The Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee has proposed a lengthy list of issues and options for analysis, the first step in a deliberative public process aimed at helping the North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopt a long-term solution to the problem of a growing reallocation of halibut from the commercial to the guided sport sector.

The impetus stems from the action taken by the council in December to set aside earlier decisions to implement an Individual Fishery Quota plan on the charter industry.

The Stakeholder Committee met three times over the winter: Feb. 21-22, March 21-23, and April 18-20. The council posted the committee's Recommendations for Permanent Solution Alternatives and Options on its Web site May 12.

Posted are two reports: one is recommendations for revising the council's moratorium alternative. The other consists of seven pages of alternatives and options for permanent fixes to management of the fishery.

The council has already signaled a willingness to impose a moratorium on new entry to the fishery, and has set Dec. 9, 2005, as the control date that could be applied if a moratorium is adopted. The recommendations include several options for factors such as these:

- Community eligibility to purchase licenses through a CQE program.
- Qualifying years and vessel ownership criteria.
- Annual renewal criteria and license designations.
- Use caps, transfers, and leasing.
- The Recommendations for Permanent Solution Alternatives and Options raises the following issues:
  - Allocations—fixed percentage or fixed pounds.
  - How to apply overages.
  - Mechanisms to increase the charter sector harvest.
  - Limited entry—recipients, types of permits, transferability, leasing, etc.
  - Rod endorsements, vessel upgrading, renewal, permit stacking, etc.
  - Community quotas.

In addition, it raises a set of issues to analyze in considering inclusion of the charter sector in the halibut IFQ program, including the following:

- Initial issuance and qualification criteria.
- Permanent and temporary transfers.
- Block and vessel class restrictions.
- Reporting.
- Community set-asides.

Council staff, headed by Jane DiCosimo and assisted by contractors, will do an analysis of the biological, economic, and social implications of the alternatives over the summer and will present a written report to the council in October. The council could take final action on the options at its December meeting, which would mean the new measures could be implemented as early as the 2008 season.

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**Stakeholder Committee Results**

The Charter Halibut Stakeholder Committee has proposed a lengthy list of issues and options for analysis, the first step in a deliberative public process aimed at helping the North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopt a long-term solution to the problem of a growing reallocation of halibut from the commercial to the guided sport sector.

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Dec. 9 ’05 Is Control Date

Dec. 9, 2005 is the control date set by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) for new entrants into the halibut charter fishery.

The control date does not constitute a moratorium and does not prohibit new entrants from participating in the fishery. The summary provided with the advance notice of proposed rulemaking states that “. . . anyone entering the charter sport fishery for Pacific halibut in and off Alaska after December 9, 2005 will not be assured of future access to that fishery if a management regime that limits the number of participants is developed and implemented.”

The summary goes on to state “participation credit may not be granted for operating in the charter halibut fishery if initial entry into the fishery occurs after the control date.”

The notice is intended “to promote public awareness of a potential eligibility criterion for future access to the charter halibut resource, and to discourage new entrants into the charter halibut fishery while the Council discusses whether and how access to the halibut resource by the charter sport fishery should be controlled.”

Furthermore: “This announcement does not prevent any other control date for eligibility in the fishery or any other method of controlling fishing effort from being proposed or implemented.”

This is, in fact, the third such control date announced since the NPFMC began discussions on means of controlling growth in the charter sector back in the early 1990s. Had the NPFMC stuck with either of the earlier dates and NOAA Fisheries and the Secretary of Commerce implemented one of the access limitation measures now being considered, much of the current debate about means of implementing the provisions of the guideline harvest level (GHL) would be unnecessary since nearly half of the existing charter fleet would be excluded.

Until the NPFMC makes its final decision regarding means of limiting charter sport halibut catches, it is unknown whether the control date will have any real effect on the fortunes of existing or future charter operators.

The notice of proposed rulemaking concludes: “Charter vessel operators are not guaranteed future participation in the charter halibut fishery regardless of their date of entry or intensity of participation in the fishery before or after the control date. The Council may choose a different control date, or it may choose a management regime that does not make use of such a date. Finally, the Council may choose to take no further action to control entry or access to the charter halibut fishery.”

For further information contact Jay Ginter at (907) 586-7228 or Jay.Ginter@noaa.gov.

Kenai Guide Program Changes

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, has announced changes in the permit program for Kenai River fishing guides.

