Council and Stakeholders Develop Charter Halibut Management Plans

As this issue of Charter Log goes to press, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council is meeting in Anchorage. Charter halibut is scheduled for only six hours of discussion at this meeting, with a committee report on long-term solutions and allocation/reallocation, and a review of progress on charter halibut allocation/reallocation on the agenda.

No final action on charter halibut management is expected during the December or February meetings. Progress since the last issue of Charter Log includes implementation of a two-fish limit in Southeast Alaska, which has a requirement that one of those fish is 32 inches or less, along with the previously imposed ban on skipper/crew fish. The combination of measures was expected to reduce the 2C charter catch by some 518,000 pounds.

At issue are ADFG calculations that indicated sizeable overages by charter fleets in 2C and 3A, but recent recalculation reduced those excesses. New figures indicate the 3A catch in 2006 was 3.664 million pounds, only 0.37% over the GHL. The 2C catch was pegged at 1.804 million pounds, 26% above the GHL, but not nearly as bad as the 47% overage estimated earlier.

While the Council is not expected to take final action this winter, staff is analyzing alternatives, and the Stakeholder Committee continues to work on recommendations to make to the Council. Measures included in analyses are a one-trip-per-day limit, a line limit not to exceed the number of paying clients, annual limits (four to six fish per charter angler), one-fish bag limits, and minimum and maximum size limits. A review draft of the analyses is due in August 2008. The Council is also reviewing options to set allocations between commercial and charter halibut sectors, and for a system of compensated reallocation.

The Stakeholder Committee is refining positions on proposals including

• An angler-day quota program.
• A modified limited entry program.
• A “guided angler fish” quota.
• Harvest tags.
• Modified limited entry with angler days and IFQ purchase and leasing.

For details on Council actions and the Stakeholder Committee, see http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/halibut_issues/halibut.htm.
National Association OKs C.G.’s Waterways Watch

BoatU.S., the national association of recreational boat owners, has officially endorsed America’s Waterway Watch, a program being promoted by the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The Coast Guard asks both recreational and commercial mariners to closely monitor the activities of other users of the waterways and to report suspicious activities to law enforcement authorities or to the Coast Guard. Reports should be filed at 1-877-24WATCH (877-249-2824).

However, BoatU.S. president Nancy Michelman cautions boaters against approaching or challenging people behaving suspiciously. Waterway Watch does not authorize the public to act as law enforcement agents.

The Waterways Watch endorsement comes on the heels of statements made by Department of Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff that agency leaders need to raise the protection level with respect to small boats. The Coast Guard will increase oversight of small boat traffic, because its strategists believe that is where there is a potential for terrorist strikes.

The Coast Guard is proposing new regulations that would require all boat operators to carry identification on the water. The purpose, says the agency, is to build a database of boaters who venture into restricted areas. The agency also wants state boating courses to teach security protocols, according to an article in USA Today.

BoatU.S. supports these initiatives as long as they don’t require separate ID cards or expensive tracking devices. A BoatU.S. video at http://www.AmericasWaterwayWatch.org explains how to identify suspicious behavior, details how to report an incident, and provides information on promotional materials.

Boating Groups Oppose Requirement for Vessel Water Discharge Permits

Recreational and charter boat groups are up in arms over a federal court decision that could force millions of boat owners to apply for pollution discharge permits.

The federal Clean Water Act prohibits discharge of pollutants into the nation’s waters, but provides for exemptions for discharges incidental to normal operation. The Act provides for permitting of discharges by large point-source polluters such as cargo ships and tankers. The Environmental Protection Agency issued an exemption for recreational vessels to cover normal discharges such as bilge water, engine cooling, and deck runoff.

However, groups concerned about the introduction of invasive species via ballast water discharge from large ships sued the EPA, and in September 2006 a U.S. District Court ruled that the agency lacked the authority to issue such an exemption. The court has ordered the EPA to rewrite the regulation by September 8, 2008. If not overturned or corrected by an act of Congress, the decision would require that owners of all classes of vessels get federal or state pollution permits for every vessel. This could involve yearly fees, red tape associated with getting a permit, increased burden on federal and state budgets, and new enforcement regimes.

The National Association of Charterboat Operators (NACO), National Marine Manufacturers Association, and BoatU.S. are lobbying for a change to the law or its interpretation. Most are now supporting H.R. 2550, introduced by Reps. Gene Taylor (D-Miss) and Candice Miller (R-Mich), called the Recreational Boating Act of 2007 that would reinstate the exemption for recreational boats.

Of particular interest to charter operators is a definition in the bill that specifies that “recreational vessel” includes a vessel “leased, rented, or chartered to an individual for recreational purposes.” NACO and others are asking constituents to lobby members of Congress to cosponsor and support the legislation.

