

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NATIONAL APPEALS OFFICE

In re Application of

[REDACTED]

Appellant

)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)  
)

Appeal No. 11-0013

DECISION

---

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The National Appeals Office (NAO) is a division within the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Office of Management and Budget. NAO operates out of NOAA's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland and maintains an office in NMFS's Alaska Regional office. NAO is the successor to the Office of Administrative Appeals (OAA), Alaska Region, and is charged with processing appeals that are on file with OAA. This decision is being issued by the administrative judge to whom this appeal was assigned for adjudication.<sup>1</sup>

[REDACTED]  
(Appellant) filed the appeal under review. Appellant is appealing an Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) issued by NMFS's Restricted Access Management Program (RAM). In the IAD, RAM denied Appellant's application for a Charter Halibut Permit (permit or CHP).

On March 1, 2010, Appellant applied for a CHP pursuant to the Charter Halibut Limited Access Program (CHLAP).<sup>2</sup> The application was filed with RAM, who is responsible for reviewing and determining whether an applicant will receive a permit or permits.

In response to Appellant's application, on August 6, 2010, RAM sent Appellant a Notice of Opportunity to Submit Evidence (Notice).<sup>3</sup> In the Notice, RAM explained that for the recent participation year of 2008, Appellant was the owner of the business to which the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) issued the ADF&G business Owner License authorizing logbook fishing trips for [REDACTED] and that business met the criterion of a minimum of five halibut logbook fishing trips that year. RAM also

---

<sup>1</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 679.43.

<sup>2</sup> Original File Tab, Application for Charter Halibut Permit(s) for IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C and 3A, signed February 26, 2008, received March 1, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Original File Tab, Notice of Opportunity to Submit Evidence.

indicated, however, that for Appellant's "applicant selected qualifying year" of 2004, Appellant was not the owner of [REDACTED], to which ADF&G issued the ADF&G Business Owner License authorizing logbook fishing trips for that year for that business. The Notice also stated Appellant had not adequately supported a successor-in-interest claim. RAM set a September 7, 2010, deadline for Appellant to submit additional evidence in support of his claim.

On September 2, 2010, Appellant responded to the Notice.<sup>4</sup> Appellant indicated on February 7, 2008, he purchased [REDACTED] that on February 8, 2008, [REDACTED] the prior owner of [REDACTED] (Prior Owner), dissolved his interest in that company, and that Appellant took a second mortgage on his house to purchase this business.

On January 7, 2010, RAM sent Appellant the IAD at issue in this case.<sup>5</sup> In its IAD, RAM denied Appellant a permit because he lacked the requisite logbook trips as explained in the Notice. RAM stated Appellant did not qualify for a permit as a successor-in-interest. RAM noted Appellant had the right to appeal the IAD to OAA and that any appeal must be received by March 8, 2011.

On January 20, 2011, Appellant appealed the IAD.<sup>6</sup> On April 21, 2011, NAO sent Appellant a letter notifying him that the office had received his appeal and requesting that any additional documentation or information in support of his appeal be submitted to NAO by May 23, 2011.<sup>7</sup> NAO did not receive any additional material from Appellant supporting his claim.

I have reviewed Appellant's appeal and the case record, and I have determined that the record contains sufficient information on which to reach final judgment. Accordingly, I close the record and issue this decision without ordering a hearing.<sup>8</sup>

## ISSUES

At issue in this appeal is whether Appellant is eligible for a CHP. To resolve this issue, I must evaluate the following:

Did Appellant prove by a preponderance of the evidence that he timely and properly reported to ADF&G at least five bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period (2004 or 2005)?

If the answer to the above question is "no," did Appellant establish by a preponderance of the evidence that Prior Owner properly recorded and

---

<sup>4</sup> Original File Tab, type-written letter, received September 2, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Original File Tab, IAD dated January 7, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Pleadings Tab, type-written letter of appeal, dated January 17, 2011, received January 20, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Appeals Correspondence Tab, Letter from NAO to Appellant dated April 21, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 679.43 (g)(2), (k).

reported the minimum amount of logbook fishing trips in 2004 or 2005 and in 2008 thereby making Appellant eligible as a successor-in-interest to receive a CHP?