Among the changes for 2006:
• The permit fee is $750 for Alaska residents, and $1650 for nonresidents.
• Sportfishing guide permit applicants must be at least 18 years old.
• Guides who operate motorboats must be Coast Guard licensed and be enrolled in a random drug testing program. Operators of nonmotorized boats must either be enrolled in a random drug testing program or provide proof of a negative drug test within 30 days of permit issuance.
• Applicants for sportfishing guide permits may not have been convicted of a felony within the past five years, nor of more than one misdemeanor violation of fish and game regulations within the past five years.
• New permittees will be required to attend a six-hour orientation session.

Dates set for the sessions are April 22, May 6, May 20, June 10, June 24, and July 8. All sessions are at the Kenai River Center.
• Non-fishing guide fees this year are $200 for Alaska residents and $500 for nonresidents, and those fees will increase to $500 and $750, respectively, in 2007.
• Non-fishing guides operating in that portion of the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA) that is bounded by the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and are required to obtain a permit from the KNWR will pay a reduced fee to State Parks of $150 for residents and $350 for nonresidents. Those fees will increase in 2007 to $350 for residents and $450 for nonresident guides.
• The division reminds guides that they also have to comply with standing requirements for ADFG Business Owner/Guide License and Coast Guard vessel operator licensing. Other standing requirements include permits for derbies and organized events in the KRSMA, fees for commercial boat launching, guide vessel registration, and more.

Furthermore, starting in 2007 all Kenai River fishing guides will be required to successfully complete the Kenai River Guide Academy. All new guides will have to complete the academy prior to being issued a permit for 2007. Previously operating guides will have from one to five years to complete the requirement as outlined in a schedule based on the number of years of guiding experience on the river.

The academy course covers material in the following areas: regulatory, safety, ethics and behavior, and habitat and conservation. The course takes about 32 hours over a four-day period, and ends with a 100-question multiple-choice written test and oral examination. Fee for the academy is $206.

For more details on all of the above, contact Pam Russell at the Kenai River Center, (907) 260-4882, ext. 232.
Kenai Study Stirs Controversy

The Kenai River Sportfishing Association recently unveiled results of an economic study which, according to the association, shows that the sport fisheries of upper Cook Inlet generate over six times as much revenue as the commercial fisheries of the same region. The report has drawn criticism from commercial fishermen for the way data are analyzed.

The report estimates that sportfishing in the region provides $290 million in revenues and supports 3,400 annual jobs that provide $95 million in wages. The same report estimates commercial fisheries employment in the region at 500 jobs and $15 million in income.

Association director Ricky Gease told the Alaska Journal of Commerce the report was developed to convince the Board of Fish and the legislature of the economic importance of sportfishing. He told the business magazine, “The way to maximize your economy is to bring people here to catch fish.”

Logbooks Now Available

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has announced that the new 2006 saltwater logbooks are available to be picked up at ADFG offices.

Saltwater charter fishing operations must maintain a logbook for each vessel that carries paying anglers, and it must be filled out daily for each trip. Logbook sheets have to be returned to ADFG weekly during weeks when the vessel carries clients.

According to an ADFG press release, the law requires that the logbook daily entries be completed after the vessel returns to the dock and before clients depart or fish are offloaded. It the vessel is trailer-launched, the entries must be completed before the vessel or guide departs the landing site and before offloading any fish. In either case, the logbook entry has to be made even if no fish are kept.

To receive a logbook, operators must have their ADFG fishing guide license number and the vessel’s state registration or Coast Guard documentation number.

The logbooks are available at most ADFG offices in Southeast and South-central, as well as in Dillingham, Bethel, and King Salmon. For detailed information about the saltwater logbook requirement, see www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/state-wide/guides/Guide.cfm.

Towing Service Opens in Kachemak Bay

The first small boat towing service franchise in Alaska just opened in Kachemak Bay. Sea Tow Cook Inlet is open under the ownership of Dave and Peggy Cloninger of Seldovia. Dave has been a charter boat operator out of Seldovia for 20 years and says that his is the ideal location for a towboat to provide service in Kachemak Bay and lower Cook Inlet. Their operating radius covers from the Barren Islands to Ninilchik.

With an annual Sea Tow membership fee of $149, all services to member recreational boaters are provided free. Commercial boaters, including charter boat and commercial fishing boat operators, can also join for the yearly $149 fee and then will be charged a sharply reduced rate of $60 per hour for services. Sea Tow will respond to calls from non-members but the service fee charged non-member commercial and recreational users is $200 per hour.

Cloninger is running a fast Twin Vee catamaran, capable of 40 knot speed, and is equipped with a radio direction finder and other electronics. He provides towing to home port, towing dock to dock, fuel drops, jump starts, disentanglement, and similar services. He can tow vessels up to 65 feet in length.