Rockfish Allocation Request Denied

The Board of Fisheries in October denied a request from the Sitka Charter Boat Operators Association to revisit demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) allocations for the Southeast Outside area. The Board ruled that the request did not meet the criteria for agenda changes—it did not rule on the merits of the proposal. The Board will take up Southeast Alaska proposals during its 2008 cycle.

Sitka charter operators are upset about restrictions placed on their fishery as a result of exceeding the cap the last two seasons on demersal shelf rockfish (mostly yelloweye). Under the plan the commercial fishery was to receive 84% of the allowable catch in the form of a bycatch cap, and the nonresident/charter fishery the other 16%. There is no targeted DSR fishery in Southeast. ADFG has found that 95% of Southeast charter clients are nonresident, says Rob Bentz, deputy director of the Sport Fish Division.

ADFG determines charter DSR catches based on logbooks and creel census. Rockfish that are discarded by charter anglers likely are not included in the reported catch, even though most do not survive. Unless they are given a bigger share of the DSR quota, Sitka operators will be forced to cut back on salmon and halibut fishing, which could harm or destroy their businesses.
TWIC Is Coming Despite Delays; Phase-in Slated for 2008

As reported in the spring Charter Log, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is continuing to develop its Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program with the intention of meeting the September 2008 deadline to issue cards to all workers in transportation-related industries. A phase-in was scheduled to begin last summer in some ports and is supposed to be completed by January 1, 2009.

The project is fraught with problems and delays, and has raised concern from many sectors of marine industries. A writer with WorkBoat magazine says it will be "a major headache with significant costs to the maritime industry, maritime workers and the federal government."

An applicant will have to appear in person at an enrollment center to undergo a criminal history check, a terrorist watchlist check, and an immigration check. He or she will be fingerprinted and photographed, and will have to pay $132.50 ($102.50 for holders of Coast Guard licenses) for the privilege.

The Coast Guard says that eventually the TWIC and merchant mariners' documents will be integrated into a single Merchant Mariners Certificate (MMC), so the application for your Coast Guard license may serve both purposes, but that's not part of the initial phase of the program.

The government initially estimated that 750,000 workers nationwide would need the credential. But more recent estimates have upped that number to about 1.5 million. An applicant could be disqualified for violations of civil or immigration law, connections to terrorism, or mental deficiency. There will be provisions for appeal of denied application.

Generally, TWIC cards will be valid for five years. TSA says it does not plan to notify TWIC holders when their card is about to expire. The card will be a "smart card" with a small integrated circuit chip embedded, a magnetic stripe (like a credit card), and a linear bar code. Employers and waterfront facilities are supposed to purchase readers so that workers can swipe the card or hold it up to a reader. It is unclear which businesses and facilities will be required to install the readers.

The Passenger Vessel Association, which represents operators of tour boats, is supporting a bill sponsored by Rep. Steven LaTourette of Ohio, called the Merchant Mariner Credentials Improvement Act of 2007, which would reform TWIC and make other improvements to the mariner licensing system.

Coast Guard will begin issuing the integrated MMC in September 2008 and will complete phase-in five years later. Charter Log will monitor developments with TWIC and announce any significant changes. For more information see http://www.tsa.gov/twic or call 866-DHST-WIC.

Administrative Law Judge System Attacked as Unfair

Licensed mariners who are charged with infractions by the Coast Guard stand little chance of successfully defending themselves before the agency's Administrative Law Judges (ALJs), according to two WorkBoat articles.

The journal reports that a feature in the Baltimore Sun newspaper claimed that in more than 6,300 cases that went before ALJs, only 14 were resolved in favor of the mariners. Furthermore, the article quoted judges who said they had been pressured by their superiors to rule in favor of the Coast Guard, no matter what.

The Coast Guard categorically denies the allegations, and a spokesman has disputed some of the facts in the Sun article, claiming that most of those cases resulted from positive alcohol or drug tests or related offenses, and had been withdrawn or resolved before going before the judges. The spokesman told WorkBoat that only 152 cases had actually been ruled upon by the judges, and the mariners prevailed in 14 of those cases. If those numbers are correct, it still means that the Coast Guard wins about 91% of the time.

Nationwide, seven judges hear evidence on charges brought against licensed mariners by the Coast Guard. Penalties for convictions commonly include revocation of the mariner's documents, effectively depriving him or her of a means to make a living.

