

**PROPOSAL 278**

**5 AAC XX.XXX. New section.**

Align bag limits for non-resident unguided halibut harvest from rental vessels in Southeast Alaska with NOAA bag limits for guided anglers in Halibut Management Area 2C, as follows:

We propose that one of the following actions be approved by the Board of Fisheries (BOF). They are listed in preferential order with the most preferred option listed first.

1. Enact a new state regulation that would require any Non-Resident Unguided Angler fishing from a rented vessel in the waters of Southeast Alaska to abide by the NOAA halibut bag limits then in effect for Guided Anglers in Halibut Management Area 2C.
2. Enact a new regulation that any Non-Resident Unguided Angler fishing from a rented vessel in the waters of the Sitka LAMP to abide by the NOAA halibut bag limits then in effect for Guided Anglers in Halibut Management Area 2C.
3. Should proposal #1 or #2 fail, we request the Board of Fish to engage with NOAA and the NPFMC to come to an agreeable management plan for regulating the harvest of halibut by requiring Non-Resident Unguided Anglers fishing from a rented vessel, to follow the same bag limits as set for Guided Anglers in Area 2C.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In recent years, there has been large growth of businesses in Southeast Alaska that rent sportfishing vessels to non-residents, who utilize this arrangement to qualify for more liberal “Non-Guided” bag limits for Halibut. Most of these vessels are smaller than the average charter vessel and, as a result, these anglers focus their halibut harvests in areas close to the communities of Southeast AK. The Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Committee believes this activity reduces the opportunity for resident anglers to harvest halibut close to our homes. We realize that halibut are managed by NOAA and the NPFMC versus the State. We also realize that NOAA regulates “Guided” versus “Non-Guided” anglers separately whereas the state routinely establishes different sport fishing bag limits for “Residents” versus “Non-Residents”. This definitely creates some potential jurisdictional issues for what we want to accomplish which is “increase resident’s opportunity to harvest halibut near our homes”. Several years ago, the Sitka AC was the driving force in the creation of the Sitka Area Local Management Plan (LAMP), which restricted “Guided” anglers from taking halibut from the waters near Sitka during the months of June, July and August. While it would seem simple to just extend this restriction to “Non-Guided” anglers to reduce the harvest of anglers fishing from rented vessels, this action would also reduce bag limits for all local resident anglers fishing from their own vessels with their resident families and friends, in addition to any non-residents that are in town visiting and fishing from these locally owned and operated vessels. We specifically worded our proposals below to read “Non-Resident Unguided Anglers fishing from rented vessels” so that residents that do not live in a designated rural area (and thus not eligible for subsistence Halibut harvesting) will also have their local waters protected.

**PROPOSED BY:** Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Committee

(HQ-F20-175)

\*\*\*\*\*