To contact Cloninger call (907) 234-0100 or email seatowcookinlet@seatow.com.
Survey Indicates Wildlife Disturbances

The majority of respondents to a recent Charter Log survey say they have observed other boats causing disturbance to marine wildlife.

The survey went out in the last issue of the Log, and to date 58 respondents have returned their surveys. Of those, only 17 answered that they had not seen behavior by other boat operators that might disturb or injure marine wildlife.

Large marine mammals (whales) were most susceptible to this behavior, followed by small marine mammals (seals and sea otters), and seabirds. Only three respondents reported observing behaviors harmful to beach invertebrates.

Thirty percent of respondents stated that they have written policies on responsible marine wildlife viewing behavior, and the same percentage (30) said they would like to learn more about wildlife viewing-related disturbances and strategies.

A much-discussed subject among wildlife viewing advocates and businesses is an identification system that would indicate to potential customers which operators have committed to responsible viewing practices.

Many people believe that there is a sufficient number of “green” tourists who would book only, or would prefer to book, with operators who are so designated. However, among respondents to the survey only 29 percent believed that their businesses would benefit from such designation; 41 percent replied that they didn’t know if such a designation would help or not.

A slight majority (54 percent) indicated an interest in participating in developing a statewide marine wildlife viewing best practices program.

Most Charter Log readers are sportfishing charter operators or fishing guides, so the replies and relatively low response rate could be interpreted as indicating that most operators don’t feel that wildlife viewing issues are pertinent to them.

A statewide best practices program is in development and those who indicated their interest in participating will be contacted and asked to review and offer comments on the content of the program.

IPHc Lowers Halibut Limits

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) completed its annual meeting in Bellevue, Washington in January by recommending a reduction in the overall limit on halibut landings.

Total catch limit for U.S. and Canadian waters in 2006 is set at 69.68 million pounds, a 5.3 percent reduction from the 2005 limit. The limit is still one of the highest in history and reflects a healthy resource throughout most of the Pacific halibut’s range.

The commission believes that stocks remain strong in Areas 2A through 3A but have declined to the west, from Area 3B through Area 4. Last year commission staff recommended harvest rates of 22.5 percent in Areas 2A through 3A and 20 percent for Areas 3B through 4E. This year the staff has recommended the harvest rate be reduced to 15 percent for Areas 4B through E.

Catch limit recommendation for Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) is 10.63 million pounds and for Area 3A (central Gulf of Alaska) is 25.2 million pounds.

The IPHC makes halibut fishery management recommendations to the governments of the United States and Canada, which become regulations when adopted by the two governments. The commissioners voted not to adopt a proposal that would have set a legal size limit, which would have applied to all halibut fisheries including sport and sport charter fisheries.

File a Trip Plan on an EPIRB

Here’s a safety tip from the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association. According to an article in AMSEA’s spring newsletter, you can use NOAA’s online EPIRB registration service to file a trip plan.

As you know, all 406 mHz EPIRBs and personal locator beacons (PLBs) are required to be registered with NOAA. Only with current registration does the EPIRB transmit accurate data to potential rescuers in an emergency. Registration must be done before the unit is first put into service, and must be updated and renewed every two years. Registration can be done by mail, fax, or online.

The online registration menu contains an Additional Data section, which is where you can file a trip plan. You can indicate your route, the dates the plan applies, and information about your group and equipment.

According to Charlie Bond, author of the article, the plan can be filed in about five minutes. The site for registering, re-registering, and filing trip plans is www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov.

IDs and Fingerprintas Required

The Coast Guard has implemented new rules that require all applicants for new licenses, raise of grade, or license renewal to undergo identity checks and have fingerprints taken for a criminal record review.

The interim rule became effective Jan. 13 of this year. Final rulemaking will occur following review of public comment, which closed April 13.

The phone answering machine at the Coast Guard Regional Exam Center in Anchorage states that all applicants now have to appear in person for fingerprinting, and proof of identity and citizenship must be presented prior to fingerprinting.

Acceptable forms of proof of identity include a state driver’s license or state ID card. Forms of proof of citizenship include valid Merchant Mariner’s Document, valid U.S. passport, original birth certificate, or valid certificate of naturalization. For more information call the REC at (907) 271-6732.
Streamlined Camp Permit Application

Operators of temporary remote small camps, such as remote sportfishing, hunting, and ecotourism camps, now have a streamlined process for acquiring the necessary Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation approvals.

Temporary small camps, defined as housing no more than 24 persons at a time averaged over seven days, need to apply for the authorization to cover their drinking water, solid waste disposal, domestic wastewater treatment and disposal, and food service activities.