One career mariner said it took him five years, a suit in federal court, and thousands of dollars in legal fees to overturn a decision issued by an ALJ in a case involving inaccurate drug screening results. Another case has been dragging on for ten years. A congressional subcommittee recently held a hearing to look into claims of improprieties in the ALJ system, and some mariners and their attorneys are calling for an overhaul of the system.
Advisory Committee Meets to Write Draft of “Vision 2020”

NMFS has convened a panel of advisors to recommend policies for federal fisheries management over the next 15 years. The 17-member committee, known as Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), currently has two Alaskans, consultant Heather McCarty of Juneau, and Catherine Foy of Kodiak, who manages a sea lion project for the Aleutians East Borough.

MAFAC has met 16 times starting in 1999, and contributed toward publication earlier this year of a draft plan known as Vision 2020. The plan addresses four theme areas: commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, fisheries management, and aquaculture. For each theme the committee is working to identify the strongest influences on the future of fisheries, desired outcomes, recommended courses of action, critical success factors, and resources needed to achieving success.

MAFAC has a recreational fisheries working group composed of seven national leaders in recreational fishing politics, plus three advisors. No Alaskans are on the working group roster. The Vision 2020 draft summary includes a short section on recreational fishing that mentions the following issue: Growth in coastal populations and tourism is causing increasing numbers of recreational fishermen and increasing demand for fish. There will be increased need for reduced bag limit and for catch and release fishing. The draft says that many recreational species are “too valuable to be caught only once.”


Record Lingcod Landed by Ninilchik Boat

A 20-year-old California resident, fishing aboard a Ninilchik-based charter boat, landed what is believed to be a world-record lingcod. The fish was caught in the Gulf of Alaska off the south end of the Kenai Peninsula.

Robbie Hammond caught the 82.6 pound buckethead in August aboard the Highliner, skippered by Steve Smith. The 30 foot Alumaweld is one of two boats owned by Capt. Steve’s Fishing Lodge.

Halibut Sport Fish Survey Analyzed

As reported in the spring 2007 issue of Charter Log, NMFS has surveyed 4,000 Alaska saltwater sport anglers about their fishing activities and preferences. The Quarterly Report of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center says the survey is getting information on sites fished, number of trips, types of fishing trips, catch, and costs, and also asks respondents to choose among several hypothetical fishing trips that vary in species, catch, limits, and cost. The study will give insights into how halibut anglers may respond to possible changes, such as daily bag limits.

Dr. Dan Lew, who heads the study, says response rates were very good, at around 50%. About half of the questionnaires went to nonresidents, and of the remainder, half went to Southeast Alaska residents and half to other parts of the state.

Lew says that data collection was completed in June. The analysis is “very complex” and preliminary results won’t be published until next summer at the earliest. The study is being done with NMFS internal funding. Results will be announced in the AFSC Quarterly Report, at http://www.afsc.noaa.gov.

NOAA Raster Charts Available Online

NOAA National Ocean Service has announced the distribution of raster navigational charts to the public via the Internet. Raster charts are “georeferenced digital pictures” of NOAA charts for use in computer-based navigation devices such as plotters. NOAA currently publishes more than 1,000 coastal and Great Lakes charts. Paper charts will continue to be available.

In addition, NOS offers a service by which fully updated NOAA marine charts can be examined online, giving mariners clear information for updating their own charts. Print-on-demand paper nautical charts are available through an arrangement between NOAA and a company called OceanGrafix. See http://www.OceanGrafix.com for chart suppliers.

For online access to the raster charts, and to other NOS products such as electronic navigation charts, PocketCharts, U.S. Coastal Pilot, Official Chart No. 1, and other NOAA products, as well as On-Line Chart Viewers used to view corrected marine charts, see http://www.nauticalcharts.com/viewer/.
EPA Expected to Mandate Tier 3 Emissions

Is the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) laying plans to require you to replace your diesel engine?

An article in a recent issue of WorkBoat says it is. Already the state of California has announced regulations that require many classes of vessels, including excursion and dinner boats, to replace existing diesel engines with Tier 2 or Tier 3 emissions qualifying engines by around the year 2022. And the magazine says the EPA is expected to mandate Tier 3 implementation starting between 2009 and 2014, and Tier 4 between 2014 and 2017, depending on engine size and application.

Industry and the EPA say that Tier 3 can be achieved without exhaust aftertreatment. However, Tier 4 will likely require “selective catalytic reduction” which involves a large tank containing urea, which is injected into the exhaust stream.

What is getting the industry’s attention in this matter, however, is that new rules will not allow “grandfathering” of older technology engines, and will pertain to remanufactured as well as newly built engines.

The WorkBoat article does not specifically mention small boats in the size category of six-pack fishing charters, and earlier EPA emissions requirements have included exemptions for the smaller sizes of engine. But most diesel engines used in fishing charter boats are above the cut-off size for existing exemptions.

Operators would be well advised to track this issue, particularly when considering new construction, re-powering, or spending money to extend the service life of existing engines.

