

Two Fishermen and Fish Company Manager Face Thousands in Fines for Fishing Violations

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : September 16, 2009 at 6:12 am

CHINOOK, Wash. - Three men involved in illegally harvesting sablefish in 2005, were sentenced today in U.S. District Court in Tacoma to fines and restitution. JON SCHULTZ, 46, ROBERT GREENFIELD, 40 and KENNETH GREENFIELD, 51, all of Chinook, Washington, were sentenced on the misdemeanor charge of failing to exercise due care while trafficking in illegally obtained fish. Fisherman KENNETH GREENFIELD was fined \$16,479 and ordered to pay restitution to the State of Washington of \$16,479. His brother, fisherman ROBERT GREENFIELD was fined \$11,604 and ordered to pay restitution to Washington State of \$11,604. SCHULTZ, an employee of Bell Buoy Crab Company was fined \$10,000. All three men paid their fines and restitution in court this morning.

According to the plea agreements filed in the case, in the summer and fall of 2005, SCHULTZ was the Production Manager for Bell Buoy Crab Company of Chinook, Washington. He was responsible for purchasing sablefish, also known as black cod, from area fishermen including the GREENFIELDS. Federal groundfish regulations establish harvest levels and seasons for the fish. In order to determine how much fish is being taken, fish processing facilities such as Bell Buoy are required to fill out a "fish receiving ticket" and provide a copy to the fishermen with the accurate date and weight of the catch.

In 2005, there were limits on the weekly and monthly catch of groundfish per boat. SCHULTZ admitted in his plea agreement that he failed to accurately record more than 13,500 pounds of sablefish that his company had purchased. The company, Bell Buoy, reached a civil settlement of the case in March 2009, paying state and federal agencies more than \$60,000 for its failure to accurately report the loads. The settlement amount was split between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), with each entity receiving \$31,576.

ROBERT GREENFIELD admitted in his plea agreement that between May and August 2005, he exceeded the amount of sablefish he was allowed to take by more than 5,100 pounds. ROBERT GREENFIELD operates the F/V Remembrance, and failed to pay attention to the fish tickets from Bell Buoy that indicated he was exceeding his limit. KENNETH GREENFIELD operates the F/V Garda Marie and the F/V Renee Maria. KENNETH GREENFIELD admitted in his plea agreement that between May and August 2005, he exceeded his catch limit for sablefish by more than 8,200 pounds. KENNETH GREENFIELD admitted he failed to take reasonable care to monitor his catch and limits.

In sentencing the men, Magistrate Judge Karen Strombom noted that, "These regulations are intended to protect our fisheries. Those who circumvent these regulations and are caught will end up in federal court."

The case was a joint investigation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The case was a long-term, joint investigation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Program (WDFW). Both agencies often partner to aggressively pursue violations of laws meant to protect the Nations marine resources. Coastal economies and local commercial fishermen rely on the sustainability of these important fisheries resources. According to Mike Cenci, WDFW Deputy Chief, "illegal activities such as these disadvantage both."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Carl Blackstone.