

THE WATCH (from page 1)

I said this is a commercial issue, but it could, and is being implemented in the recreational charter fishing industry for halibut in Alaska. (More on this later). A Rhode Island commercial fluke fisheries pilot sector program was implemented in 2009.

Expanded annual catch limits for each sector and for those not participating in the catch share program are intended to end overfishing and ensure enough fish are left in the ocean to promote the rebuilding of depleted stocks. Measures proposed to discourage over-harvesting by either commercial or recreational fisheries include automatic reductions in next year's allowable catch, fewer days at sea, or changes to size limits, seasons, and bag limits.

At this point, the recreational aspect of this plan, if approved, would apply only to the party and charter boat industry who become part of a sector program.

Beware, it could later apply to the private recreational fishermen!

A limited access (sector) program for the recreational charter halibut industry in selected Alaskan waters has been implemented. Alaska's Regional NOAA Administrator has stated, "The new program will stabilize the guided charter fishing sector, maintain access to the fishery for businesses that participated in recent years, and allow access for others who can obtain transferable permits. The sport charter halibut has been growing steadily and exceeding harvest levels set to conserve the halibut population over time."

HOW DOES THIS ALL WORK?

A group of fishermen will get together and form a "sector". It is a legal group, in which each participant signs a contract and agree to terms on the way they will catch fish.

Based on their combined catch history in a specified set of years, they will receive their own allocation - a part of the total state's quota, given to that sector. It's theirs. It belongs to them. They can fish when they want. They can try to catch their allotment all at once, spread it out, or save it for a time when the price is highest.

A "test" sector program is going on now in Rhode Island. A group of commercial druggers have been given their own quota of fluke. They can catch those fluke whenever they want.

In theory this program would reduce bycatch because they would no longer have to throw back fluke caught in their nets when fishing for other species, even when the states' general commercial fluke fishery is shut down.

Not all commercial fishermen think this is a great idea. It's perfect for those who are in the sector, but everyone else has to share the general quota.

But government fisheries managers are pushing this new system and think it will improve the future fisheries.

**Recreational saltwater fishing
is worth
\$160 MILLION
to the Rhode Island economy
plus 1,000 jobs!**

HOW WILL IT IMPACT YOU?

What should concern recreational anglers though is that the desire to push this new system has been mentioned in some circles as possible future applications for recreational fishing.

There is a proposal being created by some Rhode Island charter industry fishermen to form their own recreational sector program for fluke, and would seek their own quota.

But where would this quota come from? YOU!

Each state gets their own allotment of each species of fish. That allotment is then divided with a percentage going to the commercial fishing industry and the remainder going to the recreational fishing industry.

The recreational allotment on fluke belongs to everyone. Anyone can go out and fish for them as long as they are follow the rules on bag limits, minimum size, etc.

This charter boat proposal would take part of the state's recreational quota that belongs to all citizens, and give it to a small group of people. It would become THEIR fluke. They could fish when they want. They could fish when you can't. They could catch more fish per day than you can.

The fish given to them would be subtracted from our allotment. **It would be privatizing a public resource.**

This program, if enacted, would definitely have a negative impact on private recreational fishermen. We'll keep an eye on this and keep you informed.

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Owner: Michael J. Bucko

Phone: (508) 674-7900
Fax: (508) 674-8021
E-mail: mjbucko@mindspring.com



Member

WWW.BuckosParts.com