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From: **Olson Research and Consulting** <olsonrandc1@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jun 3, 2015 at 12:15 AM
Subject: New Fisheries Research agreed to in Bethel, Alaska, USA
To: pfmc.comments@noaa.gov
Cc: Jim Lottsfeldt <lottsfeldt@gmail.com>

Dear Pacific Fishery Management Council,

With the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) vote to change halibut bycatch quotas in the Bering Sea Area this week (June 1-9) in Sitka, the Groundfish Forum would like you to be advised of a new collaboration between Amendment 80 Trawlers and Local Bering Sea Organizations on halibut research in the Bering Sea area.

With representatives from the Alaska Seafood Cooperative and Association of Village Council Presidents, the Chaninik Qaluyat Nunivak Working Group agreed to support funding for a project to tag halibut in the Bering Sea area in order to learn more about their movements. The data from this new study will inform policy makers to make sound decisions regarding changes to halibut bycatch quotas with potential long-term regional policy, ecological, and economic implications.

Please find attached their announcement.

Olson Research and Consulting for

Jim Lottsfeldt, Lottsfeldt + Associates/Lottsfeldt Strategies
Groundfish Forum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: **Matt Upton, Alaska Seafood Cooperative, CQN Working Group Co-Chair**
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Fred Phillip, Bering Sea Elders Group, CQN Working Group Co-Chair
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DATE: **May 29, 2015**

Amendment 80 Trawlers and Local Bering Sea Organizations Collaborating on Important Fisheries Research

The Chaninik Qaluyat Nunivak (CQN) Working Group is pleased to announce that funding has been awarded by the North Pacific Research Board for the research proposal, “Halibut survival for trawlers using alternative handling methods.” Principal investigators for the project are Ms. Paige Drobny, Spearfish Research, and Dr. Craig Rose, Fish Next Research.

The CQN Working Group was established by voluntary agreement in late 2012 and is comprised of ten members total – five from the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) and five representing the Bering Sea Elders Group (BSEG), the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and villages in the area. The purpose of the CQN Working Group is to provide the opportunity for a productive yellowfin sole fishery while minimizing the impact of that fishery on the way of the life of the people who use the region to maintain their economic, nutritional, and cultural wellbeing, and to work to reduce the impacts of the yellowfin sole fishery over time, as guided by research, traditional knowledge, and best available technology and fishing practices.

At their first meeting in November 2014 the CQN Working Group discussed the importance of modifying fishing practices to reduce halibut mortality. The AKSC had been working on a project to get halibut caught in trawl nets back into the water as quickly as possible by sorting them on deck. The CQN Working Group supported the authorization of experimental deck sorting but wanted to gain a better understanding of how expedited release would improve survival. They directed Ms. Drobny, contract biologist to the Working Group, to develop a research project design in collaboration with Dr. Rose and others.

With funding now secured, the project plans to attach 120 satellite tags to halibut released during experimental deck sorting. These tags will monitor the halibuts’ movements, and thus survival, for 100 days after its release from the ship. This will provide a better understanding of the effect that being caught and released in the trawl fishery has on these halibut. Ms. Drobny will field test the tags on a local community vessel this year prior to deploying tags on AKSC vessels in 2016.

The CQN Working Group met again earlier this month in Bethel, Alaska to continue to discuss ways to work together in support of their mission and plans to meet again in Fall 2015.