

Limited entry fishing opposed

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the recent move by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council to implement a moratorium on halibut fishery entry permits and initiate studies regarding the viability of the institution of an "individual quota" or "share system" form of limited entry in that fishery.

I am strongly and unalterably opposed to any form of limited entry in any fishery, and find this "individual quota" concept so blatantly contrary to the most basic precepts of capitalism and free enterprise that it is especially hard to believe its implementation can be seriously considered on a federal level in light of the current administration's "hands-off" economic policies and "anti-big-government" rhetoric.

Apparently an exception has been made in the case of fisheries management, and a perverted form of communism is now acceptable.

Limited entry in any form is a travesty. It is inflationary, creates overcapitalized fleets which target on only one fishery no matter what the condition of that fishery, inhibits the ability to diversify between fisheries as needed, abrogates citizens' rights to try to make a living as they choose, and in the end can not accomplish what its original proponents set out to do — set an optimum level of participation by fishermen.

I am a resident of Kodiak and have made a living from its crab fisheries for the past seven years. Kodiak is strictly a fishing town, and as such, its economy will be subject to the ramifications of the spread of limited entry and the share system through the fisheries more than areas in which fishing does not play such a major role.

The general feeling in Kodiak runs very strongly AGAINST limited entry in the halibut

fishery, and the share system in particular. Yet we seem to be in the position of having it rammed down our throats, in the name of a misguided effort to "conserve the fishery." Limited entry can only attempt to manage the fisherman, not the fish.

Fish populations can fluctuate naturally, regardless of fishing effort, for many reasons. The halibut population in Alaskan waters is certainly not suffering from over-exploitation — their abundance is very evident and increasing, as reflected in the increasing quotas.

There is a significant amount of halibut caught incidentally in other fisheries, which further attests to their abundance.

What to do about this incidental catch is another matter, but I don't see that limiting the number of participants in the halibut fishery will alter the incidental catch in any other fishery.

The value accrued by Alaska's salmon LE permits should give some idea of the expense facing a fisherman who would have to consider the purchase of "shares" to enter the halibut fishery.

In the case of salmon, the "right to harvest" is being bought and sold now for approximately what a fisherman might expect to gross in that fishery in one year (\$80,000 to \$100,000).

In the case of halibut shares, not only is the right to harvest being transferred, but the catch guaranteed for as long as the holder owns the permit, I don't see why the shares shouldn't accrue astronomical values. Who will be able to afford them? Certainly not a professional fisherman whose other fisheries might have slipped into a state of temporary ill health.

The need to fluctuate between fisheries generally becomes apparent when a fisherman "isn't making it anymore" in the fisheries he had been

participating in, whether because of natural population fluctuations, poor management from lack of funds for research and enforcement, market conditions such as a botulism scare, etc.

If the halibut fishery, for example, is healthy and the market conditions good, why close that door to him? What happened to the concepts of flexibility, hard work, and fair competition in the commercial fishing industry?

Is a government grant in the amount of the value of a guaranteed successful season and the exclusive right to harvest now the viable replacement to free enterprise?

It is imperative that opponents of the share system VOICE their opposition, or no one will realize that there IS any opposition. Letters should be sent to legislators in Washington, D.C., and to the members of the NPFMC.

Some of their names are: Clem Tillion, Bart Eaton, Robert McVey, Ronald Skoog, James O. Campbell, Rolland Schmitt, and Harold E. Lokken.

Letters directed to individual members might be more effective than to the council itself. They can all be reached through the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council Office, PO Box 3136 DT, Anchorage, Alaska 99510.

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