

# Halibut restrictions proposed

by Steve Pilkington  
*for the Tundra Times*

Halibut fishermen operating throughout the Bering Sea may face tighter restrictions next year if a set of draft proposals by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council are implemented before the new season next spring.

The council's Halibut Management

Team is now seeking public response for its proposals.

The proposals include limiting the size of the halibut fishing vessels to 30 feet or less around the Pribilof Islands and in Bristol Bay and Norton Sound. The draft would also continue limiting the size of a season's halibut catch.

Denby Lloyd, a fishery biologist who assisted in the drafting of the pro-

posals for NPFMC, said there may be some opposition by the public.

"As far as commercial fisheries go, I expect some of them will object," he said.

The council recently took over the halibut allocation responsibility for most of the Bering Sea. Before, alloca-

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tion of halibut was handled by the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

The NPFMC is attempting to keep existing allocations made by the Halibut Commission as well as add some of their own.

The proposals, an environmental assessment and impact review conducted by the council's Halibut Management Team, are an attempt to limit the size of the catch in order to protect the halibut resource.

If accepted, they would affect two areas.

- Area 4C, which is north of the Pribilof Islands.

- Area 4E, which is an area including Nelson Island, Bristol Bay and Norton Sound.

The proposals also are an attempt to exclude halibut fishing vessels from Outside. Those vessels mainly are based in Seattle.

The draft intends to do this by limiting halibut fishing vessel size in areas 4C and 4E to 30 feet or less. Most commercial fishing vessels from Seattle are about 60 feet in length.

Some of the local halibut fishing vessels from Dillingham, however, may also be excluded because they use vessels larger than 30 feet.

The draft says that near the Pribilof Islands, a trip limit of 10,000 pounds per vessel would be used until 25 percent of the available halibut catch has been harvested. This is the same limit

used by the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

The new limit for the Nelson Island fishery would equal 6,000 pounds.

If the council takes no action on the proposals, then the current allocative

measures set up by the International Pacific Halibut Commission would be repealed.

Officials for the NPFMC, however, feel that action will be taken before that can happen.

The NPFMC is expecting to have a new draft completed in December after the public has had adequate time to respond. Then the council will meet at that time and decide whether to continue with the current proposals.

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