If the answer to that question is “no,” I must uphold the IAD and conclude Appellant does not qualify for a CHP.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. In 2004, Prior Owner timely and properly reported seventy-four bottomfish logbook fishing trips to ADF&G.<sup>9</sup>
2. In 2005, Prior Owner timely and properly reported sixty-two bottomfish logbook fishing trips to ADF&G.<sup>10</sup>
3. In 2004, Appellant timely and properly reported no bottomfish logbook fishing trips to ADF&G.<sup>11</sup>
4. In 2005, Appellant timely and properly reported no bottomfish logbook fishing trips to ADF&G.<sup>12</sup>
5. In 2008, Appellant timely and properly reported fifty-one halibut logbook fishing trips to ADF&G.<sup>13</sup>
6. On February 7, 2008, Appellant purchased [REDACTED] from Prior Owner.<sup>14</sup>

### PRINCIPLES OF LAW

The regulations governing the CHLAP provide that NMFS will issue a CHP if an applicant meets certain requirements. If an Appellant seeks a permit because he is a successor-in-interest, among the requirements for establishing his claim is proof that the predecessor reported five or more bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period, either 2004 or 2005, and reported five or more halibut logbook fishing trips during the recent participation period, 2008.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Original File Tab, printed summary.

<sup>10</sup> Original File Tab, printed summary.

<sup>11</sup> Original File Tab, printed summary.

<sup>12</sup> Original File Tab, printed summary.

<sup>13</sup> Original File Tab, printed summary.

<sup>14</sup> Original File Tab, type-written letter, received September 2, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A) and (B)(iii); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(6) and (7); and 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(d)(1).

Minimum participation requirements to qualify for a charter halibut permit are as follows: an applicant must have reported five or more bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period, namely 2004 or 2005, and must have reported five or more halibut logbook fishing trips during the recent participation period, namely 2008.<sup>16</sup>

A “logbook fishing trip” means a bottomfish logbook fishing trip or a halibut logbook fishing trip that was reported as a trip to the State of Alaska in a Saltwater Charter Logbook within the time limits for reporting the trip in effect at the time of the trip.<sup>17</sup>

A “bottomfish logbook fishing trip” means a logbook fishing trip in the qualifying period that was reported to the State of Alaska in a Saltwater Charter Logbook with one of the following pieces of information: the statistical area(s) where bottomfish fishing occurred, the boat hours that the vessel engaged in bottomfish fishing, or the number of rods used from the vessel in bottomfish fishing.<sup>18</sup>

A “halibut logbook fishing tip” means a logbook fishing trip in the recent participation period that was reported to the State of Alaska in a Saltwater Charter Logbook within the time limit for reporting the trip in effect at the time of the trip with one of the following pieces of information: the number of halibut that was kept, the number of halibut that was released, the statistical area(s) where bottomfish fishing occurred, or the boat hours that the vessel engaged in bottomfish fishing.<sup>19</sup>

The regulations governing the CHLAP provide that NMFS is only authorized to issue a CHP to the individual or entity to which ADF&G issued the ADF&G Business Owner License.<sup>20</sup> This license authorized the logbook fishing trips that are used to meet the minimum participation requirements to qualify for a CHP.<sup>21</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The first issue I must resolve in this appeal is whether Appellant meets the minimum participation requirements to be eligible for a CHP. Under CHLAP regulations, minimum participation requirements for a CHP are five or more bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period, namely 2004 or 2005, and five or more halibut logbook fishing trips during the recent participation period, namely 2008.<sup>22</sup>

Appellant properly reported fifty-one logbook fishing trips to ADF&G for 2008. Thus, Appellant meets minimum participation requirements for 2008. However, Appellant reported no qualifying trips for 2004 or 2005 to ADF&G. Since the CHLAP regulations

<sup>16</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A)-(B), (f)(6)-(7).

<sup>17</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(4).

<sup>18</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(2).

<sup>19</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(3).

<sup>20</sup> An ADF&G Business Owner License includes a business registration, a sport fish business owner license, a sport fish business license, and an ADF&G business license. 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(3).

<sup>21</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii).

<sup>22</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A) and (B); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(6) and (7); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(d)(1).

require minimum participation in both 2004 or 2005, and 2008, Appellant does not meet the minimum participation requirements for a CHP.

The next issue I must resolve in this appeal is whether Appellant can obtain a CHP as a successor-in-interest.<sup>23</sup> Under the CHLAP regulations, a putative successor-in-interest must prove that its predecessor reported five or more bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period, either 2004 or 2005, and reported five or more halibut logbook fishing trips during the recent participation period, 2008.<sup>24</sup> As NMFS states in pertinent part in the CHLAP regulations: “If [a] person is applying [for a permit] as a successor-in-interest to the person to which ADF&G issued the Business Owner Licenses that authorized logbook trips *that meet the participation requirements described in paragraphs (b)(1)(ii) of this section,*” NMFS will require certain proof of the applicant’s status as successor-in-interest.<sup>25</sup> The participation requirements found in paragraph (b)(1)(ii) are “five (5) bottomfish logbook fishing trips or more during one year of the qualifying period [2004 or 2005]; and...five (5) halibut logbook fishing trips or more during the recent participation period [2008].”<sup>26</sup>

Appellant purchased his business from Prior Owner on February 7, 2008. At the point of sale, Prior Owner was not eligible for a CHP since it had not satisfied the recent participation requirement of reporting at least five halibut logbook fishing trips in 2008. As a result, Appellant cannot establish eligibility based on the successor-in-interest provisions of the CHLAP regulations.

