

the Charter Log

A Quarterly Newsletter for Fishing Guides and Charter Boat Operators

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Back to the Drawing Board

It's back to the drawing board for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council on the hotly debated charter halibut management plan. On December 9 the council voted to set aside the previously approved IFQ plan and consider two sets of options.

One would be an "allocation-based fishery plan." This option may include a federal moratorium or state limited entry. Other features could include subdivision of areas 2A and 3A into sub-districts, establishment of local area management plans (LAMPs), super-exclusive registration areas, limits on days fished, reduced daily limits, and more.

The other would be a modified IFQ, possibly designed to allow operators currently in the fishery to more easily obtain quota than was assumed to be possible under the original plan. Sub-division of 2C and 3A, and creation of LAMPs, will be part of the consideration.

December 9 was set as the control date for any future access limitation measures, including a possible moratorium on new entries. A "stakeholder working group" is to be named to study the alternatives. The developed alternatives will be presented at the April council meeting.

The motion to study the new suite of options was put forward by ADFG commissioner McKie Campbell. This motion reportedly pleases current charter operators who entered the business after the key qualification years for quota shares, and raises the ire of commercial halibut fishermen and many longstanding charter operators who worked for years to craft a plan for an orderly management of the fishery. It's not yet clear how the move will be regarded by those charter

operators who opposed the IFQ on free-enterprise philosophical grounds, since access limitation is a central feature of both options.

This move re-opens the question of allowing the charter limit to float with abundance, as it would have with the original IFQ, or keeping it a fixed poundage, as under the GHL.

The council took no action to rescind the GHL, which caps charter halibut catches in lieu of the IFQ. The council staff and GHL committee are conducting an analysis of proposed means for getting the halibut charter industry catch back to within the GHL. Measures could include a one-trip-per-day limit on charter boats, a prohibition on fishing by skipper and crew, and annual limits of five or six fish per person for anglers in area 2C.

ADFG also announced plans to work with the next legislature to establish a moratorium or license limitation (limited entry) for the charter industry, a move that could affect all kinds of charter operators and not be restricted solely to halibut charters. ❁

Alaska Charter Association

Note: The Spring 05 issue of Charter Log contained an article introducing the recently formed Alaska Charter Association. In it I editorialized about some statements made by individual ACA members. Board member and recently elected president Greg Sutter contacted me to say he felt I had mischaracterized the organization, and he made the valid point that a whole statewide group should not be judged by actions of a few

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individuals. I invited him to write a brief article setting the record straight about ACA, its membership, and its goals. His article follows. —Terry Johnson, Editor

By Greg Sutter, President

The Alaska Charter Association's mission is to preserve and protect the rights and resources of Alaska's sport anglers. We strive to promote professional business practices in Alaska's charter sport

fishing industry, encourage responsible stewardship of Alaska's natural resources, and ensure equitable representation in governmental affairs for all of our industry participants.

The ACA has recently passed its first year anniversary. During this time our membership has grown to represent members from Ketchikan to Barrow, and we have received recognition and support from several national recreational/sport fishing organizations. Although the ACA is a young and steadily growing organization, it will remain a permanent feature in the political future of Alaskan fisheries. The reality of our fisheries

dictates that its participants must be aware of policy issues and be involved in the policy making process. We do both and more. So far we are far from "Mission Accomplished." But we have made great strides and engaged the state of Alaska, many local governments, chambers of commerce, and other major statewide organizations such as the Alaska Outdoor Council and the Alaska Travel Industry Association to take a stand against the inequities within the proposed halibut charter IFQ program and the current GH (guideline harvest limit). If our efforts do not initially succeed with the federal North Pacific Fishery Management

Council on this issue, we will persist until our aims are met.

As with many startup organizations, the ACA was described as a "one issue organization." That is true. The issue is "fairness" to all users, and what is best for the resource. Our goal is to represent not only charters and anglers in the Gulf of Alaska, inlets, sounds, and bays, but rivers, streams and lakes as well. Professionally guided sport anglers should always be able to have the right to enjoy a healthy resource in Alaska, and have a voice that is heard. The ACA Web site is www.Alaskacharter.org.

