

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Findings for Recommendations on Subsistence Halibut Regulations  
#2001-206-FB

In October 2000 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) adopted options concerning subsistence halibut regulations for specific areas of the state that defined eligibility, gear and daily limits. The NPFMC requested that the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) provide recommendations relating to legal gear, daily limits, reporting requirements, customary and traditional use areas of tribes and rural communities, and nonrural area definitions for halibut fishing areas. These recommendations were presented to the NPFMC at its June 2001 meeting in Kodiak.

A committee comprised of three members of the board held four regional public meetings at Sitka, Kodiak, Cordova and Homer to hear from the public about these issues. The committee presented its report to the full board and the board developed recommendations represented in a matrix covering area, gear, harvest limits, permits and reporting requirements, and proxies. The matrix focused board discussion on whether to recommend to the NPFMC that the proposed option be liberalized, be the same, or be less liberalized than the first set of options given to the board to review in October 2000.

The board recommended current nonsubsistence use areas defined in state regulation, except that in the Anchorage/Mat-Su/Kenai nonsubsistence use area the board recommended that the subsistence use area for halibut should be defined as those waters south of a latitudinal line west across Cook Inlet from the northernmost point of the current state subsistence area. This recommendation leaves open the customary and traditional use area of the villages qualified for halibut subsistence by the October 2000 NPFMC action. The nonsubsistence use area north of this line recommended by the board consists of waters not customarily and traditionally used by the qualifying users defined by the October 2000 NPFMC action.

With regard to gear, the board discussed subsistence halibut fishing in areas 4C, 4D, and 4E and recognized the small window of opportunity available for fishing due to the weather and the fact that halibut must be harvested in one trip if possible. As such the board focused on liberalizing regulations in these areas in order to accommodate the subsistence use in these areas.

Therefore, in areas 4C, 4D and 4E the board recommended no gear restriction and no limit on the number of hooks. The board recognized the fact that it was unable to hold hearings in these areas so it received limited input. The board also recognized that the NPFMC recommended no harvest limits for the area. The board believes a gear limit makes no sense if there is no harvest limit.

Regarding the four specific areas of Sitka Sound, Cook Inlet, Kodiak and Prince William Sound, the board identified a concern with bycatch of other species. It is unknown how large the potential pool of participants will be in Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, Kodiak road zones and Sitka due to the definition of eligibility adopted by the NPFMC. Due to a concern for a potential conflict with the state's conservation concern on species such as rockfish, the board

focused on more cautious recommendations for gear, harvest limits, etc., while still recognizing and providing for subsistence use of halibut in the four specific areas described above.

The board recommendation for gear for the four specific areas include: Sitka Sound LAMP area: two hooks; Kodiak road zone and Chiniak Bay: five hooks; Prince William Sound: five hooks; and Cook Inlet: five hooks. Stacking gear is not recommended for Sitka Sound LAMP area. The board does recommend allowing stacking gear in the specific Kodiak, Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet areas at three times the number of hooks on a single unit of gear. The board recognizes allowing stacking of gear acknowledges traditional ways the fishermen go out to get their fish.

The board recommendation in the Sitka Sound LAMP area is based on recognition of the extensive work that went into the LAMP and the conservation aspects of that plan. Also, conservation concerns exist for rockfish and other species.

With regards to the board recommendation for Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound, the board recognized that state subsistence regulations in these areas include a five hook limit based on conservation concerns for rockfish. The board also recognized concerns for rockfish bycatch by nonlocal users who would be qualified to come to the area to fish but not possess the local knowledge necessary to avoid rockfish while longlining for halibut.

In areas 3B, 4A, 4B and areas 3A and 2C, except for the four specified areas noted above, the board agrees with the NPFMC option of a 30 hook limit. In addition, stacking gear up to three units of gear is recommended, provided that the subsistence user(s) are onboard the vessel. Allowance for stacking gear acknowledges traditional ways the fishermen go out to get their fish.

Regarding harvest limits, the board recommends no harvest limit for areas 4C, 4D, and 4E. In areas 3B, 4A, 4B, and 3A and 2C except for the specific areas noted above, the board recommends a harvest limit of 20 halibut per day with no annual limit.

The board committee heard consensus and/or support during the hearings in Sitka and Kodiak for an annual limit. No annual limit was supported for Prince William Sound or Cook Inlet. The board noted that no proxy fishing is needed in areas where there is no annual limit. Therefore, the board recommends the following harvest limits for the specific areas: Sitka Sound LAMP area, and Kodiak Road Zone and Chiniak Bay: 20 fish per day, 20 fish annual limit with allowance for proxy fishing without the necessity of the other person being onboard the vessel; Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet: 20 fish per day with no annual limit.

In considering staff reports, the status of the resource, public hearings and written comments, the board recommends the harvest strategy outlined above for subsistence use of halibut.

Adopted: November 12, 2001  
Anchorage, Alaska

VOTE: 7-0

  
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Ed Dersham, Chair  
Alaska Board of Fisheries