one of this year's prize boxes full of delicious wild Alaskan seafood!

More information on tickets and how you can pick them up on pg. 7 of the newsletter.

The halibut biomass has dropped 50 percent over the past decade and catch limits for the directed fisheries have been dramatically reduced to promote rebuilding, yet halibut bycatch limits for the trawl industry have not been reduced since they were set in 1986. Groundfish fisheries (trawl and fixed gear) in the Gulf of Alaska are allowed to take 2,300 metric tons of halibut as bycatch. In fact, the number of halibut annually taken as bycatch equals the number of halibut taken each year in the directed fishery. Halibut taken in trawls are mostly small fish (less than 32 inches), but since those small fish represent the rebuilding potential of the halibut stock—and the economic survival of the halibut fishermen—that bycatch is unacceptable. At the April Council meeting, ALFA and Petersburg Vessel Owners led other longliners in asking the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to fast track action to reduce halibut bycatch.

In response to the request, the Council launched an amendment to reduce Gulf halibut bycatch caps that could be in place as early as 2012. The caps are assigned to individual target fisheries, and when reached, close the fishery. Halibut fishermen from the commercial and charter harvest sectors urged the Council to consider a 10-30% reduction in the cap. ALFA cited the 73% reduction in the 2C catch limit, the 28% reduction in the 3A catch limit, and the 25% reduction in the 3B, 4A and 4B harvest rate as reasons for substantially reducing halibut bycatch.

The Council voted to consider a range of 5-15%, dropping the higher options. The Council will take final action on this issue in December when they set the 2012 total allowable catch for all fisheries. On a longer term track, Council staff was assigned to prepare a discussion paper on various kinds of incentives being used in other parts of the world to help fishermen reduce bycatch. The trawl industry is urging the Council to pursue economic incentives, including bycatch shares and cooperative management systems that allow for individual accountability. ALFA will continue to follow this issue closely and considers halibut bycatch reduction one of our highest priorities.

More Council News and Updates ...

Council Limits Future Use of “Hired Skippers” in IFQ Fisheries

In April the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) approved an amendment that limits the use of “hired skippers” on halibut/sablefish vessels. The newly approved amendment allows initial quota share (QS) recipients to hire skippers to harvest their quota if that quota was purchased before February 12, 2010, but requires the QS holder to be on board the vessel when B, C, or D class quota is harvested for any QS purchased after the February date.

The Council took the action after reviewing data documenting that 50% of the halibut and sablefish catcher boat QS is now harvested by “hired skippers.” When the IFQ program was implemented in 1995, only 8% of the halibut/sablefish quota was harvested by hired skippers. The founding goals of the IFQ program were to maintain an owner-operated fleet, provide entry level opportunities for coastal residents, and promote resource stewardship through the long-term investments of active fishermen in access privileges. The Council recognized that growing absentee ownership of QS was undermining these goals, and that the resource rents, or lease fees, charged by absentee QS holders is reducing the wages paid to active fishermen and also increasing the cost of QS. The amendment adopted by the Council was considered a reasonable compromise between sunsetting all hired skipper privileges and allowing the trend toward absentee ownership to continue unchecked.

Not surprisingly the Council’s action on hired skippers was contentious within the longline industry. ALFA supported the compromise adopted by the Council, as did Petersburg Vessel Owners Association and Katchemak Bay Fisheries Association. Our membership maintained that active engagement in the fisheries by QS holders is a critical component of the halibut/sablefish fisheries and essential to the preserving the IFQ program. While leasing QS gets more attractive as sore backs and shoulders plague aging QS owners, ALFA members voted that QS should be sold rather than used as a retirement program. If you have questions or comments on this action, please feel free to call the ALFA office (907-747-3400) or call Linda directly (907-747-0695).

Council moves toward limiting Chinook salmon bycatch

On April 2nd the Council identified a preferred alternative to cap bycatch of Chinook salmon in the Gulf of Alaska Pollock trawl fishery at 22,500 fish. Catalyzing Council action on Chinook bycatch was the 51,000 Chinook taken as bycatch in the groundfish fisheries in 2010 (41,000 in the pollock fishery alone), and the poor returns of kings to central and western Alaska streams. The Council is scheduled to take final action on this amendment in June and, since there are currently no limits on trawl bycatch of Chinook, adoption by the Council of the preferred alternative will set an important landmark. The Council will also consider requiring trawlers under 60’ to carry observers 30% of the time—another first, since the under 60’ fleet is currently unobserved. The June Council meeting is in Nome, which makes attendance challenging, but the cost of faxing or mailing a letter is minimal. Please address your comments to Chairman Olson and send to 605 West 4th Avenue Suite 306 Anchorage, AK 99501 or fax to 907-271-2817. ADFG Commissioner Cora Campbell is leading the charge to reduce Chinook bycatch. Please let Cora know you appreciate her work!

