

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Regional Office

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
ALASKA REGIONAL OFFICE

NOAA Fisheries News Releases

NEWS RELEASE

June 27, 2013

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NOAA SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON PROPOSED HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN

NOAA Fisheries is seeking public input on **proposed regulations** that would implement a catch sharing plan for the commercial and guided sport (charter) Pacific halibut fisheries in Southeast Alaska and the Central Gulf of Alaska.

Pacific halibut in Southeast Alaska and the Central Gulf of Alaska is fully utilized by commercial, recreational, subsistence, and personal use sectors.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended the catch sharing plan to establish a clear allocation between the commercial and charter sectors in Southeast Alaska and the Central Gulf of Alaska, provide stability in charter harvest, and provide halibut fishery managers with greater precision in setting halibut catch limits and management measures that are responsive to changes in halibut exploitable biomass and fishing effort.

The catch sharing plan would replace the **charter guideline harvest level** with a percentage allocation of the commercial and charter combined catch limit for each area. The combined catch limit would be determined by the International Pacific Halibut Commission each year prior to the fishing season. Under the catch sharing plan, the allocations to the charter and commercial sectors would vary with changes in halibut abundance.

The catch sharing plan would also authorize transfers of commercial halibut individual fishing quota to charter halibut permit holders under the "guided angler fish" program. The guided angler fish program would give charter anglers the opportunity to land halibut up to the limit in place for unguided anglers. For example, charter anglers in Southeast Alaska are currently limited to one halibut of a specific size per person per day, while unguided anglers may retain two halibut of any size per person per day. Taking advantage of the guided angler fish program, a charter guide could allow a client to harvest up to two fish of any size per day.

The public comment period on the **proposed rule** is open for 45 days from the date of publication in the Federal Register. Address comments to Glenn Merrill, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region NMFS, Attn: Ellen Sebastian, and identified by FDMS Docket Number NOAA-NMFS-2013-0180. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

» Electronic Submission: via the **Federal e-Rulemaking Portal**

» Mail: P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668

» Fax: 907-586-7557



Pacific halibut in Southeast Alaska and the Central Gulf of Alaska is fully utilized by commercial, recreational, subsistence, and personal use sectors. Elijah Keaton, 5, poses with his sport-caught halibut on July 4, 2012, in Douglas Harbor. Elijah hooked one of these halibut all by himself, reeled it in, and assisted in subduing the fish in the bottom of the boat. Photo: Josh Keaton

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