On appeal, Appellant argues he qualifies for a CHP based on the dictionary definition of a successor-in-interest, that he operated [REDACTED] in 2004 and 2005, and filled out ADF&G logbooks during those years, and that NMFS’s non-responsiveness to his ownership qualification questions prejudiced his ability to make reasonable interpretations on how to proceed in his business plans.

Although Appellant states the dictionary definition of a successor-in-interest demonstrates his eligibility for a CHP, such a definition does not establish Appellant is a successor-in-interest under the CHLAP regulations.

Appellant states he operated [REDACTED] in 2004 and 2005, and filled out ADF&G logbooks during those years. Appellant properly reported fifty-one halibut logbook fishing trips to ADF&G for 2008. Thus, Appellant meets minimum participation requirements for 2008. However, Appellant reported no qualifying trips to ADF&G in 2004 or 2005, and, therefore, does not qualify for a CHP based on achieving the minimum participation levels associated with an ADF&G Business Owner License issued to him in 2004 or 2005, and 2008. Merely taking trips is not sufficient to meet participation requirements. The regulations require that the bottomfish fishing trip was a) timely reported, b) in a logbook assigned to Appellant based on his business license,

<sup>23</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A) and (B)(iii); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(6) and (7); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(d)(1).

<sup>24</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A) and (B); 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(f)(6) and (7); and 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(d)(1).

<sup>25</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(iii)(emphasis added).

<sup>26</sup> 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii).

and c) with appropriate information. Appellant has not shown that he submitted logbook pages to ADF&G reporting at least five bottomfish logbook fishing trips during one year of the qualifying period (2004 or 2005).

Although Appellant achieved the minimum participation requirements for the recent participation period of 2008, the CHLAP regulations do not allow successor-in-interest claims in which the applicant is not a successor-in-interest for both the qualifying and recent participation periods. CHLAP regulations provide that the person must be applying as a successor-in-interest “to the person to which ADF&G issued the Business Owner Licenses that authorized logbook fishing trips that meet *the participation requirements described in paragraphs (b)(1)(ii) of this section.*” (Emphasis added.) The participation requirements in paragraphs (b)(1)(ii) are the participation requirements in the qualifying period and the recent period. 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)(A) (qualifying period) & (B) (recent period).

Appellant argues NMFS’s non-responsiveness to his questions prejudiced his ability to proceed in his business plans. The scope of this appeal does not extend to evaluating Appellant’s ability to receive information affecting his business plans. Rather, the issue on appeal is whether the CHLAP regulations were correctly applied to Appellant. Appellant has not established that the IAD issued to him was inconsistent with CHLAP regulations.

In reaching my decision, I have carefully reviewed the entire record. I recognize Appellant’s financial hardship and his interest in his business. However, I am bound to follow the CHLAP regulations, and as such, Appellant does not qualify for a permit.

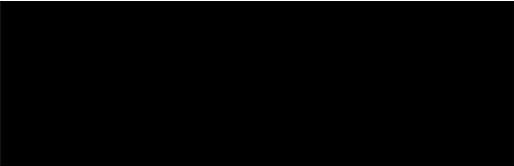
#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Appellant is not eligible for a permit under the CHLAP rules as he did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence that he reported at least five bottomfish logbook fishing trips during either 2004 or 2005. Appellant has not established by a preponderance of the evidence that Prior Owner met the requirements of 50 C.F.R. § 300.67(b)(1)(ii)-(iii) . Appellant is not eligible for a CHP as a successor-in-interest to Prior Owner. The IAD is consistent with CHLAP regulations.

#### ORDER

The IAD dated January 7, 2010, is upheld. This decision takes effect thirty days from the dated issued, November 30,2011, and will become the final agency action for purposes of judicial review, unless a motion for reconsideration is made pursuant to <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/appeals/reconsiderationpolicy.htm>, or the Regional Administrator reverses, modifies, or remands this decision pursuant to 50 C.F.R. § 679.43 (k), (o).

Appellant or RAM may submit a Motion for Reconsideration, but it must be received at this Office not later than 4:30 p.m. Alaska Standard Time on November 10, 2011, the tenth day after the date of this Decision. A Motion for Reconsideration must be in writing, must allege one or more specific material matters of fact or law that were overlooked or misunderstood by the administrative judge, and must be accompanied by a written statement of points and authorities in support of the motion. A timely Motion for Reconsideration will result in a stay of the effective date of the Decision pending a ruling on the motion or the issuance of a Decision on Reconsideration.



Steven Goodman  
Administrative Judge

Date Issued: October 31, 2011