

the Charter Log

A Newsletter for Fishing Guides
and Charter Boat Operators



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Permit Application Period Ending

As this issue of the Log goes to press, halibut charter operators are in the final weeks of the application period for the new Sport Charter Halibut Fishing Permit. The deadline for application is the close of business on Monday, April 5.

This application process is the next-to-last step down the rocky road to a "limited access" management program for the halibut charter industry in Alaska. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is expected to complete the process by issuing permits before the limited entry plan goes into effect on Feb. 1, 2011. From then on only charter operators in possession of the new permit will be allowed to have guided sport-caught halibut landed on their boats.

Permit awards will be based on halibut fishing trips that were recorded in ADFG-issued logbooks registered to particular vessels. Both transferable and non-transferable permits will be issued, based on the number of bottomfish charter fishing trips made during qualifying years. To qualify for a non-transferable permit an operator needs to have reported at least five trips either in 2004 or in 2005, and again in 2008. To qualify for a transferable permit the operator needs to have logged at least 15 trips in 2004 or 2005 and in 2008.

Though the program won't, of itself, limit charter halibut catches, NOAA Fisheries Acting Regional Administrator Doug Mecum

announced in January that it is designed to "stabilize the charter fishing sector."

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council approved the plan in March of 2007. It effectively caps participation in the fishery in Area 2C and 3A (Southeast and Southcentral) at 520 businesses and 920 vessels. It is expected to cut out some 327 of the vessels that were operating in 2008 because owners do not meet the qualifying criteria. In Area 2C 173 of the businesses that operated in 2008 (43 per cent) will be left out and 3A, 34 per cent or 154 businesses will be cut from the fishery. Most of the 2008 businesses and vessels that will not qualify for permits lost out because they were not in business or failed to log a sufficient number of guided bottomfish trips during 2004 or 2005. Some may have missed those years due to unplanned hardships, and there is an appeal process for those who believe they are being wrongly denied a permit.

The plan has no effect on charter halibut operations west of Kodiak Island. Nor does it affect salmon charters or non-commercially-guided halibut fishing.

The Council previously approved and later rescinded a plan which would have issued halibut quota shares to qualifying charter operators. It would have by-passed the need for limited entry and also would have prevented imposition of the one-fish limit in Southeast (see accompanying story) and

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other measure that could be coming in the future if guideline harvest levels are exceeded. The IFQ program fell out of favor with a component of the charter fleet as implementation deadlines approached and the Council rescinded its previous action.

Each permit is endorsed for a set number of anglers, based on the numbers reported in the logbooks. Most angler endorsements will be for six or fewer, but in Area 3A permits can be "stacked" so that an owner can use, for example, two six-angler permits to carry 12 anglers on a Subchapter T charter boat. Charter boats in Southeast Alaska continue to be limited to six anglers. A glitch arose when it was discovered in the plan language that owners of multiple boats could get all of their boats endorsed for the maximum number of anglers logged by any one of their boats, resulting in the possibility that some six-pack boats owned by a multiple-boat company could receive endorsements for the same number of anglers as their biggest party boat. The Council was expected to clarify that issue prior to issuance of the first permits in late summer or fall.

Permits will be issued to "persons" including people, companies and associations, including Community Quota Entities that represent specific groups of remote coastal villages, and military recreation programs.

Permits can be transferred to other vessels so that the owner can shift the permit from one boat to another as long as each boat has its

own ADFG logbook. The permits won't have to be renewed annually but owners will have to notify NMFS if their business undergoes significant changes.

Applicants who feel they are incorrectly denied a permit, and who applied during the open application period, can appeal to NMFS. Late applications will not be considered. The application process is being handled by NMFS Alaska Region Restricted Access Management (RAM) Division in Juneau, which can be reached at 1-800-304-4846 (option #2) or RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov.

New entry will still be allowed, but as with other limit entry fisheries the only way in will be to acquire an existing permit by gift or purchase. Already a few permits are being offered for sale on Craigslist in anticipation of issuance and the SouthEast Alaska Guides Organization has an online permit trader site. Six-pack licenses are being offered at prices as low as \$15,000 each for a 2C multiple permit package to as high as \$165,000 for a 3A permit. Several are offered at around \$100,000 each. Prices eventually will be determined by what buyers will be willing to pay.

NOAA Fisheries is now working on a plan to establish an allocation of halibut between the charter and commercial fishing sectors (commonly called "catch sharing") designed to allow the sector with the greater need to acquire halibut quota from the other. See the next issue of *The Log* for details. ☺

USCG Help Line Established

The National Maritime Center has established a telephone help line to provide answers to questions from mariners concerning licensing and related issues. It can be used to request license application packages, to check the status of current applications, and to pose questions

on other license-related questions. Charter Log tried the number and had to wait only about five minutes before a live person came on the line. The toll-free number is 1-888-427-5662. Mariners can also request information by email at IASKNMCC@USCG.mil. ☺

One-Fish Limit in Place in Southeast

Charter boat halibut anglers in Southeast Alaska are facing a one-fish daily limit for real in 2010.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) originally imposed a one-fish limit for the 2009 season but a group calling itself Charter Halibut Task Force took the government to court in Washington, D.C. and got the regulation lifted for that season. The industry went back to court twice in 2009 and in both cases the court reaffirmed NMFS' decision to limit the daily bag limit.