Pacific Marine Expo

For the second year, Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle included a daylong series of programs for charter boat operators called Charterboat Conference. Hosted by show owners Diversified Business Communications and organized by Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, the conference consisted of four hour-long sessions. One was an update of the status of the Alaska halibut charter IFQ and GH (guideline harvest limit) plans (see article elsewhere in this issue with the latest on that matter). Others were on surviving in the charter business, how small charter boats will be affected by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and charter boat passenger safety.

Surviving 10/20 Years in the Charter Industry

This session featured three speakers: Monte Hughes of La Conner, Washington, who operates a 100 foot tour boat in the San Juan Islands; Gary Krein of Everett, Washington, who takes out anglers in Puget Sound on a 28 foot sportfishing vessel; and Dan Wilk of Orcas Island who, with his wife Denise, specializes in whale watching in the San Juans on a 56 foot passenger boat. Each made a series of observations about the measures they had successfully employed over the years to keep their businesses running profitably in a changing economic environment, as summarized below.

Monte Hughes, Mystic Sea Charters:

After long experience in the Alaska fishing industry, Hughes started a charter boat service in La Conner. He relocated for a while to Whittier for dinner and glacier cruises, but followed his heart and returned to La Conner. Until 9/11 about 70% of his business was corporate and group charters, but after the attack that part of the business died.

"You need flexibility," Monte told the audience, "you need a boat that's flexible." Further, he added, "know your banker well. . . . you will need money to get through. You need an operating line (of credit)." He recommends a \$50,000 rotating line.

Ten years ago, he says, clients were OK with the less exciting tours. Now people want action tours. They want a trip to be more hands-on; they want to be more involved. He mentioned whale watching as a more action-oriented activity than regular touring.

Other tips: As each person gets on the boat he or she is met by the captain.

On customer satisfaction: "Pick out the grumpy old man and make him smile. You want the passengers to say 'this (trip) is worth more than we paid.'"

The number one thing about his advertising, he says, is the map on the brochure. People use it to decide where they want to go, and they use it during the trip.

And one more point: "You won't see a profit for at least five years," Hughes told his listeners, "It takes a long time to build a charter business."

Gary Krein, All Star Fishing Charters:

Gary is on the NACO board (National Association of Charter Operators), is president of the Charter Association of Puget Sound, writes fishing articles for newspapers, and lobbies the Pacific Marine Fisheries Commission when not actually running his boat. During the summer he often does two charters a day.

His five keys to success: (1) commitment to the job, (2) integrity, (3) flexibility, (4) attitude, and (5) reputation.

The stages of commitment are pre-entry to the business, early employment, and late career entrenchment. "Customers need to see enthusiasm in you," he says. Integrity includes conveying realistic expectations through advertising and conversation. The hardest thing to learn, he says, is "It's OK to say no." An example of flexibility is being able to accommodate customers' desire to change trip plans, such as starting or ending at different times from the normal. He says charter operators "live and die by their reputations." Think brand loyalty. You need to sweat every detail, he says. Too many skippers, he adds, base success on the number of fish in the box; the customer judges the success on how much he enjoys the day.

He says excellent business practices are very important. When customers make bookings, he advises, get their data, get a credit card to guarantee they'll show up. Cancellation policy should be posted on the company Web site.

Dan Wilk, Orcas Island Eclipse Charters:

Dan came into chartering with a varied background that included a degree in engineering and experience in commercial fishing and vessel maintenance. He and Denise started with a sportfishing charter business in Yakutat, but returned to their home waters of the San Juan Islands to six-pack whale watching. The movie *Free Willy*, in which they had acting roles, gave their fledgling whale-watch business a boost, and they graduated to a custom boat of their own design that is fast, well-appointed, and, as Dan says, "squeaky clean."

Some tips:

- Use visual aids. They have plywood whale cutouts that they use to advertise their trips at the dock. Include education on the animals as part of the package.
- Offer more than just reservations. Help customers find lodging and purchases.
- Eagles are a big deal. Show customers all the wildlife, not just the whales.
- Work with other operators—do mutual referrals, participate in a whale-spotting co-op, and share the excitement with customers of finding whales.
- The Wilks have a relief skipper who runs the boat two days a week, and several naturalists who rotate days so that they don't get stale.
- The Internet is the best marketing tool. They don't use much print advertising, but Denise maintains a large email list and sends frequent "blast" emails.

How Does the ADA Affect the Charter Industry?

