

Petersburg Borough Assembly
5/15/2024

Petersburg Vessel Owners Association represents a fleet of approximately 50 vessels that harvest seafood from California to the Bering Sea. Many of those member vessels are directly tied to the halibut ifq fishery as part of their broadly diversified business plans. Because of PVOA's membership interest as well as the current and historical reliance that Petersburg as a community has had on the commercial halibut fishery, we recognize halibut as a vital resource to not only our members, but the community as a whole.

In December 2023, PVOA joined an intervener group, the Halibut Defense Alliance, in support of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in a lawsuit filed against them by the Groundfish Forum (GFF). This lawsuit is in response to Amendment 123 (A-123), a NMFS regulation that went into effect January 1st, 2024. A-123 sets the prohibited species catch (PSC) limits of halibut by the Amendment 80 (A80) trawl sector based on abundance as opposed to the flat PSC limit that the A80 fleet has operated under in recent history. PSC is sometimes referred to as bycatch. This means that when stocks decline, halibut bycatch limits are lowered for the A80 sector, in a similar manner to ifq holders seeing their fishable pounds decrease in times of decline. In times of abundance, ifq harvesters see an increase in their harvestable pounds and the A80 sector's PSC rates would increase.

The Halibut Defense Alliance is a collection of industry, tribal, municipal and environmental groups from Southeast Alaska to the Bering Sea that want to see the burden of conservation for the pacific halibut stock to be shared among all harvesting sectors. We do not want this to be a sector vs sector issue, but rather to support the regulation that NMFS has already established with Amendment 123.

Because of PVOA's involvement as interveners and reliance on a healthy halibut population for much of our membership and the community of Petersburg, PVOA is asking the Petersburg Borough Assembly to sign a resolution in support of NMFS and Amendment 123. A draft resolution is provided for the Borough officials and lawyers to look over and all legal fees will be covered by the Halibut Defense Alliance. Stakeholder groups from other coastal communities are reaching out to their respective city/borough assemblies and asking them to also sign resolutions so that they can be compiled in an amicus brief showing coastwide community support for Amendment 123.

Sincerely,



Nels Evens
Director, Petersburg Vessel Owners Association

Interveners in the Halibut Defense Alliance:

City of St. Paul

Aleut Community of St. Paul

Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

Alaska longline Fishermen's Association

Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association

Fishing Vessel Owner's Association

North Pacific Fishermen's Association

Homer Charter Association

Halibut Association of North America

Alaska Marine Conservation Council

The Boat Company

Seafood Producers Co-op