NMFS imposed the measure in an attempt to bring the Southeast charter catch to within the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) set by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in 2003. The Council set the 2C GHL of 1,432,000 lbs., or 125 per cent of recent historical charter sector landings, but the GHL has been lowered with decreasing halibut abundance almost every year to as low as 788,000 lbs. last year. Meanwhile, the Southeast charter fleet and its catches have grown. Each year since 2003 the Southeast charter fleet has exceeded its GHL, and in 2009 the overage was 126 per cent.

Understandably, the industry is displeased with the decision. Several operators have told the press that they can't survive with a one-fish limit because their clientele won't pay the going rate to bring home a single halibut. The one-fish limit has been a central cause of the Alaska Charter Association (ACA) and the SouthEast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO), which has formed a coalition with recreational anglers called Save Alaska Sportfishing. The Charter Halibut Task Force (CHTF) formed to fight the measure. Another operator launched a separate website called www.dontbuyhalibut.com, which includes content on charter halibut allocation issues in British

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One Fish Limit continued ...

Columbia. CHTF, with assistance of ACA, spent more than \$300,000 on the Washington D.C. lobbying and legal services of Earl Comstock in 2008 and 2009, according to OpenSecrets.com, with money contributed by charter businesses around the state, but since last court decision the CHTF has stepped back to reassess the situation, and at press time its website was off-line.

The problem in Southeast is exacerbated by the fact that

International Pacific Halibut Commission data indicate that the stocks are decreasing at the same time that the recreational demand is increasing. Due apparently to ocean conditions causing slow growth in juvenile fish, the IPHC calculates that the exploitable halibut biomass in area 2C has decreased by 58 per cent in the last ten years, and accordingly the commercial catch allocation has been cut by about 54 per cent during the last four years.

The longliners' position is that they have lost more than half of their allocation in order to conserve the stocks while the charter catch has increased without restraint.

The only bright light currently on the horizon is the IPHC projection that those slow-growing young fish will start recruiting into the fishery in 2012, which should result in increased quotas in the next few years. ☺

Inflatable Work Vest Selected Best PFD by Fishermen

The Alaska office of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health has completed a study of personal flotation devices and has found one more popular with commercial fishermen than the others.

The Mustang Inflatable Work Vest is the unit that fishermen in the study rated most highly. NIOSH research coordinator Dr. Jennifer Lincoln says the Mustang unit got high marks from fishermen who said it was comfortable, easy to clean and easy to don (put on). The unit also differs the mechanism that makes it automatically inflate is activated by a hydrostatic release that reacts to water pressure rather than a dissolving tablet such as is used in competing units.

Dr. Lincoln says that NIOSH conducted the study because

their data show that 25 per cent of fishing industry deaths result from falling overboard, nearly all by persons not wearing personal flotation devices. Commercial fishermen tend to shun pfd's when working on deck because they are bulky, snaggy and uncomfortable. So the agency conducted a two-year study in which they interviewed some 400 commercial fishermen and asked them to rate six different pfd's that had been selected on the basis of apparent suitability for use on deck. Criteria they were asked to rate include weight, fit (tightness or other discomforts), bulkiness, snagging, ease of donning and ease of cleaning.

Of the six, three rated three stars or better, meaning that fishermen found them acceptable.

"When the guys found out that

there's a pfd that allows them to work, they were very interested," said Dr. Lincoln. She went on to say that some of the units don't currently have Coast Guard approval, but that is beside the point. Just as passenger vessels are required to carry Type I pfd's, commercial fishing vessels in Alaska are required to have survival suits and the work vest doesn't meet that requirement. Meeting the regulation is one thing, she says, but having something that is comfortable enough that the fishermen will wear them on deck is the point of the study.

The Mustang unit retails for \$240-\$350 depending on outlet.

NIOSH will publish a paper on the study soon and will name the other units included in the test. ☺

Guide Concession Comment Period Ends

Alaskans had until March 31 to submit comments to DNR on the question of whether to develop a guide territory lease program for big game hunting guides.

The state had such a program from 1976 until 1988, when it was declared unconstitutional by the Alaska Supreme Court in a ruling known as the "Owsich Decision." While the Court found that the program in effect at the time did not

meet constitutional tests it did not rule out the possibility of establishing exclusive guide concessions on state lands.

According to a press release from DNR's Division of Mining, Land & Water, members of the commercial hunting industry have long sought to re-create the program but in a version that addresses the deficiencies highlighted in the 1988 decision.

As envisioned a guide territory concession program would generate enough income to cover all administrative costs plus bring some revenue to the state general fund. Supporters claim it would encourage better stewardship of the resources and allow for better game animal management.