John Waterhouse is a professional engineer and president of Elliott Bay Design Group. His firm designs large passenger vessels, and he is on the Passenger Vessel Access Board, which was organized to provide recommendations to the federal government regarding implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act

in the passenger vessel industry. He provided information on the process of ADA implementation, and made recommendations to the audience about ways to ensure that their current and future vessels are in compliance.

Gary Krein, All Star Fishing Charters, is a member of the board of the National Association of Charterboat Operators, and provided a NACO response.

Key points of Mr. Waterhouse's presentation include the following.

The ADA prevents discrimination in employment, in public entities, and in public accommodations. Accommodations include boats.

After a brief discussion of employment and public entities, Waterhouse went on to focus the remainder of this talk on vessels. He cited a court decision declaring that all vessels have an obligation to remove architectural barriers if "readily available."

Small power vessels, defined as less than 65 feet, with beam of less than 16 feet and with a program area of less than 750 square feet, have reduced standards. For example, under the current interpretation an accessible toilet is not required on vessels less than 48 feet in length; door width and sill limits don't apply to vessel less than 45 feet in length.

A comment period on a draft guidelines notice published in the Federal Register closed at the end of July. To come are issuance of proposed rule for small passenger vessels and identification of the agency to enforce the rules.

Waterhouse says that the ADA pertains to all vessels that carry passengers for hire but while specific design and feature standards are not in place, operators should focus on good business practices that meet the intent of the law. He made several recommendations.

- Identify and remove barriers where it is readily achievable.
- Review your promotional material to identify the level of accommodations offered.
- Work with advocacy groups to educate them about your business and to gain ideas on acceptable practices and procedures.
- Train your staff on access issues and customer rights and expectations.

Remember, Waterhouse says, that the ADA is civil rights legislation, and requires businesses to provide the same service to disabled as to able-bodied patrons. He adds that the cost of compliance and ignorance of the requirements are not excuses for non-compliance. He says the small passenger vessel industry currently has some goodwill with the disability community because they've been welcomed, and treated as guests. A boat may not have to be 100% accessible if disabled persons feel they're valued customers.

He said that most lawsuits are about people's expectations. He recommends that operators get together with advocacy groups for assistance on meeting disabled persons' needs. Operators should show good faith, and should train their staffs.

"The good news is you probably won't have to modify your sport fish vessel," he told the audience, "but you probably are going to have to think out how you're going to respond to your (disabled) clients."

Gary Krein, representing the National Association of Charterboat Operators, told the audience that NACO generally agrees with the summary and the advice presented by John Waterhouse.

Charter Client Safety Makes Sense

Steven Campbell, training coordinator for Alaska Marine Safety Education Association, and a seasonal fishing charter operator, outlined some points for improving safety on charter boats. He also touched on matters of charter boat insurance, alcohol on-board policy, liability waivers, and developing a "go/no-go" decision matrix.

Much current discussion on charter boat safety focuses on recent fatal accidents, including the *Taki-Too* incident in Oregon. The Coast Guard and the National Transportation Safety Board have recommended that operators develop and implement go/no-go policies for rough sea conditions, and development of a decision matrix that spells out in identifiable detail when certain safety measures—such as passengers donning PFDs—are to be taken. They also recommend that operators do a review of the standard passenger weight used to calculate vessel stability and seaworthiness. Recent events had led to the discovery that as individual Americans are becoming heavier, the

amount of weight represented by a given number of passengers has increased, to the point that in some cases excess passenger weight (while within the legal limit of number of persons) may have contributed to vessel instability leading to capsizing.

Campbell advises operators who serve or even allow alcohol on board to develop a policy, and to consult their insurance policy. Passenger drinking is a frequent contributor to injuries on board, and of course licensed operators are allowed a very low (0.04) limit, which effectively prevents any operator drinking, even at anchor if operating the boat may be required sooner than the next day. The working—not to say legal—standard is “eight hours bottle to throttle.”

Some insurance industry professionals attended the session and offered comments about liability waivers and accident response. They said that while an individual cannot waive the right to sue for negligence, a properly drafted and signed

waiver often serves as a psychological deterrent and shows evidence of operator conscientiousness, which can result in lower awards if a suit is filed.

