

Island Ad-Vantages

THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

April 23, 2020 – Many readers look forward to fresh halibut in the late spring. Management of the Atlantic halibut fishery is complicated by the fact that they live not only in both state and federal waters, but the science that determines catch limits is pretty weak. The Maine DMR recently sent a survey to halibut fishermen asking for input on ways to pare down the 2020 season set to start on May 11. Though Maine has its own state-waters fishery, it is actually a subcomponent of the federal Northeast Multispecies Fishery, managed by the New England Fishery Management Council with a 2020 total allowable catch of about 102mt, and a state waters subcomponent of 21mt. Maine fishermen have seen an increase in halibut catch in recent years, landing almost 24mt in 2019. Some fishermen reported filling their 25-tag season limit in just a few days. If the catch limits are exceeded, it could mean a ban on halibut possession for all federal permit holders (any species) in 2021 – a measure no one wants to see happen. Does this increase in landings come from more effort in the fishery? Or from an improvement in the halibut resource? The short answer is, nobody knows. It certainly calls for improved data collection feeding federal stock assessments. We will be paying attention to how fishermen can participate in that effort in the coming months. For now, we urge fishermen to fill out the survey if you plan to fish for halibut this spring, and encourage you to use the comments section to let the DMR know that you're supportive of better real-time monitoring programs to improve data collection.

If you need help with the survey, feel free to contact our staff.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 367-2708. Learn more about MCCF by visiting us online at www.coastalfisheries.org.

FISHERIES LOG

Prices to Harvesters in Stonington

Lobsters: \$4.00/lb.

Bait (frozen Pogies): \$28/box

Fuel (diesel): \$2.35/gal.

Oceanographic Buoy I-01*

Surface Water Temperature: 41°F