

**JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
HARVEST OF PACIFIC HALIBUT BY GUIDED SPORT CHARTER
VESSEL ANGLERS OFF ALASKA**

OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0575

Request: Revise Federal requirements to match revisions made by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to the ADF&G Saltwater Sport Fishing Charter Trip Logbook data sheets.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manage fishing for Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) through regulations established under authority of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982 (Halibut Act).

IPHC and NMFS developed a regulatory program to manage the guided sport charter vessel fishery for Pacific halibut. One step in the development of that program was the implementation of a one-halibut daily bag limit on charter vessel anglers in IPHC Area 2C in order to limit their overall harvest to approximately the established guideline harvest level (74 FR 21194; May 6, 2009). The regulations implementing the one-halibut daily bag limit program included recordkeeping and reporting measures codified at 50 CFR 300.65. These regulations require participants to submit State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Saltwater Sport Fishing Charter Trip Logbook (charter logbook) data sheets for halibut charter vessels operating in IPHC Areas 2C and 3A. *NMFS needs to amend the recordkeeping and reporting requirements for the Pacific halibut guided sport charter fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) and Area 3A (Central Gulf of Alaska) to improve consistency between Federal and ADF&G regulations on ADF&G changes to the charter logbook reporting format.*

To manage halibut effectively, NMFS and ADF&G managers need information on halibut fishing effort and harvest by the guided sport charter sector of the fishery. To avoid duplicative surveys of, and reporting by, industry, NMFS uses data gathered by ADF&G through its ongoing surveys of sport charter fishermen and from the charter logbook program. IPHC uses this information to set annual catch limits. The Council and NMFS use the information to evaluate the potential effects of alternative restrictions on Area 2C guided sport harvests, charter vessel limited entry in Areas 2C and 3A, and a catch sharing plan.

This change request covers the following revisions:

- ◆ Revises location and deadlines for submitting charter logbook data sheets to match State regulations that allow the data sheets to be submitted to any regional or area ADF&G office within a specified amount of time of when the fishing activity occurred. The instruction for recording the IPHC regulatory area fished on the data sheet is revised because of recent changes by the State to the data sheet format.

- ◆ Revises the event on which the deadlines are based from the date “the charter vessel fishing trip ends” to “when the halibut are caught and retained.”

- ◆ Revises the instruction regarding the location of the charter vessel angler's signature on the data sheet and eliminates the requirement to record the sport fishing operator business license number on the data sheet, as the revised data sheet no longer includes this field.

- ◆ Clarifies that separate charter logbook data sheets be completed for IPHC Area 2C and Area 3A if halibut were caught and retained in both regulatory areas during the same charter vessel fishing trip. The completed data sheets for each IPHC regulatory area must indicate the primary statistical area in which the halibut were caught and retained.

- ◆ Adds language to specify that these requirements must be complied with by the end of the day or by the end of the charter vessel fishing trip, whichever comes first. The additional text corresponds to requirements in the charter logbook instructions, which specify that the logbook data page must be completed at the end of each trip or, for multiple-day trips, at the end of each day.

These changes will not create an additional reporting burden on charter program participants as they are already required by the State to meet these requirements. NMFS anticipates that the revisions will not require additional cost to accommodate.