More information on the concept, and contact addresses are at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/gcp>. ☺

Guide Certification Plan is Dropped

ADFG's Sport Fish Division has dropped plans to create a sport fish guide certification program.

In 2006 the ADFG commissioner authorized a statewide task force to develop a plan that would address several areas of concern regarding the sport fishing guide industry in the state, including an excess of guides in some geographic areas and a perceived lack of service quality in some cases. The department felt that fisheries conservation and management could be improved if there were a limit on the number of guides and some requirements imposed in the areas of training and experience.

After several meetings the task force decided that goals could be met by regulating licensing, professional standards and activities of sport fishing guides, outfitters and transporters. The task force recommended creation of a Sport Fish Guide Services board to regulate guide activities rather than a simple limited entry system.

The proposal was taken to a series of public meetings during 2008 in Sitka, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Kenai/Soldotna, Homer, Palmer, Kodiak, Juneau and Anchorage. The majority of public comment opposed the idea, so the state has dropped the plan.

Rob Bentz, Deputy Director of the division, told Charter Log that the meetings were "very well attended and the vast majority of the guides, charterboat operators and public opposed it." The commissioner reported this result at the end of the year and word came down to take no action.

The Sport Fish Division website dedicated to the proposal has been taken down. ☺

NOAA Plans Engagement with Recreational Fishing Sector

Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Dr. Jane Lubchenko, has announced a new policy of engagement with the recreational fishing "community."

She announced it was time to take a "fresh look" at recreational fishing and to "adopt policies and practices that will protect ocean ecosystems and ensure one of America's most treasured pastimes endures for future generations."

First step I this new initiative will be to create a new position of senior policy advisor for recreational fishing. This person will coordinate recreational fishing policy. Second

will be to call a national "recreational fishing summit" to provide a forum for addressing issues and possible solutions. It will be followed by a series of "joint problem-solving roundtables." Possible topics for these discussions include data and resources needed to incorporate the economic value of sport fishing into NOAA's information and reports, recreational fish habitat considerations, marine spatial planning, catch shares, and how NOAA Fisheries can focus personnel and financial resources on the recreational sector.

You can track progress on this initiative at the website www.noaanews.gov. ☺

Best Boating Colleges Compiled

Is your son or daughter having a hard time deciding where to go to college? Is he or she a budding marine scientist, a fisherman, or just a kid who loves being on the water?

Many colleges and universities across the country have marine science and engineering programs, and others have strong extracurricular water sports programs. Competitive water-skiing or bass fishing? Read on.

In the marine science, first consider the in-state favorite, University of Alaska Fairbanks, with campuses and research labs at Juneau, Seward, Kasitsna Bay near Seldovia, and Kodiak. UAF offers bachelor of science and bachelor of arts in Fisheries, as well as master' and doctoral programs. UAF also offers seafood technology, and is strong in oceanography. The university recently commissioned construction of a new, state-of-the-art ice reinforced research vessel.

If the kid just has to get out of state, many other universities have fisheries and oceanography programs, including University of Washington, Auburn, Florida Atlantic, Maine Maritime, California Maritime,

the Coast Guard Academy and the Merchant Marine Academy.

So much for academics. BoatUS has compiled a list of the nation's top-ranked sailing schools (Boston College, Georgetown, Stanford and Yale, for example), water-skiing schools (U. of Louisiana, Florida Southern, Iowa State, California Polytechnic and Arizona State) and collegiate bass fishing champions, including University of Arkansas, Texas A&M, Virginia Tech, East Kentucky U. and Texas Tech. Colleges featuring all three watersports include Baylor, Michigan State, Purdue, U. of North Texas and North Carolina State. These are lists, not rankings, and each category has about 20 colleges.

For more details about the lists, see the Intercollegiate Yacht Racing Association of North America (www.collegesailing.org), the Association of Collegiate Anglers (www.collegiate-bass) and the National Collegiate Waterski Association (www.ncwsa.com). For the complete set of lists and explanation of how BoatUS compiled them, see BoatUS Magazine, July 2009. ☺

Free Fishing for Soldiers in May

The popular idea of a free fishing tournament for soldiers and veterans that was pioneered a few years ago in Seward is spreading this year to other Alaska ports. Whittier, Valdez and Homer are cooperating to offer a day of free fishing this year on May 21.

Dubbed the Alaskan Veterans Halibut Fishing Tournament, the tournament is being organized by Jack Roskind of Knot Roughin' It Charters in Whittier, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10252 in Anchorage. Roskind, himself a retired Air Force veteran, says he has lined up 30 boats in Homer, eight or nine in Whittier and three in Valdez to participate. He told Charter Log that Valdez participation is limited because that community already has a "military appreciation day" scheduled for two weeks later in which many Valdez fishing charter boats will be participating. He says he hopes that more than 500 veterans and active duty service members will get to participate in the combined tournament, and is looking for private

boat owners to take any overflow from the charter operators.

