



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

**Mailing Address:** PO Box 20229, Juneau AK 99802-0229

**Physical Address:** 410 Calhoun Ave Ste 101, Juneau AK 99801

**Phone:** (907)586-2820 **Fax:** (907) 463-2545

**Email:** [ufa@ufa-fish.org](mailto:ufa@ufa-fish.org) **Website:** [www.ufa-fish.org](http://www.ufa-fish.org)

March 11, 2013

Dr. James Balsiger, Regional Administrator  
National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, AK 99802  
Via email: [IPHC2013comments@noaa.gov](mailto:IPHC2013comments@noaa.gov)

Dear Dr. Balsiger,

United Fishermen of Alaska is the largest statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 36 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and its offshore federal waters.

At UFA's February 2013 Board meeting, our members reviewed the list of International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Nominees and noted several strong candidates. Rather than selecting a specific individual, we identified the following attributes as critical elements in making the final decision.

First, the IPHC commissioner from Alaska should come from an active commercial fishing background. The halibut fishery is vital to the members of UFA and the communities they live in. More than 80% of the directed fishery occurs off Alaska's coast. A Commissioner with hands-on experience in commercial fisheries and sustainable fishing practices will greatly enhance the discussion and decision-making process at the IPHC.

Second, the Alaskan IPHC Commissioner should live in a fishery dependent community and have a full understanding of the linkage between the viability of Alaskan fishing communities and a healthy halibut resource. Halibut is an economic, social and cultural mainstay in many of Alaska's isolated coastal communities. Interaction with stakeholders from commercial, sport, charter, subsistence, and bycatch user groups will foster communication and education about the halibut resource, and ensure stakeholder perspectives are considered by IPHC commissioners.

Third, the Alaskan IPHC Commissioner also needs to be an individual with a broad interest and understanding in all aspects of halibut management. The halibut resource and stakeholders will face many challenges in the coming years. The harvest rate policy will be reviewed, the impacts of bycatch need to be more fully understood, and there needs to be better accounting of removals from all sectors. During this time of transition, it is extremely important for the Alaskan IPHC commissioner to be someone who can work with IPHC staff and stakeholders in Alaska to develop solutions to the challenges the halibut resource faces.

In closing, UFA members strongly believe that the Alaskan IPHC Commissioner must be a person who is fully engaged in all aspects of managing the halibut resource. We urge you to carefully review the candidates, with these considerations in mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julianne Curry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being significantly larger and more stylized than the others.

Julianne Curry  
Executive Director

CC: Honorable Sean Parnell, Governor, State of Alaska