

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
ALASKA PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES: CHARTER RECORDKEEPING
OMB CONTROL NO.: 0648-0575

Justification: Request to merge OMB Control No. 0648-0632 into OMB Control No. 0648-0575. Associated Rule – RIN: 0648-BA37, implemented a Catch Sharing Plan for the Pacific halibut guided sport charter and IFQ commercial fisheries in waters of IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Central Gulf of Alaska).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) manage fishing for Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) through regulations established under authority of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982, 16 U.S.C. 773c (Halibut Act). The Council adopted management measures for a guided sport charter fishery in June 2007 under the authority of the Halibut Act in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A and Area 2C to a specified guideline harvest level (GHL). The IPHC promulgates regulations governing the Pacific halibut fishery under the Convention between the United States and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea (Convention), signed at Ottawa, Ontario, on March 2, 1953, as amended by a Protocol Amending the Convention (signed at Washington, D.C., on March 29, 1979). Regulations that implement this collection-of-information are found at 50 CFR part 300.60 through 300.66 and at 50 CFR 679.5(l)(7).

NMFS administers the IFQ Programs in the North Pacific (see OMB Control No. 0648-0272). The IFQ Programs are limited-access systems authorized by the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*, as amended in 2006, and the Halibut Act. To manage halibut effectively, international and Federal 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 and IPHC depend on data gathered by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) through its ongoing surveys of sport charter fishermen. This information is used by the IPHC to set annual catch limits, and by the Council and NMFS 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.

The harvest of Pacific halibut occurs in three fisheries – commercial, subsistence, and charter (recreational) and is described in five OMB collections, with recreational harvest covered in OMB Control No. 0648-0592 and -0575.

Under RIN 0648-BA37, NMFS implemented new Federal regulations that replaced the Guideline Harvest Level Program for Pacific halibut with a Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for the commercial IFQ and charter sectors. Individual charter halibut permit holders would be allowed to lease commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ), in order to provide charter anglers with harvesting opportunities, not to exceed limits in place for unguided anglers. IFQ is the annual catch limit of halibut that may be harvested by a person who is lawfully allocated a harvest privilege for a specific portion of the annual commercial catch limit of halibut.

OMB Control No. 0648-0575 will now consist of two elements: ADF&G Saltwater Logbook and Guided Angler Fish (GAF) electronic reporting. Both of these elements are available online. NMFS requires two types of charter halibut reporting -- common pool (paper logbook) and GAF (electronic reporting) by all charter operators. Common pool allocations of halibut would continue to be managed using the ADF&G Saltwater Logbook reporting system. GAF electronic reporting would be conducted in real time, and is required only if anglers choose to retain GAF. All persons that obtain or use GAF would be required to use electronic reporting. Real time data completion of the GAF electronic reporting system would allow fishery managers and enforcement and sampling officials to verify catch by angler on a specific trip.

NMFS is merging OMB Control No. 0648-0575 and OMB Control No. 0648-0632. OMB Control No. 0648-0632 is a temporary new collection developed in conjunction with RIN 0648-BA37 when OMB Control No. 0648-0575 was in the process of a request for extension. The temporary collection will be discontinued once this change request is approved.

The current respondents, response and burden estimates for OMB Control No. 0648-0575 are: 1,109 respondent, 37,706 responses, 2,514 hours, and \$0.

Numbers for temporary collection-of-information OMB Control No. 0648-0632 are: 696 respondents, 47,238 responses, 3,550 hours, and \$1,183. These numbers supercede the currently approved numbers for OMB Control No. 0648-0575, as OMB Control No. 0648-0632 was written to include both the existing and new programs.

However, since OMB Control No. 0648-0632 was approved, the number of respondents has increased almost to what it was in the last iteration of OMB Control No. 0648-0575.

Therefore, based on new respondent numbers and the requirements added in OMB Control No. 0648-0632, the final numbers after merging are: 1,090 respondents, 74,120 responses, 5,559 hours and \$1,853.