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10/5/14
ALEX
C1-handout

Ocean mayo
1933 dodge circle
Sitka AK 99835
Re: Agenda item C1

To, the north pacific fisheries management council

Hi my name is Ocean Mayo I have been a fishermen in some capacity for 25 seasons. starting as fish tender deckhand and now as a commercial longline quota holder, captain, and deckhand. I have seen a lot of changes in the ifq program in the time I have fished. One recent change which has made my job harder and less lucrative is the new observer program for under 60' vessels I work on and run a 58' boat the F/V Coral Lee. Having observed the observer program I have to say I am less than thrilled with its operations. I do agree that conservation and fish assessments are helped by having a better idea of what is being brought to the roller and some observer coverage is warranted. Areas that need correction/attention are ; the ever growing tax and cost put on IFQ's , the safety of crew and observers, not allowing electronic monitoring and being repeatedly picked for coverage

The tax on the IFQ fishery has gotten out of hand already and now the observer program is asking for a higher percentage of our gross. 3% was supposed to be the max we would have to pay for for enforcement/management. That is the percentage I agreed to when I purchased my quota over the years. Last year and again this year we will be paying more than with observer fees added with those fees scheduled to rise next year. Also the added cost of having an observer on board should make it so you only have to be picked once a year for coverage. This year we were randomly selected for 6 months of straight coverage which amounted to 100% coverage. It is excessive that my crew and I had to feed another hand all year while other had no coverage at all.

Safety on boats should always be paramount. Since this program has started it has produced a lot of new observers in a "we will take what we can get" atmosphere. Many of these people have never been on vessels this size, have less than one year experience and think they know more about what is going on than they do. From not securing their gear on the back deck to constantly being under foot, Most seem to be unaware of their surroundings enough to be a safety hazard . the added stress to skippers with rules like having to wake them up before every haul and such. which amounts to adult babysitting is excessive and impedes the daily fishing operations.

I see no reason why implementing an electronic monitoring system as an alternative isn't a viable option. Canada has been using it for years with success. It would work better for boats that don't have room for an observer. It would also eliminate the need to take a deckhand off the boat to clear up a bunk for an observer which could effect a deckhands yearly wage by thousands of dollars.

In closing I think the tax on IFQ's is already too much and should not be increased. I support electronic monitoring as an alternative to observers. I support a one and done approach to having observers where if selected in any year you would not be selected again so one boat isn't stuck with a big bill. Also the way observers conduct themselves on the boat and their lack of safety and concern for their equipment should addressed.

Sincerely 

Mr. Chairman and members of the NPFMC:

My name is Carter Hughes and I am a small boat commercial fisherman based out of Sitka. I have been fishing for over 25 years in S.E. AK and earn my living primarily from salmon trolling and my 10,000 lbs of IFQs. I fish my IFQs on a friend's 42 ft vessel. I am writing comments on the Observer Deployment Plan (ODP) for next year.

The plan that NMFS has proposed for next year is greatly improved over last years ODP. In particular, I support the change of the under 57.5 ft vessel selection method from vessel selection for 2 months to trip selection. I also strongly support the exclusion from the observer pool, of vessels selected for EM.

EM is a much better system for vessels on the small side of the 40 to 57.5 ft vessel class. Last March I worked on a vessel that carried EM, the F.V. Minke. EM was not intrusive to our work. The weather was very rough and the deck was congested for the three of us, the skipper, his deckhand and myself. I am a working permit holder, that is, I work as a deckhand and posses the majority of the IFQ pounds being harvested by the vessel when I fish on it. Had we been picked for an observer and had to leave the deckhand behind, setting and hauling the gear with only 2 people would have been very difficult and hazardous. The EM equipment however allowed the vessel to be fully crewed and was unobtrusive to our work. The Council needs to further fast track this option.

Finally, there should be a poundage threshold below which a vessel is excluded from selection as it becomes a poor use of funding to send observers to vessels that will not be fishing in a federal fishery or fishing a significant amount of halibut or sablefish. I would suggest 500 lbs as the limit as it is a limit currently used by the RAM program for landing troll caught halibut by catch with out a call in requirement. At the very least, a vessel that has a poundage remainder that is less than a legal fish, (ex. less than 10lbs of halibut), should not be included in an observer pool. This is particularly true of vessels fishing in State fisheries such as P cod inside 3 miles or Chatham and Clarence Sts sablefish. The State of Ak manages these fisheries and the inclusion of a federal observer is superfluous if no federally managed fish are being harvested.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

James Carter Hughes
F.V. Astrolabe
Sitka

Michael J Mayo

10/1/14

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Dear Members of the Council

re: Agenda item C-1, Observer Program

Hi, after 2 years of being in the observer program i have a few comments to make. I have a 58ft longliner, F/V Coral Lee. I have been fishing halibut/black cod since 1976. From the depths of the halibut resource to again the depths of the halibut resource. the observer program , although good intentioned, has some distinct flaws. One is safety, one is cost and the other is obnoxiousness and lack of concern for the fishing fleet.

