


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council and Commission Members

FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke
Executive Director 

DATE: September 24, 1998

SUBJECT: Halibut Personal Use Management

- (a) Receive staff update on the charterboat GHL and moratorium analysis.
- (b) Receive staff update on ADF&G charterboat logbook.
- (c) Receive staff update on halibut subsistence management.
- (d) Receive Joint Board of Fisheries/North Pacific Council recommendations on ADF&G statistical areas.

(a) Charterboat GHL and Moratorium

In September 1997, the Council approved a guideline harvest level for the halibut charterboat fishery. In December 1997, NMFS notified the Council that, without accompanying regulations, the GHL could not be submitted to the Secretary for formal review and publication. Instead, NMFS published the Council's intent of the GHL as a notice of inquiry in the *Federal Register* on March 10, 1998. The Council formed a Halibut GHL Committee to recommend possible management measures to keep the fleet under the GHL.

In April 1998, the GHL Committee recommended possible management measures to the Council. The Council approved a modified list of short-term and long-term measures for analysis. The Council recommended a more contemporary control date for a possible moratorium on new entry into the fleet. The latest control date was set as June 24, 1998 (the date of publication in the *Federal Register*). The Council has previously set control dates of September 23, 1993, and April 17, 1997. Proposed management measures for analysis are listed below.

Alternative 1. Drop the GHL.

- Develop local area management plans as quickly as possible for areas with documented problems, through facilitation, etc., if possible.
- Employ the following six tools within a local area management plan (LAMP) to curtail catch rates of guided sport anglers: (1) line limits on boats, (2) annual angler limits, (3) vessel trip limits, (4) super-exclusive registration of charter vessels, (5) moratorium, and (6) sport catcher vessel only area (SCVOA) to address gear conflicts. These tools could be employed, as well as others not listed, within a LAMP framework to curtail guided sport catch rates.

Alternative 2. Under a GHL,

- Retain GHL at specified levels and convert the GHL to an allocation.
- Manage the guided sport fishery under status quo or according to LAMPs approved by the Council.
- Consider moratorium in the LAMPs.

- Bank uncaught halibut for sport fishery to be provided to sport fishery during years of low TAC to provide stability to guided sport fishery.

Alternative 3. Under a GHL,

- Manage guided sport fishery status quo.
- Apply range of management measures listed above to curtail catch rates of guided anglers once GHL is attained.
- Apply management measures up to 2 years after attainment of GHL (1 year if data is available, but at the beginning of a year for industry stability).
- Employ combination of management measures (e.g., line, boat, annual and/or trip limits) depending on the level of catch reduction required.
- Include a moratorium under this alternative.

In discussions with the Council and Alaska Board of Fisheries, ADF&G staff noted that there currently is no constitutional authority for the State to impose any form of license limitation system or moratorium on recreational fishermen, including the charter fleet. Thus, any proposed local area management plan (LAMP) for halibut must take into account ripple effects on other State-managed species that may be targeted or caught as bycatch by the charter fleet. That concern, along with the concern that guided operations are in very different stages of development across the State, would compel the State to oppose any form of state-wide moratorium or license limitation system. The State could support a moratorium or limitation system on a local level through LAMPs given sufficient justification and involvement of the BOF.

A discussion paper on the above alternatives prepared jointly by staffs of the Council, NMFS, ADF&G, and IPHC will be available on November 1. The GHL Committee is tentatively scheduled to meet on December 3 to review the paper. The Council will review the discussion paper and committee recommendations in December and decide on a course of action.

(b) ADF&G Charterboat Logbook

Preliminary information from ADF&G Sportfish Division indicates that through mid-September 1998 about 930 ADF&G Saltwater Logbooks were issued to vessels homeported in Southeast Alaska. About 700 charter boats reported at least one charter trip on the weekly logbook reporting forms. The operators of approximately 200 charter vessels have indicated that they will not charter again in 1998. Department staff have reviewed 6,650 logbook forms from Southeast charter vessels so far this season.

Of the logbooks issued to vessels in Southeast Alaska, 300 went to the Southern Southeast area, 80 to Petersburg/Wrangell, 205 to Sitka, 305 to Northern Southeast (Juneau area), and 20 each to both the Haines/Skagway and Yakutat areas.

Approximately 620 logbooks were issued to vessels homeported in Southcentral Alaska. Of the logbooks issued to vessels in Southcentral Alaska, 415 were issued to vessels in Cook Inlet, 125 to Prince William Sound, and the remaining 80 to the Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula area.

ADF&G has the funding to analyze the returned logbook sheets and will provide an update of available data to help the Council in its continuing GHL analysis, though a more detailed report will likely not be available until early 1999. These logbooks have been identified as essential to any analysis of alternatives to implement the GHL or moratorium.

(c) Halibut Subsistence Management

No action has been taken on halibut subsistence management since Council action in June 1997 to allow retention, but not sale, of undersized halibut caught while halibut CDQ fishing in Area 4E. The Council has been awaiting resolution of this issue by the Alaska State Legislature prior to taking final action. The Council has scheduled this issue as a discussion item at its February 1999 Council meeting.

(d) ADF&G Statistical Areas

In July 1998, ADF&G staff briefed the Joint BOF/NPFMC Committee regarding the use of ADF&G statistical areas to facilitate the development and enforcement of local area management plans that include halibut. As a result, the Joint BOF/NPFMC Committee urges the Council to recommend to the IPHC at their joint meeting in October, that halibut catch data, for all fisheries, be collected by ADF&G statistical area, for all vessels (including vessels <60'), in order to facilitate local area management plan development and the ensuing enforcement and management regimes.