Wildlife Viewing Increases While Fishing Declines

Wildlife viewing is up, and sport fishing is down, according to a study done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

As reported in the Anchorage Daily News, Alaska ties Minnesota for the highest percentage of residents who fish recreationally, but the number of Alaskans and other residents of other states who fish for fun is declining. Nearly a third of Alaskans age 16 and over are anglers, but participation has decreased 26%, and nationwide participation in angling has decreased 12%, since 2001. The number of Alaskan hunters has also plummeted, by 24%.

While the numbers of hunters and anglers dropped, the number of Americans who engage in wildlife viewing has risen. Nationwide wildlife viewing is up 8%, and in Alaska the number of resident wildlife viewers has increased by 22%.

The study found that about 38% of Americans age 16 and over participated in fishing, hunting, or wildlife watching, and those 87 million people spent $120 billion on those interests. Anglers accounted for $41 billion and wildlife watchers $45 billion.

Douglas Vincent-Lang, of ADFG’s Sport Fish Division, told the Daily News that the state’s measure of “days fished” has declined, and fishing license sales also decreased after the state instituted a surcharge to pay for hatcheries. The actual number of licenses continues to grow slowly, but the percentage has decreased due to population growth. He believes that the time commitment associated with sport fishing is a deterrent to adults who are rearing children.

But people in the outdoor adventure and wildlife viewing industries say their businesses are growing, and they think the competition from other kinds of outdoor recreation is putting a dent in sport fishing participation.

Sea Lion Conservation Benefits Studied

A NMFS economist is analyzing the results of a 2007 survey to get views on preferences for protection measures for Steller sea lions in Alaska. As reported in the Federal Register, the study is aimed at determining public benefits associated with sea lion conservation, particularly the viewing value and other non-consumptive uses.

Bird Nests May Suffer Wake Damage

A recent item in the online journal Alaska Fish & Wildlife News reminds boat operators to exercise caution when operating along lake and river shorelines, particularly May-August when waterfowl are nesting and rearing young.

The article says that grebes, loons, and swans are most at risk of being harmed by boat wakes because they build nests on the water or very near the shore. Grebe and trumpeter swan nests are particularly vulnerable, especially in the Mat-Su area where boat traffic is increasing.

Nests typically are built in May and laying occurs in May and June, but if eggs are lost a bird may lay a second clutch in July. Chicks hatch in June and July. The article urges boaters to travel slowly near shore, and not to race up to birds or get too close. Even kayaks and canoes can frighten birds from their nests by approaching too closely.
Latest in Charterboat Gear and Technology Outlined at Seminar

From digital signal processing to stinky artificial baits to online booking programs, charter operators have access to technologies to improve their fish-catching and business success. Speakers at the technology session of the Charterboat Conference at Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle this year got updates on what’s hot in the industry.

Electronics Developments

The big advantage of digital signal processing (DSP), says Fred Fink of Lunde Marine Electronics in Seattle, is that it reduces “noise” in fish finders, which allows the operator to turn up the gain without seeing extraneous marks on the screen. This allows the machine to show a clearer picture of target fish, bait, and bottom features under the boat. The technology works well, he says, with both 50 kH wide (40 degree) transducers, and with the deep-ranging 200 kH transducers. He says that a good 50 kH transducer with digital signal processing can actually calculate the length of the fish shown on the screen.

Other developments in electronics include AIS (automatic identification system) units for small boats, satellite weather, and new autopilot technology.

AIS, which is required on most types of ocean-going ships, also has advantages for small boats in some locations. The transponders broadcast on VHF frequencies and transmit vessel position, speed, and heading, and can interrogate another vessel for name, radio call sign, and similar information. This can be helpful in crowded areas and where vessels may want to communicate by digital selective calling rather than regular VHF voice channels. Small-boat AIS systems now sell for as low as $800.

XMWX is the name for the XM-based satellite weather radio service, which includes access to weather radar and real-time data from weather buoys that includes sea surface temperature, forecasted wave height, direction, speed, etc.

New autopilots have self-learning functions that allow the machine to learn how much rudder is needed to control the boat. They can be programmed to hold a track over bottom, to follow bottom contours, or to fish a predetermined pattern. Some models have wireless remote control.

Artificial Baits

Two of the session speakers sang the praises of artificial baits, especially “Gulp!” Mike Jamboretz, who runs fishing charters out of Neah Bay, Washington, says a big advantage of Gulp! is that it repels dogfish. He uses it to enhance artificial lures, like Scampis, which he used for halibut fishing. Gary Krein, who runs salmon fishing charters in Puget Sound, says that although the bait has a powerful odor of its own, it’s not as messy as fresh bait, and the artificial strips can be kept in ziplock bags. Good for about four hours soak time, they can even be reused if left in the water for shorter periods. Krein puts a small strip of Gulp! on the hook behind a hootchie and says it is equal to or more effective than a strip of fresh herring.

