

From: [REDACTED]
To: [FGC](#)
Subject: Fishery regulation change proposal
Date: Monday, November 03, 2014 7:02:06 AM

Dear Commissioners - I am a 35-year-old San Francisco and I'm writing because I'm concerned about the state's California halibut fishery. Below, I have proposed several regulations changes that I would like to see implemented and which I believe would benefit the fishery.

I have vividly watched the abundance of halibut decline at multiple locations in the past 12 years, and I believe overharvesting is the problem. Where I once saw 10 to 15 halibut per morning while snorkeling in shallow water, I now see 1 or 2 per year. I am not exaggerating. Moreover, this has been a consistent downward trend, with no anomaly years in the past 9 when there was any abundance to speak of. The halibut are almost entirely gone. I am talking about several beaches along the San Mateo coast. Throughout Northern California, other fishermen have reported watching the same process unfurl. Something, clearly, must change in the way these fish are managed, with reduced limits in areas where the fish spawn and an increased size limit. I also believe it would be wise to prohibit using nets on undersized fish. Nets cause the tail of these fish to split, leading to a fatal condition called fin-rot.

Commercial fishermen must also face catch limits, which they currently do not.

This year, one of the last Northern California halibut hotspots, Tomales Bay, took a heavy hit. I was there twice, took two big fish and felt sorry to be a part of the massacre. Fishermen and SCUBA divers in every direction were taking big halibut, wounding some, going home with limits and coming back the next day to take more. I would guess dozens of halibut were coming out of a 10-acre parcel of the northern end of the bay each day through June and July. With other halibut spots having dried up, it's only a matter of time before this one does, too, unless restrictions are tightened. NOTE: I am not suggesting closing the fishery. I want to see measures taken to ensure this fishery lasts as long as the ocean does.

(My proposed reg changes are below, but please bear with me!)

Why doesn't someone with the state go observe this Tomales Bay fishery close up for several days at the peak of the season, perhaps go into the water to try and make an estimate of the fish density, and then try and determine whether these spawning adults can successfully reproduce under this kind of hunting pressure? I'm doubtful the fish can effectively go about their natural business with scores of hunters in their midst.

I propose: Reduce the daily bag limit on halibut to 1 fish. Increase the size limit to 26 inches. Impose a 2-fish possession limit to prevent anglers from "loading up."

In important spawning areas (like inside of the Tomales Bay bar) where the fish congregate), I would like to see the use of SCUBA tanks prohibited among spear fishermen (a la abalone diving).

I also propose catch limits, and perhaps a fishing season, be imposed on commercial boats. Why, after all, can a trawler or gill netter take all the halibut they want. It's

ludicrous!

Officials took the trouble to increase the lingcod bag limit for 2015-16. Why not do something proactive to help secure a future of productive halibut fishing? I have seen the halibut population drop with my own eyes. I fear it will continue to do so unless action is taken.

Thanks for hearing me and offering feedback.

Sincerely,
Alastair Bland