The Seward event, called Armed Services Combat Fishing Tournament, mustered 30 charter boats last year to provide a day of fishing to nearly 400 active duty service personnel and veterans.

Roskind says that most of the participants in the Alaskan Veterans Halibut Fishing Tournament will be active duty people who are selected by their unit commanders as reward for exceptional service. Emphasis will be on veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. About 15 per cent of the slots will be reserved for other honorably separated and retired personnel.

The tournament has its own website, www.akvft.org.

Roskind says that next year the program will be even larger, with more participation from Valdez expected, and there may be coordination with the Seward Armed Services tournament. If all goes according to plan, that event will be open to all veterans. ☺

Skipper gets Top Three in Derby

Ketchikan charter captain Gary Garrison was in top form during the '09 Ketchikan halibut derby; anglers fishing with him got the three largest fish. According to the Anchorage Daily News, Benny Geary's 154.6-pounder was not only the largest landed in the derby, but was also the closest to the first-prize hidden weight of 141.6 lbs. A lifelong Alaskan, Geary had never before places in a derby. Two other anglers fishing with Garrison took second and third in the derby. ☺

Marine Information Specialist at 17th CG District

Alaska has a new Marine Information Specialist, attached to the Coast Guard District 17 Command Center in Juneau.

He is Todd Buck, and his roots in maritime Alaska go deep. He served on a Coast Guard buoy tender out of Homer, was a search planner for the Group Command Center when it was located in Ketchikan and as a civilian was a search planner at Sector Juneau after the command center moved to the capital city. He holds a 100-ton near-coastal Master license and skippered a charter fishing boat and worked as relief skipper on the airport ferries in Ketchikan. His

Salmon Anglers Guide from ADFG

The Department of Fish & Game, Division of Sport Fish, has published a nice four-fold pocket brochure called Angler's Guide to Salmon Fishing in Alaska.

The publication is clearly intended for sport fishermen, both visitors and residents who are not completely familiar with salmon, but it could be a handy item to keep on the boat or to send out to clients with their reservation packets. The brochure includes identifying pictures and basic facts about the five species of Pacific salmon found in Alaska plus rainbow/steelhead trout, cutthroat trout and arctic char/dolly varden.

It also has information on salmon anatomy, licenses and regulations, angling techniques, proper care of fish after they've been caught, bear awareness, invasive species and protecting salmon habitat.

Copies are available free of charge from Nancy Long with ADFG Public Communications by emailing nancy.long@alaska.gov or by calling 907-465-6166. ☺

family also owns a boat dealership and boat rental business in Juneau.

Mr. Buck is, among other things, responsible for publishing the weekly District 17 Notice to Mariners, which can be viewed at www.navcen.uscg.gov/lnm/d17. He also works with aids to navigation and is the person to contact if aids are discovered missing, extinguished or off-position.

If you have comments about the Notice to Mariners or need other Coast Guard information you can contact him at 907-463-2269 or Todd.R.Buck@uscg.mil. ☺

What to do if a Tsunami is Predicted

Recent tragedies in Haiti and Chile are reminders that the coast of Alaska is in a very active seismic zone and is also in the direct line of seismic waves (tsunamis or “tidal waves”) that can be unleashed almost anywhere along either side of the Pacific.

Ports are frequently among the most damaged sites during and after an earthquake, and many vessels are lost or seriously damaged by tsunamis. It is prudent for boat owners to think out the implications of earth tremors and seismic waves to their vessels and to their own lives, and plan how they will react if a ‘quake occurs or a tsunami alarm is sounded.

Patrick Corcoran and Kaety Hildebrand of Oregon Sea Grant have published a two-page flier on the subject called Tsunami Awareness for Fishermen and Mariners and it is available on-line at <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu>.

The authors distinguish between tsunamis caused by distant earthquakes and those generated by large local quakes. The main difference is time: a seismic wave originating off Japan, for example, can take eight hours to arrive (and one from Chile 12 hours or longer). This gives you plenty of time to take action, if you get the word that there is an alarm. A locally-

generated tsunami may hit within minutes of an earthquake.

In the case of a distant earthquake, listen to broadcasts by the Coast Guard or other sources for predictions of possible tsunami, paying particular attention to the estimated time of arrival. In most cases you have three choices: take your vessel to sea and remain there until the waves have passed, run to port (or leave the boat in port if it's already there) and get yourself and crew or family out of the projected inundation zone (everything less than about 50 feet above high tide level), or if the boat is small enough, trailer or haul it out and get it out of the inundation zone. In some locations you may be able to run it up a river, into a back bay, or to some other location safer than the boat harbor.

A local earthquake is different because there probably won't be enough time to haul a boat, or to get back to port if you are at sea, so it may be necessary to leave it tied to the float and hope for the best while getting yourself to safety. If tsunami warning projections indicate enough time, and if other conditions are conducive, it may be preferable to cast off lines and head to sea.