Booking Programs

Larry McLean’s company, Adventures Express, produces online booking programs. His program and others like it offer charter operators the big advantage of being able to respond to Internet inquiries and take reservations and deposits every hour of the day, every day of the year. Research shows that potential clients doing Web searches spend only a few moments on a site, and if they can’t get answers to questions or be enticed to make a purchase decision during that brief time they move on to another site and do not come back. It’s key, he says, that potential buyers find out right away whether they can book a particular day.

Online booking programs can provide other services as well, such as an online policies page, including a cancellations policy that the customer must agree to before he can complete booking. The program takes credit cards.

An interesting note—McLean says that research shows most people book their trips while at work, during weekdays, either first thing in the morning or from 1 to 3 pm.

Check out the latest issue of Alaska Seas and Coasts: Clean Boating

Protect your boat, help control costs at the marina, and conserve the environment.

http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/M-72.html
State Funds Study of Sport Fishing Value to Alaska Economy

A Florida firm, Southwick Associates, Inc., has received a nearly-quarter-million-dollar contract from ADFG to calculate the value of sport fishing to Alaska. Southwick is getting the $248,000 to send surveys to 7,500 households believed to include people who sport fish in Alaska. About 60% of the surveys are going to non-Alaska residents, reflecting the split in recreational fishing license-holders. The data provided by survey returns will be analyzed using the Minnesota Implan Group model, which is used to analyze a variety of economic data.

According to an article in Fishermen’s News, the survey asks questions on the money anglers spend per trip, per day of effort, per year for equipment, travel, and other costs. Anglers under 16, and seniors holding long-term fishing permits, are excluded from the study.

The study is funded at nearly $400,000 (including ADFG staff time) by license revenues and by a 2006 legislative appropriation made in response to requests from the Board of Fisheries for more data to help with allocation decisions, according to the ADFG Web site. ADFG requested the money to meet a statutory requirement to obtain economic data periodically on the recreational fishery. The first round of surveys went out this summer.

ADFG contact on the study is Bill Romberg, sport fish biologist in Anchorage. He says the study is to assess economic impact of the industry on the state’s economy, not valuation of fish or particular fisheries.

Although ADFG has stated that the study is strictly for informational and not political purposes, some in the industry are already talking about using results to support regulatory or legislative measures to reallocate salmon from commercial to sport fisheries.

According to Fishermen’s News, sport fishing industry advocates including the Kenai River Sportfishing Association board have said that the study could be used to reallocate salmon away from commercial fishing. And Rep. Mark Neuman (R-Big Lake) announced plans for hearings in 2008 on fisheries allocations, despite the fact that the legislature normally leaves allocation decisions to the Board of Fisheries.

Commercial fishermen have expressed dismay that the state is funding research that could be used to support changes that would take fish away from them.

A draft report is due this fall and the final report will be out in December 2008. Project updates are at http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Statewide/economics/2007Study.cfm.

Attorney Assistance May Be Valuable When Filing 2692 Casualty Report Form

A column in the August issue of WorkBoat highlights the importance of engaging an admiralty attorney early in the case of a vessel accident. The column, written by maritime attorney John K. Fulweiler, addresses the issue of filing a CG-2692.

The CG-2692 is the form that must be filed with the Coast Guard for an incident involving death, injury, property damage, or oil pollution. The Coast Guard may use the form in accident investigation, for statistical purposes, and to identify hazardous conditions.

The point of Fulweiler’s column is that it is essential that the form be filled out accurately, since it is a document available to the public and may be used by a court to establish facts in a case. The description of an incident on the form must match what you actually saw. A report that contradicts witness testimony can cause problems.

Because maritime attorneys are accustomed to gathering and recording facts, they can be very helpful to a mariner in correctly filling in the form. Fulweiler recommends that even if you don’t hire an attorney to help fill in the form, it may be cost effective to have one review it before submission to the Coast Guard.

Drug Test Guidance

If you hire skippers or crew for your vessels, you are responsible for requiring they participate in a random drug-testing program. Details of your obligations and the technical aspects of the program are outlined in a Coast Guard publication called Marine Employers Drug Testing Guidance (What Marine Employers Need to Know About Drug Testing).

The 56-page publication covers federal law; identifying and selecting service agents; written policies; and conducting pre-employment, random, serious marine incident, reasonable cause, and periodic tests. It also details record-keeping and return-to-duty processes.