They recommended in the case of an injury on board that the operator persuade the injured person to fill out and sign a form in which the injured person describes the event, the injury, and the response. Witnesses should likewise provide written and signed descriptions. This serves to document the facts at the time so that at a later date an injured person’s attorney doesn’t attempt to reconstruct the incident with the operator characterized in a bad light.

They recommend that the operator provide full and complete first aid treatment, offer transport to a medical facility, and guarantee payment for all treatments or losses, which in most cases will be covered by insurance. Audience members recommend follow-up calls, letters, and emails of concern, especially ones that create a paper trail.

Campbell provided examples in his own experience where keeping meticulous notes in his vessel logbook protected him from spurious claims later.

Campbell also reminded his audience that federal law requires filing an accident report with the Coast Guard within 48 hours of an incident, even if no deaths or injuries result. The existence of an accident report can be crucial when making an insurance claim.

Other tips:

- Do a daily walk-around of the vessel, much like an airplane pilot, looking for anything that’s loose, corroded, or otherwise not shipshape.
- Check safety equipment monthly.
- Develop a medevac or rescue plan and a response plan for the various agencies that may get involved in case of an incident. ☺

Alaska Business Licenses

The Alaska Division of Occupation Licensing has a new name, and with it come new services and procedures for obtaining or renewing a business license.

Except for commercial fishing, all businesses in the state must operate under a state business license, which must be renewed annually.

The renamed office is the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing. The DCB&PL now uses recently updated activity codes, converted to the current version of the North American Industry Classification System, which is a six-digit code system maintained by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The first two digits of the code designate the Line of Business. A single license provides for operation of any business activities within that Line of Business. If a business operates in more than one Line of Business it must have additional licenses. The Line of Business cannot be changed at the time of license renewal; if the owner wants to change the kind of business conducted, a new license must be purchased.

The classification system database

can be searched at www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naico602.htm. The list can also be viewed or printed at www.businesslicense.alaska.gov.

Businesses listed as corporations, limited liability companies or limited partnerships, or limited liability partnerships must file creation documents with the corporations section. To determine whether a business is properly filed, search the database at www.corporations.alaska.gov. Online filings can be done at the same address.

Other filings that can be made online include

- LLC articles of organization and registration of foreign LLCs.
- business corporation articles of incorporation and application for certificate of authority.
- purchase good standing certificates, or certificates of compliance.
- biennial reports.
- business name registrations.

The address for business license online renewal is www.businesslicense.alaska.gov. The site takes Visa and MasterCard. ☺

ADFG Hires Dersham

Long-time fishing guide and member of the Board of Fisheries, Ed Dersham of Anchor Point has joined the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as a project coordinator with the Commercial Fisheries Division. He has resigned his Board of Fisheries seat. He is reportedly hired on a three-quarter time basis. He began his new job on September 1, 2005, and is based at ADFG’s Homer office.

As a project coordinator Dersham assists the Board of Fisheries and the Salmon Restructuring Panel in their efforts to examine options for restructuring the state’s commercial salmon industry, according to an ADFG press release. He also works on the state’s efforts to examine rationalization of Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries, specifically the effects in state waters. His assignments include work on legislation and associated policy decisions.

Jeremiah Campbell, a Seward fishing guide and owner of Alaska Northern Outfitters, was named to replace Dersham on the Board of Fisheries, in a term that expires at the end of June 2006. Campbell has been vice president of the Seward Charter Boat Association and secretary of the Seward Fish and Game Advisory Committee. ☺

Rockfish Release

All saltwater anglers know that rockfish pulled from depths of greater than about six fathoms are prone to injury and death resulting from decompression. Since many rockfish are caught unintentionally, anglers have long wondered whether it may be possible to recompress the unwanted fish so that they could survive.

Oregon Sea Grant has released a new four-page publication that details just how to do that. *Release Methods for Rockfish* by Steve Theberge and Steve Parker explains how the swim bladder expands and pushes the stomach out of the mouth. Fish that are visibly bloated float on the surface, or have the protruding stomach, are unable to return to the bottom and will die unless released with special technique. Fish even with visibly bulging eyes can survive if recompressed and released quickly.

Two basic techniques are described: venting, and recompression. Venting

consists of puncturing the swim bladder with a hollow tool or needle. The needle must not penetrate the stomach (which bulges out of the mouth) or other organs. Venting is potentially damaging to the fish but may work if performed correctly.