Pribilof Islanders join the SEASWAP research team!

The Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (CBSFA) contacted ALFA early this year with an interest in supporting ALFA's whale deterrent work, or the Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project (SEASWAP). The

CBSFA, a Pribilof Island-based group, is impressed by the progress ALFA and project partners at the University of Alaska and Scripps Institute of Oceanography have made in identifying the acoustic signals associated with sperm whale depredation on longline gear and potential deterrents to depredation. CBSFA vessels have suffered significant depredation on longline gear by killer whales near St George Island and by both killer and sperm whales in the Gulf of Alaska. ALFA and CBSFA exchanged ideas for collaboration, and then developed the details of a joint research project that will engage the Sitka Sound Science Center, UAS, Scripps, ALFA and CBSFA. With the generous support of CBSFA, project focus over the next three years will be to:

1. Collect acoustic data on sperm and killer whale interactions with commercial longline gear from a range of vessels and in varied fishing conditions; and
2. Increase development and testing of active and passive deterrent strategies for both sperm and killer whales.

ALFA will be working with Southeast boats this spring to collect acoustic data and to test deterrents; please contact the ALFA office to participate in this important research, there is a small stipend available for boats to take out acoustic recorders. In May, SEASWAP researcher Lauren Wild will travel to Dutch Harbor for two weeks to record whale interaction acoustic data on the CBSFA longline vessel St. Paul. Similar data will also be collected on the sablefish survey vessel as part of SEASWAPs ongoing effort to develop a metric for predation during longline stock assessments.

We are very excited to be working with CBSFA, and recognize that the Pribilof Island fishermen bring a depth of experience and host of new ideas to SEASWAP's work. We also welcome ideas from ALFA members about deterrent devices and strategies that have worked for you or that you would like to see tested. Give the ALFA office a call 747-3400 or contact our FCN coordinator Carina Nichols at: carina_nichols@hotmail.com.

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FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Sperm Whale Sighting Network

907-747-3600

Listen to a recording detailing whale locations
Leave a message with your sighting information
Date, location, number of whales


Sperm whale

Questions? Call 907-747-3400 for more information

Halibut Charter Update



37 inch rule- In January the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) determined that a 37 inch limit on 2C charter caught halibut was necessary to constrain total 2C charter harvest to the area GHL. In adopting the 37 inch limit the IPHC limited their consideration of management alternatives to those identified through the Council process and used the methodology developed by Council staff as part of the halibut Catch Sharing Plan. Subsequent to the IPHC decision, sport fish managers for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) challenged the limit, claiming less conservative assumptions regarding charter high grading should have been used, and that based on preliminary 2010 numbers the size limit should be increased to 42 inches. Charter operators unleashed a political tantrum in Washington DC, eventually convincing NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenko that the size limit should be reviewed. The Council was poised to schedule a special meeting in the end of April to perform the requested review when ADFG completed entry of 2010 halibut charter numbers, which were higher than preliminary numbers indicated, and determined that 37 inches was the correct limit to prevent a charter overage—even with less conservative assumptions about high grading. As a result, the 37 inch limit is likely to remain unchallenged.