**Boatyard Results**

Good communication between a boat owner and a boatyard service provider is key to good results. That is the opinion shared by three marine service providers who spoke in a session on boatyard work at Pacific Marine Expo in Seattle.

Scott Anderson with CSR Marine said it is important to know up front exactly what you want from your boatyard or service technicians, and also how much you are prepared to spend. With service rates averaging $75 an hour, and increasing environmental regulations governing boatyard work, it is difficult for the yard to complete all the work the owner wants, and keep it within his budget, unless there is clear communication.

Paul Miller of Miller&Miller agrees, and says the owner should specify as clearly as possible what he expects, even down to the parts and fittings for the project. It usually doesn’t pay for the owner to work alongside the professional technician because the owner’s questions and commentary tend to slow progress on the job, which raises costs. But he highly recommends “progress billing,” which means insisting that the yard or technician bill frequently (weekly is most common) for work done, rather than waiting to deliver one big bill at the end.

Jim Brown of Yachtcare concurred, and added that it’s a good idea to confirm from suppliers the availability of parts before starting the job. Boat owners quickly become unhappy and yards lose money when boats sit waiting for parts that are on back order.

In answer to an audience question about the best time to get a boatyard project done, the speakers said most of the job backlog is completed by fall so any time from August to Christmas may be a good time to get a job done quickly and well. But they added that there is no predictable slow time in the boat service business, so it’s best to contact your yard or technician early and ask to be put on their schedule.

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**Captain Given Six Years in Prison after Fatal Sinking on Oregon Bar**

An Oregon charter boat captain has been sent to prison for six years after pleading guilty to three counts of Seaman’s Manslaughter after three of his passengers died in a mishap on the Umpqua River bar.

Richard J. Oba was operating the 38-foot charter boat Sydney Mae II on September 19, 2005, when the vessel was hit by a large wave and sank. The Coast Guard had warned Oba of dangerous conditions on the bar and ordered him to stay away. The judge ruled that Oba had acted recklessly.

The sentence is regarded as the longest in this type of case. The skipper of a Staten Island ferry who fell asleep at the helm and crashed the ferry into a pier was sentenced to only 18 months even though his actions caused the deaths of 11 people.

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**Illegal Charter Brings Fine for AK Guide**

A sport fishing guide was ordered in August to pay $10,300 in fines and do 40 hours community service after pleading guilty to several violations committed on a trip he guided in July 2006. He also received four years probation.

Ray Blodgett, owner and operator of Fisherman’s Choice Charters, was charged with guiding a king salmon fishing trip on Clear Creek in the Talkeetna River drainage after the close of the king salmon season, using bait for king salmon, and removing king salmon from the water that were not retained. The

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**Juneau Brokerage Posts Crew Referrals**

A Juneau charter brokerage is helping vessel owners find crewmembers, including skippers, cooks, and chefs.

Charter Brokers of Alaska recently circulated a letter to operators whose vessels it represents, announcing that it was developing an online system for connecting employers with would-be crewmembers. Charter Brokers and Alaska Boat & Marine have been lining up delivery skippers and crew for vessels the boat brokerage sells, so the company already has a list of licensed captains who have Alaska experience. The crewmember service is just an extension of the hired skipper referral service already in place, according to the letter.

Initially the company is not charging for the service, but is looking for an equitable way to recover costs for providing it. The company is open to suggestions for arranging compensation.
Upper Kenai Subsistence Fishery Quiet

The first season for the highly controversial federal subsistence fishery on the upper Kenai River passed quietly, with a small catch and no observed conflict.

The federal fishery allowed residents of Ninilchik, Cooper Landing, and Hope to fish the upper Kenai and part of the Russian River with dipnets for salmon and trout. Anglers had strongly opposed the fishery, and some predicted the demise of the world-class sport fisheries for rainbow trout and three species of salmon.

According to adn.com, only 108 people got permits and total harvest was 410 sockeye salmon, only 10% of the permitted harvest. They also took one rainbow, but no king salmon in the dipnets. No officials reported conflicts between anglers and subsistence fishermen.

Adn.com ascribed the low-key fishery to confusion about the program, difficult access, small salmon runs, and a policy shift by the Ninilchik Traditional Council. Initially the council pushed for the Kenai fishery, but later negotiated for an expanded "educational" gillnet fishery on the Cook Inlet beach near Ninilchik. This fishery involved several Native families that caught and distributed 300 king salmon and thousands of sockeye, reducing the incentive for local residents to drive 80 miles to dipnet in the upper Kenai.

Harris Announces Sportsmen's Caucus; Says It Will Represent State's Anglers

The Fishermen's News reports that Speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives, John Harris, is forming the Alaska State Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus.