Recompression can be accomplished with use of either an open-bottom box that is placed over the fish and lowered by line, or with a weighted, inverted barbless hook, which is inserted through the fish's lip. The weight is lowered by line, then disengaged by quickly lifting on the line. Recompression, properly done, is usually preferable to venting because it is less damaging to the fish and more effective. The publication describes the options in more detail and contains useful photos.

The authors point out that bringing rockfish to the surface slowly does not prevent decompression injury, as it would take a rockfish several hours to adjust to surface pressure.

Release Methods for Rockfish is publication ORESU-G-05-001. Check the Oregon Sea Grant Web site at seagrant.oregonstate.edu to order copies.

Alaska Rockfish Guide

While on the topic of rockfish, be sure to see the recent publication *Angler's Guide to the Rockfishes of Alaska*. Written by Scott Meyer, ADFG sport fish biologist in Homer, the four-page tri-fold color publication contains a lot of reliable biology and life history information, discussion of fishery management, recreational harvest data, fishing tips, and good quality color identification photos.

Angler's Guide to the Rockfishes of Alaska is published by Alaska Sea Grant as SG-ED-40 and is available in print and can be ordered online at www.uaf.edu/seagrant/bookstore/pubs/SG-ED-40.html.

AWRTA Conference

The annual conference of the Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA) will be in Seward, March 1-3, 2006, and will feature content of interest to charter boat operators. A session on marine ecotourism is scheduled for the afternoon of Thursday, March 2, and other sessions will address tourism in Prince William Sound, marketing, risk assessment, and more. The conference will dovetail with an international conference on northern tourism marketing, sponsored by the Northern Forum, Feb. 27-March 4, also

in Seward. A workshop on responsible marine wildlife viewing, sponsored by Alaska Marine Advisory and the NOAA Coastal Training Program, is also scheduled for Seward.

AWRTA is the statewide trade association for businesses involved in wilderness, wildlife, and ecotourism, and many boat operators are members. For more information on the conference call AWRTA at 907-258-3171 or check their Web site at www.awrta.org.

BOF Call for Proposals

The Board of Fisheries has issued a Call for Proposals for changes to subsistence, personal use, sport, guided sport, and commercial finfish regulations for Bristol Bay, AYK, and Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands. In addition, proposals are being accepted for changes to subsistence, personal use, sport, guided sport, and commercial statewide finfish provisions regulations. Proposals must be submitted, using the standard proposal form, to one of the five regional Section of Boards Support offices, located in Juneau, Dillingham, Kotzebue, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. Deadline for proposals to reach one of those offices is Monday, April 10, 2006.

Forms can be downloaded at www.state.ak.us/adfg/boards/bordhome.htm.

Sea Grant Requests Your Help

The Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, and the NOAA Coastal Training Program, are seeking charter operator input on the effects of approach and viewing on marine wildlife. Please take a moment to answer the questions on the accompanying survey, and mail the card to Alaska Sea Grant in Fairbanks. Easier

yet, go online and complete the survey at www.uaf.edu/MAP/charterlog/index.html.

The survey information will be used to help steer a program to ensure quality wildlife viewing opportunities, for charter and tour boat passengers and recreational boaters.

All results are confidential. Respondents are encouraged to include contact information if they want results of the survey or if they want to participate in developing the responsible marine wildlife viewing program.

State Halibut Management

Prior to the recent North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting where the IFQ/GHL issue was rehashed, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game floated a list of proposals that would supplant IFQ management.

Although much of the recreational halibut fishing occurs in state waters, the state has no management authority over the fishery. Responding to policy expressed by the last two state administrations opposing IFQ management, ADFG is attempting to insert itself into sport halibut management. In fact, point 12 of the state's recommendations is "Explore the potential for **state management of some aspects of halibut sport fishing**" (bold face in the state's document text).

Among other points of the ADFG draft:

- The state supports a clear allocation between commercial and charter fleets.
- The halibut charter fleet does not meet any of the standard reasons for fishery rationalization.
- The state supports linking the GHL to abundance, and maintaining the existing percentage allocation splits between the longline and charter sectors. As halibut stocks go up and down so would the allowable charter catch.