Though tsunami waves travel very rapidly and contain a lot of

energy, in deep water they are not steep and in most cases can be ridden out by even small boats. Oregon Sea Grant recommends heading for water of a depth of at least 15 fathoms. Keep in mind that because of the threat of aftershocks and multiple wave patterns, it is recommended you stay out of shallow or restricted areas for 12 hours after passage of the first wave. Also keep in mind that on your return you may find the harbor damaged or destroyed, filled with debris and totally unusable. Furthermore, all services including light, power, telephone and roads may be cut.

Plan ahead for tsunamis with your family and crew. Establish a meet-up location outside the danger zone and make a plan for communicating by radio or cell phone. In the case of a major local earthquake cell phone service may be disrupted so establish a back-up plan. Also, store important papers such as insurance certificates and vessel information in a secure place where it can be easily located in the aftermath of a catastrophe.

Read more details about tsunami planning in the Oregon Sea Grant publication described above, or contact Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program at 907-274-9695, terry.johnson@alaska.edu.

Compact Fluorescent Lights Interfere with Some Electronics

The Coast Guard is warning boat operators that certain compact fluorescent lights emit a light wave that can interfere with some kinds of navigation equipment.

As reported in Marine Safety Update, the newsletter of the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association, CFLs can cause interference with radio communications and electronic safety equipment,

especially those that operate between the frequencies of 0.45 and 30 MHz. This includes citizens band radios and some frequencies of HF (single-sideband) radios. The HF emergency frequencies of 2182 MHz and 4125 MHz are within the frequency range potentially affected by the radio frequency waves from CFLs. VHF radio frequencies are not.

The Coast Guard recommends that operators check locations of fluorescent lights to ensure that they are “well separated from radio equipment other than VHF radios.”

Sea Otter Critical Habitat Designated by Fish and Wildlife Service

The officially-designated threatened sea otters of southwest Alaska now have officially-designated critical habitat. The Fish and Wildlife Service has declared some 5,900 square miles of nearshore waters in the Aleutians, Bering Sea and around the Alaska Peninsula as habitat essential for survival of the stock.

The southwest stock was declared threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2005. The law requires that critical habitat be designated for listed species, but when that did not happen the Center for Biological Diversity filed suit in 2006 to force it. The following year an agreement was reached

that required the government to designate the critical habitat by last fall, which is what happened.

The nearshore areas were selected because that is where sea otters forage, and also where they have the best chance of avoiding predators, especially killer whales. It is believed that killer whale predation may be a key factor in the decline of the stock.

According to a Associated Press report, the Fish and Wildlife Service said that the delay in habitat designation resulted because the agency needed time to conduct an economic impact analysis. The analysis indicated that there would be little impact and predicted that

the designation would not cause any fishery closures.

In the 1970s an estimated 100,000 sea otters inhabited southwest Alaska waters but that number has dropped to about 40,000 and the decline has been greater in some parts of that range.

While critical habitat designation does not necessarily prohibit any particular human activities, it does require more detailed scrutiny of any applications for development within the area. Most of the area within the southwest sea otter critical habitat is extremely remote and nearshore uplands are managed in federal reservations such as national parks and wildlife refuges. ☺

Halibut Subsistence Expanded

More people now are eligible to participate in the subsistence halibut fishery due to new regulations announced by NOAA Fisheries in December.

Rural residents and members of officially designated Alaska Native tribes with a history of traditional use of halibut may apply for a Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC) which entitles them to use a limited amount of longline gear and to harvest more than the two fish per day per person allowed sport anglers.

Most communities in Alaska qualify as rural except those within the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, the City and Borough of Juneau, Sitka Borough, Kenai Peninsula (except the extreme south end around Seldovia), Anchorage Borough, Mat-Su Borough and Fairbanks Northstar Borough.

However, it became apparent that people had been disqualified

because they live in remote areas not inside the boundaries of federally-designated rural communities and are not members of the tribes. This created a situation where some of the most truly subsistence-dependent people missed out on subsistence halibut simply because they did not live in town.

The new regulations remove that discrepancy and change the definition of eligible rural residents to include those living outside the designated communities as well as within.

Full information on the subsistence halibut program, eligibility, and application for a SHARC registration form can be found at www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/ram/subsistence/halibut.htm. Only applications submitted on the new forms, found at that website, will be accepted. ☺

Protecting Tubes

If you have a rigid inflatable (RIB) or even a conventional inflatable boat you are no doubt concerned about getting the maximum life out of those expensive air tubes. A recent issue of RIBCRAFT Newsletter, published on-line by the leading American manufacturers of RIBs, offers five tips.