Harris is quoted by reporter Bob Tkacz as saying that he hopes the caucus will be "more successful in representing the interests of the thousands of Alaskans who hunt, fish and trap, through a renewed emphasis on conservation and stewardship."

Harris wants the state caucus to be organized similarly to the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus and to be part of the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses.

It will be bipartisan, and won't become a lobby for charter operators or other commercial interests. According to Harris the group will not attack commercial fishing, nor will it take on subsistence. Harris was unclear about what issues needed more successful representation.

Organization is being done by Juneau free-lance lobbyist Eddie Grasser, who has worked for sport hunting and fishing interests. Grasser told Tkacz in September that already half the Senate and "some 26 or 27" members of the House said they would join.

ATIA Sees Increase in Tourism Numbers

The total number of Alaska tourists increased by 100,000 this year to 1.7 million, according to the Alaska Travel Industry Association. Contribution to the state economy was $1.8 million. About one million tourists were cruise ship passengers, and they spent about $186 million on shopping, meals, activities, and tours onshore. Some 600,000 visitors flew to Alaska, and 100,000 came by car.

The Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau reports "slow but steady growth" in both cruise and independent travelers. Ferry traveler arrivals to the capital city increased by 13% from 2006, and airplane traveler arrivals increased by 4%.

The Associated Press reports that the number of cruise ship passengers visiting the state quadrupled since 1990, while the number of independent travelers increased by only 48% during the same period.

Save a tree!
To get an electronic Charter Log, contact Sue Keller at fnsk@uaf.edu.
Seats Can Diminish Shock of Pounding

Does a trip back from the grounds on a choppy sea day leave you feeling like you’ve been run over by a truck? Maybe it’s time to look into the new technology of shock mitigating seats.

Like so much else in technology, pioneering work in the field was done by companies supplying the military. Navy SEALs drive high speed assault vessels in steep waves and some have sustained broken bones, sprains, and kidney damage from the pounding. A company called Stidd Systems developed a device called 800V53 Advanced Shock Mitigating Seat, specifically for use by the SEALs.

As detailed in the September 2007 WorkBoat, the Stidd Systems seat uses a built-in mechanical logic system. It measures impact and within a millisecond stiffens the dampening system in the seat base.

The Stidd seat is only one of several coming on the market. Another company, Bentley’s Manufacturing, makes a knee-action mechanical suspension system with air shocks incorporated in the Severe Duty Mariner seat. H.O. Bostrom Co. makes the Seaspension shock absorbing system, which involves a heavy duty spring that travels up to six inches and can absorb 6Gs of force. The same company makes a scissors-like torsion suspension that will absorb 2Gs, for slower boats.

A British Columbia firm called Shockwave makes a system based on springs, shock absorbers, and a urethane bumper. The springs absorb some force but serve mainly to reposition the seat after each impact; the bumper absorbs most of the force.

Damage Control DVD Now Available

Flooding Control: Knowledge and Tools to Prevent Sinking is the title of a new instructional DVD issued by the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association and the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program.

The 14-minute video outlines maintenance procedures to prevent flooding, preparation for dealing with flooding, and temporary patches, plugs, and other flooding control techniques. The movie was filmed both on the Coast Guard damage control trainer and onboard working vessels in Alaska. The Marine Advisory Program did production, with funding from the Coast Guard. AMSEA wrote the script with the help of experienced advisors.

The video is available for loan at Marine Advisory offices and for purchase through AMSEA at http://www.amsea.org and Alaska Sea Grant at alaskaseagrant.org.

Report Any Problems Caused by Enhanced Gas, Low Sulfur Diesel

With so much recent discussion in the marine press about E-10 ethanol-enhanced gasoline, and ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel, the question arises whether Alaska boat operators have suffered any problems with engines or fuel systems. E-10 gas is reported to cause “phase separation” and water contamination in fuel, and is supposed to cause catastrophic deterioration of fiberglass fuel tanks. Ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel is reputed to have lower lubricity than the previous generations of diesel fuel, causing damage to injectors and injection pumps, and deterioration of gaskets and seals that could cause fuel leaks.

In response to an inquiry, the marine fuel dealer in Homer stated that to his knowledge no E-10 gasoline is being sold in coastal Alaska. Further, his company adds lubricity agents to its no. 1 and no. 2 diesel fuel and has had no reports of damage. However, he does not know whether other companies add lubricity agents, and he has heard rumors of pump and injector damage from fuel sold in other parts of the state.

If you believe that you have purchased either E-10 gasoline or untreated ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel anywhere in Alaska, or if you have experienced engine or fuel system damage consistent with the effects of those fuels, please contact the editor of Charter Log to document these problems and possibly warn operators to avoid dealers who distribute the fuels. Call Terry Johnson at 907-235-5643 or terryjohnson@uaf.edu.