- The state wants to subdivide areas 2C and 3A into subregions, and then would support creation of local area management plans (LAMPs).
- A moratorium should be considered on new entrants to the halibut charter fishery.
- Halibut bycatch in other fisheries should be reduced and the savings re-allocated to directed halibut fisheries.
- The state recommends considering size restrictions on halibut.
- If the revised GHL is exceeded, the state favors trip limits and lower annual harvest limits by subregion.
- The state supports legislation to require a tax stamp on all non-commercial fish boxes shipped out of state (except the first box).

Irrespective of other actions taken on halibut charter by the NPFMC, the state will reinstate the halibut reporting requirement in charter logbooks, introduce one regulation proposal to the Board of Fisheries to limit the number of lines on Southcentral boats equal to the number of paying passengers, and introduce another to prohibit proxy fishing for halibut. ☺

National Angler Database

The federal administration has proposed creation of a national saltwater angler database as part of its proposal for reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens (Fishery Conservation and Management) Act. The M-S Act is the law, originally passed in 1976, that created the 200-mile exclusive economic zone and the regional fishery management councils, and ushered in the age of federal management of fisheries in the waters between three and 200 miles off shore. The act is up for reauthorization and numerous entities are proposing revisions.

The saltwater angler registry proposal is sometimes referred to as a national sport-fishing license program because in states where there is no saltwater angling license the program would impose a new registra-

tion requirement. States like Alaska that already required licenses for saltwater angling would not be affected as long as the angler data collected through issuance of the state license meets the federal needs. The license would pertain only to saltwater angling in federal waters. States would be authorized to enforce the requirements under a joint enforcement requirement. Fees collected under the program would be available for use by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to support sport fisheries management.

It is not yet clear what the State of Alaska's position will be on the saltwater angler registry, nor is it known whether the administration's proposal will be adopted by Congress. ☺

Kenai River '05 Season

The Kenai River sport fishery experienced a pretty good king salmon season during 2005, and a red hot red run, according to the Anchorage *Daily News*.

The early king fishery started off slow, as ADFG had predicted, although by season end the river had yielded a respectable 18,000 fish, about 5,000 more than the average season catch. According to Matt Tunseth of the Peninsula *Clarion*, the average guided angler needed 14 hours fishing to catch a king, while the unguided angler took 27 hours. The escapement was calculated at 19,000 kings, which is near the low end of the ADFG escapement goal range.

The red run was strong all season, and ran much later than normal, with more than a half million fish entering the river in August. During July an average of 26,000 reds entered the Kenai each day. Total run was calculated at five million sockeye and escapement was expected to be more than one million fish. The department liberalized bag limits for anglers and extended the hours open to dipnetting.

The down side was that an additional river ranger on the beat resulted in 972 citations, more than double the number for the previous year. Most citations were for boating safety violations or illegal fishing practices. Most safety violations involved not carrying enough PFDs, or for children under 13 not wearing PFDs. Some 78 citations were issued for exceeding the 35 hp motor limit, and 58 citations were issued to guides for failing to complete required season-end reports. ☺

Marine Conservation Network on Magnuson-Stevens Act

The Marine Conservation Network (MSN), a coalition of sportfishing-related groups and companies, has launched a campaign to “strengthen the voice of recreational anglers in Congress” and “protect and strengthen” the Magnuson-Stevens (Fisheries Conservation and Management) Act (MSA), which is currently up for reauthorization.

Network recreational organizer Robert E. Jones says that the effort is aimed at overcoming threats to the oceans and to today’s and future anglers. He encourages anglers to log on to the campaign Web

site at www.AnglingforConservation.org and sign up as a supporter. Neither the MSN press release nor the Web site specify in what ways they want the MSA “strengthened” and the sign-up page may simply be a device for collecting angler names and addresses for future email advertising.

Members of the coalition include the American Sportfishing Association, International Game Fish Association, *Sportfishing* magazine, International Big Fish Network, and the Federation of Fly Fishers. ☺

Lug Nut Torquing

Do you trailer your boat? If so, the Trailer Safety Industry Coalition has some suggestions for ensuring that your boat trailer continues to function safely.

The wheel mounting lug nuts must be tightened (torqued) correctly. Loose lug nuts can cause wheel separation. The coalition’s advice for ensuring correct tightness:

- Be sure you have a full understanding of the specific wheel maintenance issues regarding your trailer.
- Check lug nut tightness often, especially during the first few hundred miles of use, at the start of each long trip, every time a wheel is removed, and at least twice annually.