1] Safety: The observers that come aboard have not been versed on safety while out at sea. They have been advised that we, the fishermen, are the enemy. They, have been told that we are out to get them. Many times aboard the vessel during inclement weather and in good weather their gear is not properly stowed. Many times i have told an observer that this was the case. It is not up to the fishermen to babysit the observers or their gear. On a trip this spring 2014, I had to tell the observer, in a beam sea, 4 times to secure his gear as it was sliding around in the baitshed. This was a danger to myself and other crewmen baiting gear in the baitshed and the crewman bringing the tubs back into the baitshed. Guaranteed to cause an accident if he had not finally listened. This was after telling him other times about the proper stowage of gear and us securing it for him. The captain of the boat is responsible for safety. The way the observer program is being implemented this function of the captain is being burdened and diminished. This will only in the future lead to accidents. I have heard many other fishermen talk about the "little gods" not listening to them. An extreme safety hazard. A 'green' observer not listening to a seasoned fishermen of 10, 20, 30 years or so. We are not dealing with boats of 100ft plus mostly vessels less that 58ft that can get severely challenged in

heavy weather if not everyone listens to the captain. Of course all people aboard should listen to the captain or an experienced crewman but now this is sometimes called 'harassment'. Even asking about the observer program can be classified as harassment.

2] Cost: The 2% cost added to the 3% is excessive. There is no accounting of the cost. The GAO [Governmental Accounting Office] should be called in to investigate the wanton waste of this program. When they bring an observer off a dragger in Sand Point to Sitka for a boat fishing the Chatham Strait state fishery for less than 1,000 pounds of halibut, there is something wrong. This is ridiculous and a complete waste of money that is hard to earn. It is as if they are trying to spend more money to justify increasing the cost of the program. We have to feed the observer. On a small trip of halibut or black cod feeding the observer is a burden. Let alone when you have one for 2 months of straight fishing. The food bill is an expense to the crew. This food for the observer comes out of the crews share.

If picked for a trip or a 2 month session we have to take an observer even if only a few pounds remain. How out of context to the halibut resource of proper management. There should be a minimum before an observer needs to come aboard. Say 1,000 pounds. This would be better cost management. Putting an observer for 8lb, 20, 50 lbs is an exaggeration of cost. It is mismanagement. This should be looked into by the GAO. Cost has no concern to them. No business can operate that way. They are financially unconscious. This should stop. Again, the GAO should investigate.

3] Obnoxiousness: This is covered in some of the instances above. However, another case comes to mind. I was written up by the observer, Joshua Fonzi, this spring for yelling at him. As a neck/throat cancer survivor of 2 years I cannot yell. While baiting on the back deck I bang something to get the crews attention while we are fishing. Talking to people on the cell phone I have to stretch my vocal chords to be heard. Yelling? It would be nice to be able to raise my voice that much but alas it might be a while. It might have been the tone of my voice after telling him 4 times that he was in the way and unsafe while we were fishing and he was setting up his gear right in the flow of our fishery operation. This was after 4 days of fishing. Was he not observing our fishing operation? Why did he not listen when I told him what he was doing was unsafe. Boats with too many work related claims have lost their insurance which in turn leads to losing the boat because one cannot fish without insurance. I do not take inexperienced fisherman aboard. Why should I have to take an unsafe, inexperienced observer aboard who might and could cause my crew harm. Longline fishing is a extremely busy fishing operation. One is constantly working. There is no time to 'baby' an observer by taking care of him. This slows down the operation and cost the boat and crew money besides being dangerous. I'm sure if an observer gets hurt it will be the boat's fault. In an occupation where we strive to

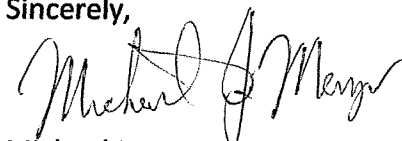
make it safer it is almost criminal and illegal being forced to take a dangerous person aboard like I have been forced to.

Another comment is concerning the supposed random picking of the vessels. This year I was picked 3 times for 2 month periods. This is not being fair. If a person gets picked for a 2 month period or a trip the boat should not be included in the next observer trip picking. This is bordering on harassment. It is quite the burden on the vessel if it is chosen again and again. I would like to see the logs on how I was chosen this way. I think something is off in the system. I would like to see how I was picked so many times.

We, Alaskan Longliners, have asked for cuts in our resources in halibut and black cod. We have been stewards with the International Pacific Halibut Commission and NPFMC in bringing the Halibut resource back from the brink of extinction in the middle and late 1970's only to see the collapse again [NOW] by mismanagement [not controlling the charter fleet and trawl fleets catch of halibut] and in the meantime being criminalized and accused of wrecking the fishery by over zealousness in the observer program.

I have asked for cuts in both the halibut and black cod fishery when I have seen that they were necessary due to my experience in fishing and before it was observed by management. I have fished from southeast Alaska to beyond Kiska. Every year my boat still fishes from southeast to and into the Bering Sea. Some of my family members are indebted to pay bills for IFQ's. I have 5 members of my immediate family [children] fishing the halibut and black cod fishery in the state of Alaska. I am deeply concerned about its' survival and the survival of my family to economically fish these resources. The observer program as it is set up does not help this concern. It is micro mismanagement at its worst.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Mayo

Owner, Sometimes [nowadays] Captain F/V Coral Lee