Seats Can Diminish Shock of Pounding

Does a trip back from the grounds on a choppy sea day leave you feeling like you’ve been run over by a truck? Maybe it’s time to look into the new technology of shock mitigating seats.

Like so much else in technology, pioneering work in the field was done by companies supplying the military. Navy SEALs drive high speed assault vessels in steep waves and some have sustained broken bones, sprains, and kidney damage from the pounding. A company called Stidd Systems developed a device called 800V53 Advanced Shock Mitigating Seat, specifically for use by the SEALs.

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Another Homer Boat Sinks in Cook Inlet

A second Homer-based charter boat has sunk during the 2007 season. The 32-foot catamaran Fat Cat sank August 11 in Cook Inlet. The vessel belonged to Mike Huff of Captain Mike’s Charters, and was operated by Steve Morphis of Silver Fox Charters.

According to the Anchorage Daily News, the boat began taking on water after pulling anchor about 1:30 p.m. The vessel Silver Fox 1, captained by Gerry Haughey, was nearby and rescued Morphis, his deckhand, and five clients. No one was injured, and Morphis said that the anglers remained calm and were pleased that the skipper and crew retrieved the anglers’ personal gear and fish before the boat went down.

Sea condition at the time was flat calm. Morphis told the Coast Guard that there may have been a problem with the vessel’s exhaust system. As reported in the spring 2007 issue of the Charter Log, the 38-foot Halibut Endeavor, also from Homer, sank April 24 off Seldovia.

Kenai River Horsepower Limit Raised

New state regulations raise the engine size limit on the Kenai River from 35 to 50 horsepower. At the same time they impose a boat size limit and begin a phase-out of carbureted two-stroke outboards.

State officials say the measures will reduce pollution on the river, which is on a federal list of impaired waters due to hydrocarbon emissions from outboard motors during the sport fishing season. They also say they will make the river safer because the additional horsepower will allow boats to get on step more quickly, reducing the time that the operator’s view forward is obstructed by a raised bow.

The decision is controversial. It is supported by members of the Kenai River Professional Guides Association, but receives less support or even downright rejection by members of the Kenai Watershed Forum and private recreational anglers.

Private sport fishermen, in particular, are angered by the requirement that carbureted two-strokes have to be off the river altogether by January 1, 2010, and are restricted from the river during July 2008 and 2009. Only four-strokes and direct fuel injected (DFI) two strokes will be permitted, and engines above 35 hp used at any time must also be four-stroke or DFI. In addition to the horsepower and engine technology change, the new regulations also limit boat lengths at 21 feet.

The new regulations pertain from Kenai Lake to the Warren Ames Bridge, four miles above the mouth.

Rec Fishing Conference Is Planned for November 10-13, 2008, at Florida Site

The 5th World Recreational Fishing Conference is scheduled for November 10-13, 2008, in Dania Beach, Florida. The conference is hosted by the International Game Fish Association. Topics include

• Community expectations and perceptions of the role of sport fishing in society.
• Global partnerships in recreational fisheries,
• Ecosystem-based recreational fisheries management.
• The economic contribution of sport fisheries to society.

For more information on the World Recreational Fishing Conference go to http://www.igfa.org/wrfc07/.

Homer-Based Angler Lands Two Big Ones

A Homer-based angler in August caught two halibut in one day that totaled 419 pounds, according to a story in the Anchorage Daily News.

Dave Nollar, a retired California teacher who has a summer home near Homer, caught the fish on the charter boat Belle Isle, owned by his son. Nollar fishes nearly every day of the summer, either from his own skiff or as the “fill-in guy” when there is a cancellation on the charter boat.

Nollar says he normally releases every halibut over 80 pounds, but on that day he was hoping to win the monthly prize in the Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby. Besides, he added, he wanted to top up his freezer.
New publication from Alaska Sea Grant

Field Guide to Sharks, Skates, and Ratfish of Alaska $25

This book is ideal for charter boat operators. It has an identification key to 10 sharks, 15 skates, and one ratfish, as well as color photos and illustrations and distribution maps.

For more information go to:
seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/SG-ED-57.html

Also new
Sharks, Skates, and Ratfish of Alaska T-Shirt $20

Alaska Sea Grant’s cool new short-sleeved, black T-shirt features the Alaska Sea Grant logo on the front, and splashy fish art created for Alaska Sea Grant by renowned Alaska fish artist, Ray Troll, on the back! Ray’s art also adorns the cover of Field Guide to Sharks, Skates, and Ratfish of Alaska.
http://seagrant.uaf.edu/bookstore/pubs/M-79.html

Visit our online bookstore at www.alaskaseagrant.org