- The only way to ensure correct tightness is with a torque wrench, used properly.
- Keep a record of date and mileage when you check lug nut torque. Make note of any decreases in torque on individual lugs and determine the reason.
- Contact your dealer or manufacturer if you find repeated lug nut loosening or any other lug, wheel, or axle problems.
- If a wheel separates, notify the trailer manufacturer and dealer, get professional assistance in assessing the trailer and its equipment and making repairs, and don’t re-use the affected lugs, wheels, and studs. ☺

Casualties

One unguided hunter on a river trip drowned, and six passengers of a charter boat were rescued in two incidents that occurred in September.

In the river incident, which happened on September 10, Frederick G. Haynes, 60, of Nome drowned on the west fork of the McLaren River about 20 miles downriver from the McLaren River Lodge near Paxson. According to a witness, Haynes and a passenger capsized their airboat in swift water. The passenger was able to

swim to shore and attempted to reach the apparently injured Haynes but could not do so. His body was retrieved the next day a short distance downstream from the accident site. Troopers concluded alcohol was not a factor, but the deceased was not wearing a PFD at the time of the accident.

Two days earlier a Coast Guard helicopter hoisted six people to safety from the 28 foot charter vessel *Augusta D* near Umnak Island in the Aleutians. Earlier in the day the boat had departed the village

Ship Security Zones

The Coast Guard is revising its proposed ship security zone rule in Alaska, in part due to comments from fishermen’s groups, who believe it will impede traffic in ports and narrow passages. The rule creates a 100-yard no-entry zone around cruise ships in Alaska waters, while the ships are under escort by the Coast Guard or other law enforcement agency. Recently, state ferries were included with cruise ships in the rule.

However, some provisions have been loosened or eliminated. The 250-yard speed restriction zone and the 25-yard security zone around moored and anchored vessels have been eliminated.

Exempt from the rule are commercial fishing vessels with gear deployed, except that trollers, tenders, and floating processors that can be maneuvered while fishing are not exempt.

State ferries were added to cruise ships requiring security zones after the terrorist bombing of the London subway in 2005. The Coast Guard has been escorting Alaska state ferries with small gunboats since that incident.

The Coast Guard received nearly 150 comments on the security zone proposal, and many of them complained that the zones would interfere with vessel operations in ports and constricted waterways.

According to a report in the Juneau *Empire*, vessel operators may request permission to enter a security zone by calling on VHF channel 13 or 16. ☺

of Nikolski and was returning when it was hit by 30 kt winds and 8 foot seas. The vessel began shipping water and the skipper put out a distress call, to which the Coast Guard responded. A nearby vessel operator relayed position and status reports until the helicopter arrived on scene. The passengers donned survival suits and were lifted from the boat, which was later towed to a safe harbor by the Coast Guard cutter *Storis*. ☺



Address Service Requested

Taki-Too


The long-awaited National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) report on the *Taki-Too* incident was released in fall 2005, and points to operator error as the main cause of the accident that took 11 lives.

The 32 foot charter boat out of Garibaldi, Oregon, with 19 people on board, left Tillamook Bay for a sport fishing trip on a stormy June day in 2003, despite a Coast Guard small craft advisory and a warning sign indicating rough condition on the bar. The vessel plowed into ten-foot breaking waves and capsized, spilling passengers and crew into the frigid surf. Only eight of those on board survived, and the captain and mate were not among them.

The report indicates that the skipper used poor judgment in going out that day, and that all of those who perished were not wearing life jackets (personal flotation devices or PFDs). All the survivors were wearing or clinging to PFDs. The report found no evidence that mechanical failure caused the accident.

The NTSB recommended that operators of small passenger vessels develop and adopt go/no-go policies for dangerous bar crossings based on risk management principles, and that the Coast Guard require occupants of small passenger vessels crossing dangerous bars, in areas served by surfboat rescue stations on the West Coast, to wear PFDs.

The Coast Guard has issued a safety alert that reminds operators of a provision in the Code of Federal Regulations that directs the skipper to require passengers to don PFDs when possible hazardous conditions exist, including but not limited to the following:

- transiting hazardous bars or inlets.
- during severe weather.
- in the event of flooding, fire, or other emergencies that may necessitate evacuation.
- when the vessel is under tow. 

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