

For Immediate Release

**The Boat Company files complaint in U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska on behalf of commercial, recreational and subsistence fishermen challenging fisheries monitoring program.**

December 24, 2012

Juneau, AK – On December 21, 2012 The Boat Company filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the District of Alaska challenging the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) program for monitoring discard (bycatch) in large volume trawl fisheries. The complaint requests that the court remand the Final Rule to NMFS for the purpose of developing a monitoring program that ensures that NMFS has adequate data regarding the discard (bycatch) of halibut, salmon and other species that are important to commercial, recreational and subsistence fisheries in the state of Alaska. In filing this legal challenge, The Boat Company seeks to advance the often-competing interests of recreational, subsistence and commercial fishermen in an effort protect not only the fisheries, but also their livelihoods.

For over 30 years, The Boat Company, the only not for profit conservation education cruise operator in the world, has been taking guests out into Southeast Alaska's wilderness. They have worked closely with the federal government, conservation organizations, local nature based tour operators and commercial fishing interests during that time to protect and preserve fishery and wildlife resources and the ecosystems that support these resources. Over the past five years, there have been substantial declines in the abundance of halibut and Chinook salmon available to the commercial, recreational and subsistence fisheries that target these species.

The Boat Company has serious concerns about the level of discard (bycatch) that results from the deployment of non-selective trawl gear in federal fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska. There are particular concerns about the inability of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to adequately monitor trawl discard (bycatch). Without adequate data, fishery managers will not be able to make scientifically sound decisions that will arrest substantial declines in the highly valuable Chinook and halibut populations that inhabit or migrate through the Gulf of Alaska.

On November 21, 2012, NMFS published a final rule implementing changes to its observer program which is the only tool used to estimate discard (bycatch) in the trawl fisheries. Fishery stakeholders expected that the restructured program would improve coverage of fisheries that remove the largest volumes of halibut and Chinook salmon as discard (bycatch). Instead, NMFS developed an expensive and inefficient program that diverts observer coverage from trawl vessels to smaller vessels that use lower impact, selective fishing gear. The restructured program fails to meet standards mandated by Congress through the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act.

For further information on the filing, please contact:

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