

ACTION ALERT July 2008

We need YOU to make a phone call or send a quick email to the National Marine Fisheries Service Assistant Administrator Jim Balsiger and the Regional Director Doug Mecum urging immediate action to implement the one halibut daily limit for charter clients in 2C.

Although the one halibut daily limit was recommended by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in June, 2007 and implemented by the Secretary of Commerce on June 1, 2008, it has been suspended by the court as a result of the lawsuit filed by 11 charter businesses. In suspending the one halibut daily limit, the judge indicated NMFS had failed to establish a conservation basis for managing the charter sector to its Guideline Harvest Level (GHL and in referencing the 2003 GHL Final Rule instead of the Halibut Act as the basis for their authority to reduce the bag limit. The judge ruled that had the Secretary established the conservation impacts or his authority under the Halibut Act the one halibut daily limit would not have been suspended. NMFS has taken no further action since the judge's decision, and time is running out. Please call or email Dr. Balsiger and Dr. Mecum with the following message:

1. NMFS should immediately initiate an Halibut Act rule making to implement the one halibut daily limit on charter clients in 2C through an expedited process, correcting the mistakes identified by the judge. This rule should be in place no later than the end of the year, preferably by the October council meeting.
2. NMFS should publish a news release clearly explaining why they are not appealing the lawsuit and addressing the erroneous information that the Halibut Charter Task Force has been putting out in the press.

Remind NMFS that the current legal action will allow the 2C halibut charter harvest to exceed the 2008 GHL by close to 1 million pounds, undermining resource management and conservation goals, and that if the one million pounds is deducted from the setline catch limit in 2009 2C quota share holders will lose an additional 15% of their quota to pay for the charter overage. Remind NMFS that allowing one sector to exceed its catch limit without acting immediately and decisively to control that sector sets a dangerous precedent.

Finally, urge NMFS to act IMMEDIATELY, since the change in White House administration that will occur in January will almost certainly result in a freeze on all new rule making, delaying implementation of any action beyond the start of the 2009 fishing season.

Please copy the Alaska Congressional delegation on your email, as well as the Halibut Coalition (halibutcoalition@gmail.com). Email addresses and phone numbers are included below. Please do this today!!! Your voice is important!

Below are the links needed to email NMFS and the Congressional Delegation

Dr Jim Balsiger, (301) 713-2239, Jim.Balsiger@noaa.gov

Dr Doug Mecum, (907) 586-7221, doug.mecum@noaa.gov

Senator Lisa Murkowski (202) 224-6665,

<http://murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContactMe.EMailLisa>

Senator Ted Stevens, (202) 224-3004,

<http://stevens.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.EmailSenatorStevens>

Congressman Don Young, (202) 225-5765,

http://donyoung.house.gov/IMA/issue_subscribe.htm