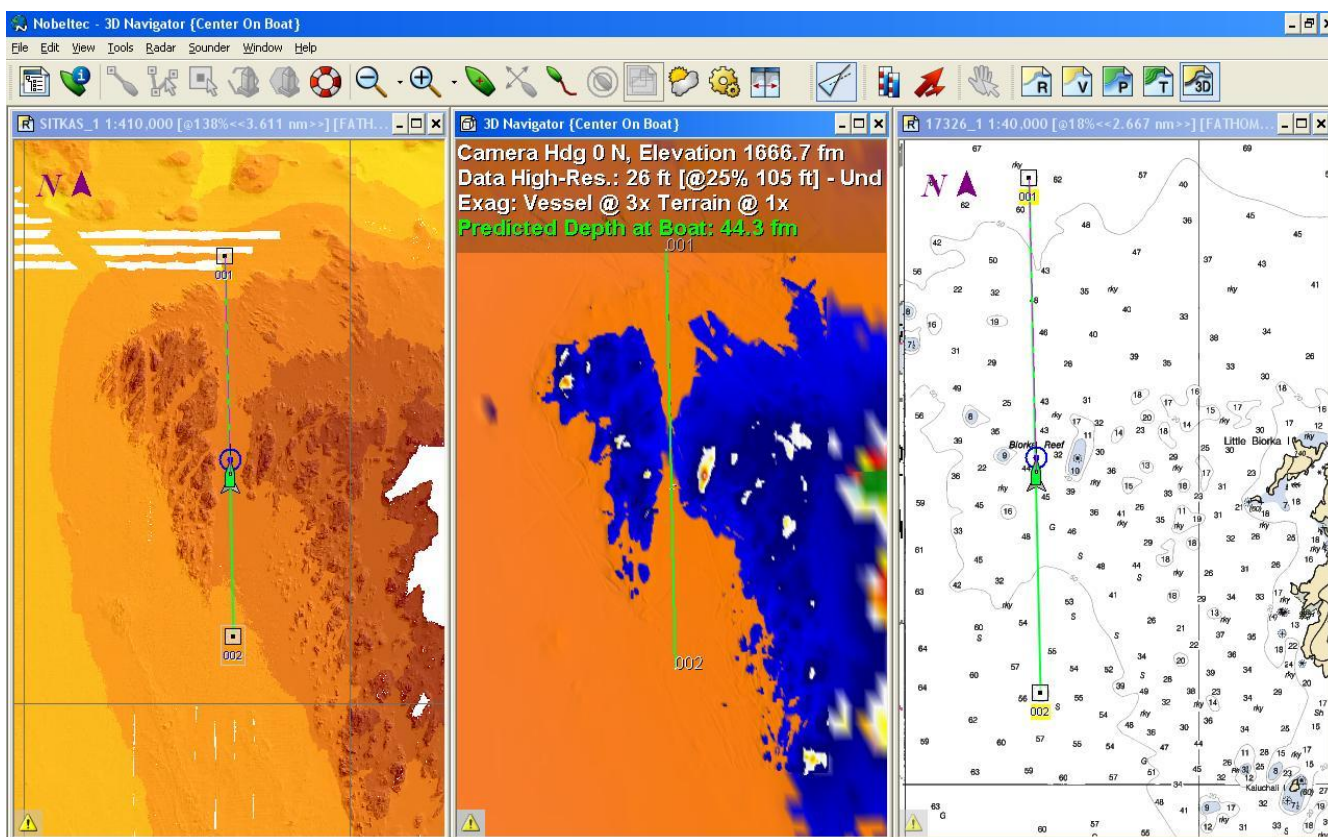
Charter limited entry- In early April a group calling themselves the Charter Operators of Alaska filed a lawsuit against the federal government challenging the charter moratorium, or limited entry program. The lawsuit states that the “Primary Purpose is to repeal, amend, or modify the federal charter halibut limited entry program to include all businesses that were in existence up to the **end of 2010.**” Plaintiffs allege that the limited entry program is not fair and equitable, violates a number of Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards, and did not fully consider impacts to small businesses. To date, no organizations or individuals have filed to intervene in defense of the moratorium, and the Halibut Coalition does not intend to do so. The limited entry program was widely supported by the charter industry when developed and approved by the Council; it provides protection to existing charter businesses from additional capitalization in their industry. On its own, the limited entry program does not limit harvest; hence protection for the sport, subsistence and commercial industry depends on approval and implementation of the Catch Sharing Plan. Litigation on the Catch Sharing Plan is also likely.

Catch Sharing Plan- Publication of the Proposed Rule to implement the Catch Sharing Plan is still pending. National Marine Fisheries Service staff indicated the comment period on the Rule will be open during the Council’s June meeting, and the Council has added a review and discussion of the Rule to their June agenda. The focus of the review will be management measures at low abundance levels, such as the maximum size limit, but the entire Rule will be open to discussion and comment. ALFA’s director (Linda Behnken) and Advisor Panel member (Jeff Farvour) will be in Nome for the discussion

Get the big picture...join ALFA's Fishery Conservation Network!

