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Ninilchik Sport Fishing Guide's License Revoked and Jail imposed for illegal Acts

(HOMER, Alaska) – Arthur C. Aho, a halibut sport fishing guide working out of Ninilchik, was sentenced by District Court Judge Margret Murphy on January 18, 2011 for illegal acts committed while working as a sport fishing guide. Aho was sentenced on two counts of aiding a sport fishing client in the commission of a violation, one count of waste of fish, one count of falsifying his sport fishing guide logbook and one count of retaining a halibut while working as a sport fishing guide with paying clients on-board.

On July 10, 2009, Aho guided two Alaska Wildlife Troopers, acting in a covert capacity, on a halibut fishing trip booked through Ninilchik Saltwater Charters & Lodge. While on the guided sport fishing trip, Aho aided one client in retaining a total of five halibut and a second client in retaining a total of three halibut, in violation of both federal and Alaska State laws. After retaining a total of 12 halibut, Aho allowed the six clients to continue fishing for a larger halibut. When one was caught, he instructed his deckhand to throw back a smaller halibut that had been lying on the deck for 40 minutes. Aho actively fished during the trip and one of the halibut hooked by Aho was retained for his clients. Aho also falsified his sport fishing guide logbook by indicating that the six clients caught two halibut each.

Aho was previously convicted in August of 2006 for aiding a client in the commission of a sport fishing violation during a guided sport fishing trip in 2005. The facts of the 2005 case were nearly identical. In the 2005 case, Alaska Wildlife Troopers booked a covert fishing trip with Catch-A-Lot Charters and Aho was their assigned sport fishing guide. During the trip, Aho allowed one client to hook and retain four halibut and a second client to hook and retain three halibut. Judge Murphy sentenced Aho in that offense to a fine of \$5,000 with \$4,000 suspended, 30 days in jail with all 30 days suspended and one year of informal probation.

At the sentencing on January 18, 2011, the State argued that sport fishing guides like Mr. Aho, who are given the privilege to make a living off of the resources of this state, act as stewards of the resource as opposed to violators of sport fish and game laws. The people of the State of Alaska should not have to rely upon Troopers conducting covert activities to ensure that such guides comply with fish and game laws. Judge Murphy imposed a composite sentence on the five counts of 90 days in jail with 80 days suspended, a fine of \$5,000, 40 hours of community work service, and six years of informal probation. Judge Murphy also revoked Mr. Aho's sport fish guide licenses and prohibited him from purchasing a new sport fish guide license for a period of two years. This sentence was crafted to not only deter Mr. Aho from committing similar future violations, but to also deter others from within the community by making it clear that repeated violations of sport fish and game laws, especially those committed for commercial gain, will result in the revocation of one's privileges to work within the guiding industry.

For more information on the case, contact Andrew Peterson with the Office of Special Prosecutions and Appeals at 269-7948 or Sgt. Katrina Malm with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers at 269-5445.