

Fishermen's group formed for halibut

The Aleutian Pribilof Fishermen's Association was formed to develop halibut fisheries for local residents at a recent meeting in Anchorage, sponsored by State Rep. Adelheid Herrmann.

The meeting was called to bring together fishermen from Atka and the Pribilof Islands to discuss alternatives for providing local small-boat fishermen with better access to the halibut fisheries in their areas.

As a group, the fishermen have

drafted a number of proposals which they intend to present before the international Pacific Halibut Commission and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Over the years, fishermen from the Pribilof Islands and Atka have been working toward developing local fisheries to provide an economic base for the local residents, according to Herrmann.

She pointed out the state has shown support and encouraged the develop-

ment of local fishing fleets in the Pribilof Islands by providing funding for boat harbors. The local village corporations and individual fishermen have invested significant financial resources and secured bank loans to purchase fishing vessels and processing equipment.

"All of these investments are in jeopardy of being lost unless these small-boat fishermen are provided better access to the halibut fishery that literally takes place in their

backyards," Herrmann said. "Currently, the halibut fisheries throughout this area are being dominated by an increasing number of large 'outside' vessels."

Herrmann said the new association will provide a stronger voice for the area.

"This is the first major step toward fully establishing a locally based halibut fishery," she said. "The implications of this fishery to provide local jobs and economic development are very exciting."