In 2009 ALFA launched a Fishery Conservation Network (FCN) that engages fishermen in mapping areas with high rockfish bycatch rates and the bathymetric features that contribute to concentrating rockfish in those areas. Controlling rockfish bycatch rates is important to conservation of rockfish species and to sustained participation in the directed fisheries (halibut and sablefish) that take rockfish as bycatch. Controlling bycatch is also critical to maintaining Marine Stewardship Certification for the halibut/sablefish longline fishery which, in turn, is an important marketing tool. FCN members are also participating in ALFA's sperm whale depredation and deterrent research—another proactive initiative. In sum, participants in the FCN are safeguarding the future of their fisheries.

FCN members reap other rewards as well. Thanks to the generous support of the Oak Foundation, ALFA has grant funds to help new participants upgrade software or hardware to run the Nobeltec bathymetric mapping program that allows you to “see” the bottom in three dimensions and for some areas we also have multi-beam side-scan sonar data that provides enhanced detail. The multi-beam data is available to anyone who signs up to participate in the FCN; blended Nobeltec data that combine the mapping efforts of all FCN members are available after a season of participating in the FCN. The work of the FCN is enhanced by everyone who participates. If you are not already part of the FCN—call or email Carina Nichols, our FCN coordinator (carina_nichols@hotmail.com) today to sign up!!



Images shown above from left to right include multibeam sonar data, bathy data collected from FCN participants, and a NOAA chart of the same area.

Changing of the Guard

After many years of dedicated service, Walter Pasternak (F/V Christi Rob) has stepped down from the ALFA Board of Directors. Walter was one of the most engaged and supportive board members of my many years as ALFA's executive director. He has always kept informed of the many challenges facing our association, has helped with every event and testified on every issue, and has provided me a shoulder to lean on when the relentless battles were getting me down. I know Walter will stay involved with ALFA, but I will miss him on the board nevertheless. Thank you Walter—and thanks for your commitment to stirring the pot!!



Stephen Rhoads (F/V Equity) has taken Walter's place on the board. Stephen has been instrumental to the success of ALFA's FCN mapping project. He helped solve the myriad data and programming issues that threatened to stymie our efforts, and continues to help FCN members improve their Nobeltec skills. Stephen's partner, Beth Short, coordinates the Alaskans Own Community Supported Fishery and has been an equally creative problem solver. We are thrilled to have Stephen and Beth on our team!



Alaskans Own™ Seafood
The Best Investment You Will Ever Taste!

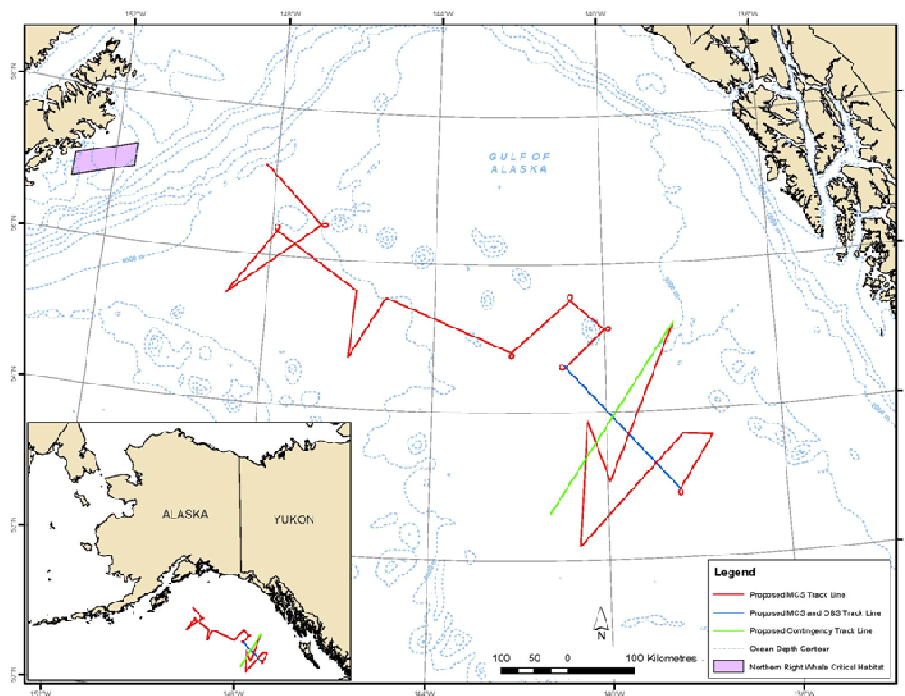
Alaskans Own—Alaska's first Community Supported Fishery