1. Make sure your tubes are always fully inflated, which means 2.5 to 3.25 psi. If you don't have an air pressure gauge, the tube should feel like a basketball.
2. Position docklines and tie down straps on trailers so that they can't chafe or apply pressure to the tubes. Over time chafing will damage tubes.
3. Don't clean your boat with acetone or use cleaners that contain silicone.
4. After using your boat in saltwater, spray or wash down the tubes with freshwater.
5. Treat the tubes with a protectant at least twice a season. This will prevent oxidation and fading. ☺

NMCA and NACO

What's up with the National Marine Charter Association? You may recall that a few years back a rift developed between the board and the law firm that managed the National Association of Charterboat Operators, and the result was that the board took its business elsewhere and the firm took some of the services and members and formed the NMCA. For a time it appeared that although the membership focus of the two groups different slightly, they were in direct competition for members and influence. Some operators felt they had to belong to both groups to retain the services (insurance, drug testing coverage, lobbying power) that they had previously enjoyed.

A recent check showed the NMCA website still up but with no apparent change of content in several years, and the posted 800 number has been disconnected.

If any reader is currently an NMCA member and knows how to reach the association board or management, please contact your editor, Terry Johnson, at terry.johnson@alaska.edu or 907-274-9695.

Meanwhile, indications are that NACO still is in operation. The board of directors includes Bryan Bondioli and Bob Ward of Homer and Tim Evers of Ninilchik. NACO offers its members a range of services, including both vessel insurance and health insurance, a drug testing program, a merchant account program for taking credit cards, and access to various kinds of purchasing discounts for equipment and other services. Read up on NACO at www.nacocharters.org ☺

2010 IPHC Limits

The IPCH announced 2010 overall catch limits. The Commission capped the total at 50,670,000 lbs., down 6.4 percent from 2009. Area 2C total is 4.4 million lbs and 3B is 9.9 million lbs. Decreases reflect lower abundance as the big year classes of '88 and '89 pass out of the fishery. ☺

Felt Soles Banned Statewide

Prepare to say goodbye to your felt sole waders or wading boots, now that the Board of Fisheries has voted in its March meeting to ban them statewide. The Board previously had imposed a felt sole ban in Southeast only.

The Board voted in the fall to ban the use of felt sole waders, as of Jan. 1, 2011. The proposal was introduced by Mark Vinsel of Juneau, a member of the Juneau chapter of Trout Unlimited. But in March the Board extended the ban to the whole state, though it postponed implementation to 2012.

Felt sole waders have come under fire recently because it has been shown that they can carry spores and microbes that introduce harmful invasive species to new waters. Because Alaska waters are generally free of invasives, Trout Unlimited

is promoting steps such as the felt sole ban to prevent new species from being introduced. Concern is about organisms like New Zealand mudsnails and pathogens such as that which causes whirling disease in trout. Another invasive, "rock snot" or didymo has been identified in streams near Juneau.

Many wading anglers favor felt sole boots or shoes because they grip mossy rocks better than rubber soles, and make wading safer. But boot makers are offering alternative soles that they claim are equally effective. Anglers can expect to pay \$50-100 to replace low-end waders and up to \$300 or more for custom deluxe waders with boots lacking felt soles. Many anglers use stocking-foot waders and will only have to replace wading shoes, not the entire set of waders. ☺

Free Printable Charts from NOAA

NOAA has announced release of an experimental series of "BookletCharts" that can be downloaded free. The agency says they are designed to help recreational boaters "locate themselves on the water" but do not meet chart carriage requirements for regulated commercial vessels.

An index of BookletCharts is posted at <http://ocsddata.ncd.noaa.gov/BookletChart/>.

The new product consists of standard nautical charts reduced in scale and divided into separate pages rather than on a single large sheet as is the case with the usual NOAA charts. The cartography including colors is the same but it takes some practice to picture a location when it requires piecing together several pages to form a single chart. (Some people fold or cut charts into pieces for ease of storing or use in restricted spaces such as on kayaks, so they should find it easy to adjust to the spatial peculiarities of the booklets.) The booklets also contain excerpt

from the Coast Pilot and chart notes, as well as emergency information.

Unlike standard charts, the BookletCharts are not updated weekly during the trial period. A single standard chart (example, NOAA Chart 16682 Cape Resurrection to Two Arm Bay) prints out on 20 pages, 8.5 X 11, including cover with page index, explanatory text, Chart Note and Emergency Information.

NOAA encourages boaters to download as many of the free charts as they wish, but cautions that full-scale NOAA charts should be used for navigation wherever possible, which sort of leaves open to question the purpose of the program. It's likely, though, that many operators will ignore the agency's advice and use them as their primary hard copy navigation source in light of escalating prices for standard charts. (Thanks to Alaska Marine Safety Education Association's newsletter Marine Safety Update for getting out the word on this program.) ☺

Stranded Animals Should be Reported, Not Touched

If you ever find a “stranded” marine mammal—dead or alive—it’s important to keep in mind some basic facts:

1. All marine mammals are covered by federal laws that severely limit what you can do with one.
2. The Alaska SeaLife Center has a rehabilitation program that in certain cases may be able to take stranded seals, sea lions or sea otters. Some rescued animals live out their lives in captivity, while others are successfully returned to the wild.
3. Even dead and somewhat decomposed marine mammals can yield useful information to scientists if recovered in whole or if appropriate tissue samples are properly removed, preserved and sent to those scientists, or if pertinent information about the animal is recorded and reported. Which takes us back to point 1.

