

Final Action Expected on Halibut Bycatch Reduction

Monday, 04 June 2012

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/120604.npfmc_halibut_advance.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Reduction to halibut bycatch in the trawl and hook-and-line Pacific cod fisheries of the Gulf of Alaska will be a hot topic at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting this week in Kodiak.

Currently, there are approximately 5-million pounds of inadvertently-caught halibut tossed overboard each year. The options before the council are cuts to that number of five, 10 or 15 percent.

-- (Halibut 1 15 sec "We don't think it's quite enough ... progress in the right direction.")

That's Kelly Harrell, the executive director of the Alaska Marine Conservation Council, headquartered in Anchorage. She says the bycatch is actually more than 5-million pounds.

-- (Halibut 2 11 sec "That limit is the dead halibut ... a lot of fish to be wasting.")

Calls for the bycatch reductions have united commercial longliners and the guided sportfishing industry. As the halibut population in the Gulf of Alaska has shrunk, the two user groups have competed with each other for a share of the diminishing resource.

Tim Evers
(ee-verz, rhymes with fevers) is a retired guide out of Ninilchik.

-- (Halibut 3 hit also.) 30 sec "The long-liners and the charter ... a little bit of a

Linda Behnken, the executive director of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association in Sitka, agrees that the issue is one that bridges traditional gear-group differences:

-- (Halibut 4 stocks.) 23 sec "Directed fisheries have taken ... and help rebuild

Behnken says updating bycatch limits has been a long time coming, and that the ability to avoid non-targeted fish has advanced in the last two decades.

-- (Halibut 5
cap.)

23 sec

"The technology available to ... even a reduced bycatch

The North
Pacific Fishery Management Council is set to address halibut bycatch for the
first three days of its week-long meeting, which begins on Wednesday.

###