In 2010 ALFA and project partners at the North Pacific Fishery Trust launched the first Community Supported Fishery (CSF) program in Alaska. The CSF signs up subscribers in the spring who then receive locally harvested fish each month during the spring and summer. The fish are harvested by members of ALFA's FCN, processed at Sitka Sound Seafoods or, starting in 2011, Seafood Producers Cooperative, and made available for pick up along with information that connects the consumer to FCN fishermen and the conservation work of our longline association.

The CSF provides a local market for longline-caught fish, reduces the carbon foot-print of the longline fishery, and provides a powerful tool for outreach and education. The Alaskans Own CSF was so well received in Sitka last year that the number of local subscribers will double in 2011 and the CSF will expand to include subscribers in Juneau. Along with providing high quality fish and an important connection between consumers and local fishermen, Alaskans Own provides a revenue stream to support ALFA's conservation and management work. Want to be part of this successful endeavor?? Join the FCN!!

USGS Marine Seismic Survey in the Central Gulf of Alaska this June

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) plans to conduct a seismic survey in the central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) in June 2011. The survey will take place within the exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the U.S. and adjacent International Waters between ~200 and 650 km off the coast. The primary purpose of the proposed survey is to collect seismic reflection and refraction profiles to be used to define the U.S. extended continental shelf in the Gulf of Alaska. The seismic profiles will identify the stratigraphic “basement” and map the thickness of the overlying sediments. The surveys in the central GOA will take place from early June until approximately June 25, 2011. This information is being provided to ALFA members as it may be in areas where you fish. For more information or to express concerns about the proposed survey, please contact Jonathan R. Childs at the USGS at 650-329-5195 or jchilds@usgs.gov.



Planned survey route for USGS cruise in the central Gulf of Alaska June 2011.

TAKE A CHANCE ON PREMIUM ALASKA SEAFOOD!



ALFA's fourth annual seafood raffle tickets are now available! Ten lucky winners will receive a 10 pound box of premium seafood (halibut, sablefish, rockfish and king salmon) all portioned, vacuum packed and frozen, with FEDEX delivery included. The fish will be donated from commercial landings by ALFA members and professionally processed by SPC and SSS. If you have fish you can donate to this cause please contact Natalie. Every ALFA member needs to sell at least 10 tickets to ensure this fundraiser is a success. You can pick up tickets to sell—or stop by to purchase tickets—from the ALFA office Monday afternoons, Wednesdays between 11 am and 4 pm or Thursday mornings, or call Natalie at the ALFA office at 747-3400 to arrange a different time. Tickets are \$10 each or 10 for \$90.

The drawing for the raffle will be held at the conclusion of the Market at Sitka Whalefest, on Sunday, November 13th, just in time for holiday gift-giving! Last year's raffle funds supported outreach, education and travel. Please pitch in to help with this important fundraiser by selling tickets and donating fish!



ALFA Welcomes Carina Nichols to Staff

In January, ALFA hired Carina Nichols as staff coordinator for the Fishery Conservation Network (FCN). Carina will be fleet coordinator for the by-catch and sperm whale research components of the FCN, and will also assist with the Alaskans Own community supported fishery program. Carina grew up in Sitka—or in the waters off Sitka, fishing with her family aboard the F/V Nekton. She has a bachelor of science in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Ecology from Colorado State University and is happy to be back in Sitka working in fisheries. Carina will be collecting logbook data from FCN

participants, signing up boats to participate in the sperm whale deterrent research, and working to engage more fishermen in the FCN. You can contact her through the ALFA office 747-3400 or at carina_nichols@hotmail.com.

Tory O'Connell, who helped start the FCN and coordinate the project for the first two years, is now working for the Sitka Sound Science Center, but is still involved in the sperm whale research and deterrent work with ALFA, UAS and Scripps. We will miss having Tory's creative energy, strength of purpose, and problem-solving abilities focused on ALFA, but are happy that she is still part of our research team.

Please support our Associate Members, We count on them!!