What you can, can’t, and should do:

If any marine mammal is found alive or possibly alive, report it immediately to the

NOAA Strandings Hotline (1-907-360-3481) or the NOAA Office of Enforcement Hotline (1-800-304-4867) or call the Coast Guard on VHF Ch. 16.

The SeaLife Center also has a 24-hour stranded animal hotline (1-888-774-SEAL)

Remember that the young of many kinds of marine mammals, including sea lions, seals and sea otters, may be left ashore unattended by their mothers for periods of time and are not abandoned. Touching or attempting to move them could cause them to be abandoned, however.

It is illegal (and dangerous) to attempt to move, disentangle, or otherwise rescue any marine mammal, other than by trained and certified responders, and law enforcement authorities take the prohibition seriously. If fishermen find whales or other animals tangled in gear they should not attempt to cut free the animals. There are specially trained teams that will fly in on short notice to free tangled animals. The key is to report immediately and then

keep the entangled animal in sight or at least provide information on its direction of travel and possible location.

If you find a live or recently live animal, keep dogs away, note the animal’s species, condition and apparent injuries, and any tags or other distinguishing marks. If possible, take digital photos and send them to the SeaLife Center.

Even if the animal is clearly dead your options are limited since most of Alaska’s marine mammals are on the Endangered Species list and it is illegal to collect parts. Some are not ESA listed but fall under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and you are required to register any parts you collect from them with either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service, depending on species. Before collecting any marine mammal parts check with one of the two agencies to determine which species are ESA listed. Both USFWS and NMFS publish fliers that detail regulations pertaining to dead marine mammals. ☺

Reminder – Drug Testing Required by Coast Guard

The Coast Guard reminds charter vessel operators that they are required to comply with federal drug testing regulations, as do all crewmembers working in “safety-sensitive positions” which on small boats includes all crewmembers. The requirement pertains to all U.S. vessels in commercial service that require a licensed operator, including so called “six-pack” charter boats.

Violations can result in loss of license or mariner document and fines of up to \$5,500 per day per violation.

The requirement calls for pre-employment drug testing and random testing at a rate of at least 50 per cent annually. Drug testing

is also required following a “serious marine incident.” Testing may take place when a supervisor has reasonable cause concerning drug or alcohol use. And testing may also occur on occasion of application, upgrade or renewal of a merchant marine license.

Most charter operators meet the requirement by enrolling themselves and their crews in a drug testing consortium, which schedules the random checks and arranges testing and handling of related paperwork.

Operators also are reminded that their merchant mariner documents (Coast Guard licenses) are not valid unless they also possess a TWIC card (transportation worker identification credential). The

requirement has been in effect for about two years and results of inquiries suggest that most charter operators are in compliance, but due to minimal enforcement it is possible that a few are unaware of the requirement or choose to ignore it. TWIC certification is administered by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), not the Coast Guard, and the application and background security check are separate from Coast Guard paperwork, but the Coast Guard does enforce the requirement.

You can get full information on the TWIC program at www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/layers/twic/index.shtm. ☺

Unapproved EPIRB Batteries

The Coast Guard is warning mariners to beware of the possibility that companies servicing EPIRBs are in some cases installing unapproved batteries. Furthermore, the installations are being done improperly, causing a high likelihood of failure. In one instance, the unit's case was cracked such that if deployed water would likely get in and destroy the unit.

Only a few cases of unapproved battery installation have been reported and none were in Alaska. However, if you bought a used EPIRB from out of state or sent your unit out to have it serviced, you need to make sure that the servicing was done properly.

EPIRB batteries normally need to be replaced every five years, and a sticker on the unit's case indicates when the replacement is required.

The Coast Guard safety alert on the problem reads, in part: "Every approved (i.e., accepted by the FCC) EPIRB is tested during its approval process using a battery, or batteries, specified by the manufacturer. Approved EPIRBs come with a user's manual which describes battery maintenance and replacement procedures. In order for the EPIRB to remain within the conditions of its approval, the manufacturer's instructions in the user's manual must be adhered to. To ensure that replacement batteries are of the same type with which the EPIRB was approved, and are correctly installed, manufacturers typically specify that battery replacements only be done by the manufacturer or a manufacturer-approved shop."

BoatUS Angler Helps Fishermen

BoatU.S., which is the nation's largest boating organization, offers a range of services to both charter boat operators and guides and to recreational anglers through a program it calls BoatU.S. Angler (www.boatusangler.com). The organization has 600,000 active members, most of them recreational boat owners but the ranks also include charter boat operators and guides, and anglers who hire guides when they want to fish outside their home areas.

The BoatU.S. Angler services include a guide locator program that is essentially an on-line advertising site for fishing guides and charter boat operations. Also on the page are

items such as a fishing guide checklist and trip report form, information for anglers on choosing a guide, a template for a waiver and release of liability, and access to a fishing guide/charter boat vessel and professional liability insurance program. The site also has a professional captain (delivery skipper) locator section which currently is offering free listings.

