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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NMFS Implements One Halibut per Day Rule

Change Necessary to Protect Halibut Resource in Southeast Alaska

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The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a rule today that will limit charter clients in Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) to keeping one halibut per day. The rule is a response to ongoing concerns about the depletion of the halibut resource in the area.

The halibut resource in Area 2C has declined 58 percent over the last decade, resulting in Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) decreases for both the commercial and charter segments. However, the charter fleet in Southeast Alaska has exceeded its GHL for the fishery for five consecutive years. Fisheries managers are instituting the one halibut per day rule in an effort to keep the charter fleet within their allotted share of the catch.

Halibut Coalition members support the change and say it is a necessary step to conserve a threatened resource. "The charter industry in Southeast has been allowed to grow unchecked for too many years," said Wrangell fisherman Alan Reeves. "Now the one halibut bag limit is necessary to keep them within their allotted GHL. There's only so much resource, and so many people who can make a living off that resource. They have to become responsible users, and that means staying within their GHL."

The commercial longline fleet operates under strict individual fishing quotas (IFQs). The commercial longline quota in Area 2C has been cut 53% over the past three years to protect halibut stocks from overharvest. "As fishermen, we all have times when we have to suffer to keep the stocks healthy," said Kevin McDougall, a Juneau commercial fisherman. "The stocks

Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association • Cordova District Fishermen • Deep Sea Fishermen's Union • Fishing Vessel Owners Association • Halibut Association of North America • Kachemak Bay Fisheries Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association • Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Sea Food Producers Cooperative • Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance • United Cook Inlet Driftnetters Association • United Fishermen's Marketing Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters Association

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are more important than the individual fisherman. It's time for the charter fleet to sacrifice some for the good of the halibut stocks, just as commercial fishermen have been sacrificing for years."

Halibut overfishing has hurt subsistence and non-guided sport fishermen as well. Since charter boat fishing is concentrated near communities, the overharvest has caused significant localized depletion of the halibut resource. This makes it increasingly difficult for Southeast subsistence and non-guided sport fishermen to catch fish.

The new rule will take effect in 30 days.

The following commercial longline seafood industry members are available to discuss this issue:

1. Linda Behnken, Executive Director and fisherman, Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association (Sitka), (907) 747-0695.
2. Jev Shelton, Halibut Coalition (Juneau) and fisherman, 907-586-2242
3. Peggy Parker, Executive Director, Halibut Association of North America (processing sector), (Deming, WA) (360) 592-3116 or cell (360) 319-6208
4. Kathy Hansen, Executive Director and fisherman, Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance (Juneau), (907) 586-6652 (will auto forward).
5. Julianne Curry, Executive Director, Petersburg Vessel Owners Association and fisherman, (907) 772-9323

Background material:

http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/halibut_issues/halibut.htm

Halibut Coalition comments on the one halibut/day rule:

[Halibut Coalition Comments on Proposed 2C One Fish Rule](#) (1/21/09)

The NMFS Press Release and link to the final rule should be available on this site this morning:

<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/>