Seafood Producers Cooperative ~ Silver Bay Seafoods ~ Sitka Sound Seafoods ~ Murray Pacific
Larkspur Café ~ Hoonah Cold Storage ~ Yakutat Seafoods
ALPS Federal Credit Union ~ Petro Marine Services ~ Spenards Builders Supply ~
First Bank ~ Fishermen's Eye Gallery ~ Old Harbor Books ~ Wells Fargo
~ Precision Boatworks ~ Shaffer & Co, CPAs ~ Sea Mart Quality Foods

Sitka Sound Science Center and ALFA Announce Award from NOAA

ALFA and the Sitka Sound Science Center have received an award from NOAA to work in partnership with Scripps Oceanographic Institute (SIO), University of Alaska Southeast, and the National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The Project is Entitled: Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Partnership: Fishermen, Managers, and Scientist working together to improve sablefish assessments and reduce interactions between sperm whales and longline gear.

Depredation on the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center's (AFSC) sablefish longline survey in the Gulf of Alaska as well as depredation on sablefish longline fishing sets is becoming frequent. This project will build on the groundbreaking work of SEASWAP (Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project), a collaboration between UAS, ALFA, and SIO that has studied depredation events for the past 3 years.

The goals of the SSSC project include developing a metric for assessing sperm whale depredation on the federal sablefish survey, conducting a field trial of passive deterrent gear using a rigorous experimental design, and establishing a permanent acoustic lab at the Sage Building for analysis of depredation data.

The results of this work will have direct benefits for Alaskan longline fishermen, state and federal management agencies working on sablefish stock assessment. The presence of a bioacoustics laboratory in Sitka will also facilitate work on other marine mammal research projects including interactions between humpback whales and salmon enhancement facilities.

Calendar of Upcoming Meetings —
Save these dates and participate!

- ◆ North Pacific Fishing Management Council (NPFMC) Meeting
June 6, 2011 — Nome
- ◆ NPFMC Meeting
September 27– October 5, 2011 — Dutch Harbor
- ◆ Lowell Wakefield Fisheries Symposium
Fishing People of the North: Cultures, Economies, and Management Responding to Change
September 14-17, 2011 — Anchorage

- Contact Information for Alaska Delegation
- Keep this handy for future Action Alerts

- Senator Lisa Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: 202-224-6665
Fax: 202-224-5301

- Senator Mark Begich
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510
Phone: 202-224-3004
Fax: 202-224-2354

- Congressman Don Young
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-5765
Fax: 202-225-0425

HAVE A GREAT FISHING SEASON!

ALFA T-shirts and Hats Available!



Women and Long sleeve t-shirts also now available

\$15 for members,
\$20 for non-members

Long sleeve

\$20 for members
\$25 for non-members

Colors:

Men's S/S— navy, black, brown, olive

Men's L/S— stonewashed blue, stonewashed green, dark brown

Women's S/S— deep sea blue, white, sage green, earth brown

Women's L/S— maritime blue, white, thyme



Check out our **NEW T-SHIRTS** with design by Steve Lawrie

Show your Support for **ALFA!**

We also have cotton ALFA hats!

\$15 for members,
\$20 for nonmembers

Alaska Longline FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Linda Behnken, Executive Director
Box 1229
834 Lincoln Street, Room 23
Sitka, Alaska 99835
Phone: 907-747-3400
Fax: 907-747-3462
E-mail: alfa.staff@gmail.com
Web: www.alfafish.org

TO:

Office Hours:

Mondays: 3:30- 6:00 p.m.
Wednesdays: 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Thursdays: 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.



Time to Renew Your Membership! 2011 Membership Information

Dues are on a calendar year basis January 1—December 31

Deckhand: \$100 ___ Basic: \$250 ___ Supporting: \$600 ___

Highliner: \$1,000 or more _____

Name: _____ Vessel: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone/Cell: _____

T-SHIRTS: Men's SM-XXXL, dark green, brown, black, and dark blue, Women's S-XL, green, white, brown, and blue. Long sleeve style also available

Short Sleeve: \$15/ members, \$20/non-members; Long Sleeve: \$20/members, \$25/non-members

Qty: _____ Size: _____ Men's or Women's _____ Color: _____ S/S or L/S: _____

Qty: _____ Size: _____ Men's or Women's _____ Color: _____ S/S or L/S: _____

HATS: Cotton—dark green or black \$15/members, \$20/non-members;

Qty: _____ Color: _____