Even if you don't intend to use any of the services, it may be worthwhile to read through the checklist called *Choosing a Fishing Guide* to see if your operation meets the standards recommended by this huge consumer organization. ☺

BoatUS Publishes Complaint List

If you're interested in buying a boat this year you may want to know about a service provided by BoatU.S. that reports on boat defects, manufacturers responses to complaints, defect recall notices and safety alerts.

It's called BoatU.S. Consumer Protection Database, and it now has more than 10,000 entries, all submitted by association members. It contains reports about boats, marine engines, boating products, dealers, marinas and related services. It includes both manufacturer-issued recall notices and Coast Guard safety alerts. It can be searched by boat and engine make, model and year, hull number or serial number, or by the type of problem. It does not rate or evaluate products or services.

The association's Consumer Protection Bureau cautions users that the presence or absence of reports in the Database reflects market share as much as the quality of products because those makers which have sold a lot of units are more likely to show up in complaints reports than those with small output. Still, it is a way of identifying models that have had problems, and of finding out the nature of the problems.

Access to the database is free to BoatU.S. members at www.BoatUS.com/consumer and a link at the site allows non-members to join for the special on-line rate of \$19 per year. The association offers a wide range of other services as well as a monthly magazine. ☺

NMFS Giving Fines for "Late" Logbooks

NMFS is handing out fines of \$400 for turning in logbooks "late." This from the newsletter of the SouthEast Alaska Guides Organization. Although ADFG allows an eight-day grace period

after the due date for the state-issued logbooks, NMFS doesn't. SEAGO points out that operators who follow the instructions in the logbook are at risk of being fine. SEAGO is attempting to resolve

the issue with NMFS. If you have been fined for a late logbook contact SEAGO director John Blair at john@seagoalaska.org or 925-366-6638 and check the SEAGO site at www.seagoalaska.org for updates. ☺

Springtime Sinkings Explained

According to records kept by the Boat Owners Association of the U.S. (BoatU.S.) many boats sink each spring while tied to the dock. The editors of the association's magazine *Seaworthy* examine marine insurance claims files to identify trends, and they list the following five most common reasons for springtime sinkings.

1. Hose clamps that are loose, damaged or missing. They say that operators or service technicians often remove the clamps in the fall during servicing and then fail to replace them when the boat is launched.
2. Hoses that have come off engines and equipment. This often results from freezing water in the hoses that lifts them off seacocks.

3. Heavy spring rains that seep into leaking deck hatches, improperly caulked seams and leaking ports. Leaves clogging scuppers can aggravate the problem
4. A broken sea strainer, resulting from freezing. A cracked sea strainer bowl will allow water to seep in when the seacock is opened.
5. A leaking stuffing box, resulting from improper adjustment of the nut that maintains tension on the packing.

BoatU.S. offers a freespring commissioning checklist, available at their website www.BoatUS.com ☺

LORAN-C Terminated

The federal government has pulled the plug on LORAN-C, and nearly all stations ceased broadcasting on Feb. 8 this year. Only exceptions in Alaska are Shoal Cover near Ketchikan, and Attu--which continue to operate under international agreements. Those are expected to cease in June. Attu has been broadcasting since 1942, the longest of any LORAN station in the country.

Global Positioning System (GPS) has replaced Long Range Aid to Navigation (LORAN) for all military and transportation purposes and funding came to a halt with fiscal 2010. Some Bristol Bay fishermen and others continued to use LORAN-C after the general shift to GPS because they had LORAN charts of fishing areas and because of the excellent repeatability of LORAN.

To read about the termination, go to www.regulations.gov, docket number USCG-2009-0299. ☺

End of an Era

That's right, after two decades in print, *Charter Log* is going exclusively electronic. Don't despair, get your **FREE E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTION** by simply sending an email to terry.johnson@alaska.edu with the word "subscribe" in the subject line. Your subscription will begin with the next issue. Nothing else to do. No personal information requested. No username and password required. And you can unsubscribe any time by clicking a box at the bottom of the front page of each issue.

In the future *The Log* will be ...

- More frequent
- Shorter
- Full of interesting information and useful tips for commercial charter operators, fishing guides, recreational fishermen and boaters and anyone else interested in Alaska's waters and boats.

You're not a professional fishing guide or charter operator? NO PROBLEM! The new *Log* will be an information exchange about boats, motors, fishing tackle, maintenance, technology, business, resource management and, yes, a little politics. **The Log Wants You!** Not only as a subscriber (remember, it's free and carries no advertising) but also as a contributor. Reach out to your fellow anglers and commercial operators with news, tips, and commentary. The *Log* will be as good as you make it. Go ahead, take a chance. Next time you're at your computer invest one minute in your future by sending an email to terry.johnson@alaska.edu with the word "subscribe."

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