

RFA successfully lobbies for Alaska's halibut fishermen

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

ANCHORAGE - With the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) proposing a 50 percent cut in Halibut catch for Alaska's recreational anglers, the charter boat industry in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska were facing the threat of a potentially crippling reduction. The IPHC proposal would have reduced the state's current bag limit from two halibut per day to only one, placing a severe strain on an industry that thrives on the high demand of anglers, both resident and non-resident, seeking halibut in Alaskan waters.

Last month the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) launched an intense lobbying effort with the full force of its entire membership, including a letter writing campaign to Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. To further reinforce their efforts, RFA officials and Capt. Greg Sutter of the Alaska Charter Association met with high level Commerce and State Department officials to ensure that IPHC's proposal would be rejected. "Although the IPHC voted to cut our bag limit, the decision was still subject to the approval of our government", stated Capt. Greg Sutter.

As the result of RFA's lobbying efforts, both U.S. Commerce and State departments rejected the proposed regulation. Members of the sportfishing community knew that a one-fish bag limit on halibut would not only devastate Alaska's recreational and tourism industries, but also undermine the recently re-authorized Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA), which mandates that all proposed regulations consider public input. According to RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio, "We have fought long and hard to guarantee that decision-makers listen to, and respond to, the concerns of recreational anglers."

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