



## Charter Halibut Task Force

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P.O. Box 8500 Ketchikan, AK 99901    [www.charterhalibut.org](http://www.charterhalibut.org)    1-877-588-8819

**CONTACT:**

Kimberly Tebrugge

[kimberly@charterhalibut.org](mailto:kimberly@charterhalibut.org)

Ph: 360-480-8117

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Governor Sarah Palin Gets Keys to Alaskan Businesses as a Plea for Help**

Anchorage, Alaska – October 1, 2008 – Alaska charter fishermen will make a visit to Governor Sarah Palin's office at noon here today, delivering over 1,260 public comments and letters from sportfishermen who fished in Alaska in 2008. The letters state the fishermen will not be coming back to Alaska if the guided recreational daily catch limit is cut from two halibut per day to one. Along with the letters, fishermen are giving Governor Palin \_\_\_\_ business cards attached with keys to their businesses, saying the governor may as well take their businesses if the State supports the reduction in recreational catch limits.

Pacific halibut are a federally managed fish, so although Governor Palin does not directly decide allocation for Pacific Halibut, she nominates 6 of the 11 voting members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), which makes recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce about allocation of the halibut resource. The NPFMC is meeting in Anchorage to consider halibut management measures on October 1-3. Of the 11 members of the Council, 4 members represent state or federal management agencies, one represents recreational fishermen, and six have ties to commercial fishing.

This week, the NPFMC plans to decide on a halibut allocation for guided recreational fishermen, and the options currently before the NPFMC would reduce the guided recreational limits to one halibut per day for Southeast Alaska immediately and in South Central Alaska in the not too distant future. The NPFMC is also considering an option that would purport to allow guided anglers the ability to catch a second halibut, but only if the charter operator they are fishing with has purchased the second fish from a commercial fisherman in advance.

Since 1995 commercial fishermen have caught an average of 89% of all halibut taken off the coast of Alaska (including bycatch). In contrast, guided recreational anglers have accounted for less than 7 percent of the catch on average over the same period. Charter operators feel the options before the NPFMC do not reflect the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982, which requires any allocation of halibut fishing privileges be fair and equitable amongst all user groups regardless of their state of residence. The majority of the options before the Council would result in that 7 percent being reduced or even cut in half, simply so that the commercial sector can catch more halibut.

Governor Palin recently stated "sportfishing is a significant element of Alaska's economy, creating more than 12,000 jobs and with a total annual economic impact of more than \$1 billion." However, Governor Palin has turned a blind eye to the guided sportfishing industry when they have attempted to meet with her about the upcoming allocation.

"We feel it's important that Governor Palin recognize the inequity between user groups. Even if she isn't willing to stand up for the American angler's access to the public resource, she should be aware that her own state's economy is at risk," said Donna Bondioli, with the Alaska Charter Association. The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates the reduced daily limit will decrease the number of anglers coming to Southeast Alaska by up to 30%, which would mean more than 27,000 fewer anglers fishing in Southeast Alaska alone. Also according to a NMFS analysis, a one halibut daily limit would result in an economic loss to charter operators in Southeast Alaska of more than \$8 million annually.

For more information contact Kimberly Tebrugge, 360-480-8117, or visit [www.charterhalibut.org](http://www.charterhalibut.org).

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### **About Charter Halibut Task Force**

The Charter Halibut Task Force (CHTF) represents charter fishing operators whose clients catch halibut off Alaska. The CHTF is devoted to uniting charter operators and business owners committed to stable, long-term management of the halibut resource as a vital part of Alaska's tourism industry, and educating decision-makers on the potential socioeconomic impacts charter halibut issues may have on Alaska coastal communities.

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