The new streamlined application packet is 28 pages, most of which is information such as best management practices intended to help camp operators stay within the law while protecting client health and safety. The actual application is only a page and a half. The packet is called 2006 Temporary Camp Practices, Consolidated Application and Checklist and is available from the DEC Temporary Camp Coordinator in Fairbanks at (907) 451-2100 or www.dec.state.ak.us/eh/fss/public/public_facilities.htm. The annual temporary camp authorization fee is $230.

A national study of tow vehicles and trailers, including boat trailers, reveals some disturbing information about towing dangers on the highway.

According to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, there are 57,000 accidents annually involving passenger vehicles towing trailers, and they cause an average of 365 deaths and more than 14,000 injuries.

In the study, outlined in a recent issue of Great Lakes Boater, some 500 safety inspections were conducted on campers and trailers, including boat trailers, around the country. Among the findings:

- Half of the rigs didn’t use recommended locking devices for securing coupler and hitch.
- Some 47 percent of boat trailers didn’t have safety chains properly crossed under the coupler where they could catch a trailer if it comes unhitched.
- Most boat trailers were not properly leveled, which can cause fishtailing and loss of control.
- More than half of the rigs had inadequately installed and maintained electrical systems, and 17 percent of boat trailer electrical systems were in poor or extremely poor condition.
- More than 40 percent of trailers had tires in moderate or worse condition, and ten percent of boat trailers had tires in poor or extremely poor condition.
- Security of cargo in and on 49 percent of boats, including loading and tie-downs, was ranked a moderate or worse.

No Alaska-specific data were provided in the report, but the high salt content of Alaska waters is known to contribute to rapid corrosion of trailer frames, electrical systems, and wheel bearings. Furthermore, Alaska operators may have less access to information on best practices for boat trailering than boaters in more populous regions.

Passenger Weight Revisited

The Coast Guard is requesting comments from industry on proposals to change the figures for passenger weights used in calculating Subchapter T and K vessel certificates. Although the measure applies only to certified vessels, the implications of increased passenger weight also pertain to uninspected passenger vessel (UPV) stability.

As noted in the Summer 05 Charter Log, the National Transportation Safety Board has determined that passenger weight has been a factor in recent accidents, and that passenger weight figures used for calculating vessel stability are out of date. According to a Centers for Disease Control report, in the last 40 years the average body weight of Americans has increased by about 15 percent, or more than 24 pounds.

The Coast Guard has used 160 pounds as the average weight for calculating vessel stability for capacity but is now recommending that the figure be raised to 185 pounds for a passenger mix of men and women.

The change, in combination with noted vessel alterations, could result in a reduction in passenger capacity for some classes of certified vessels. Pontoon vessels, in particular, may see their passenger certifications reduced by as much as 22-43 percent.

Uninspected passenger vessels don’t get certificates of inspection and are limited to six passengers irrespective of weight. However, a 15 percent increase in passenger weight, in combination with other vessel weight distribution changes, could render some UPVs dangerously unstable.

For more details and to submit comments to the Coast Guard on the proposal, titled USCG-2005-22732, consult this Web site: dms.dot.gov. Deadline is May 26.
Commish Can Now Halt Crew Catches

The Commissioner of Fish and Game now can issue an emergency order (EO) prohibiting fishing guides and charter boat crew (including skippers) from fishing or retaining fish while carrying paying passengers. The authority to issue the EO was granted by the Board of Fish in March. The provision allows the commissioner to prohibit crew catches if necessary to address conservation concerns or to keep charter catches from exceeding guideline harvest levels or allocations. The measure is in response to concerns about the halibut charter industry in IPHC halibut Areas 2C and 3A exceeding the guideline harvest levels (GHL) set by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The commissioner may issue an EO that prevents charter vessel crew from retaining certain species while clients are on board, and/or limits the number of lines that may be fished to the number of paying clients on board.

Prohibiting skipper and crew retention is one of the measures considered by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for reducing the charter industry overage on the halibut GHL, but the council has not yet enacted measures for accomplishing that goal.

Preston Resigns from Council AP

Juneau charter operator Jim Preston has tendered his resignation from the advisory panel (AP) to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, effective immediately.

Preston is the only charter industry member of the AP and has served since 2002. He succeeded Bob Ward, who held that position from 1997 to 2001, a period characterized by development of plans to control growth of the halibut charter industry. Preston is known for keeping industry participants well informed of developments at the council through his email listserv.

In his resignation letter Preston cited no specific dissatisfactions with the council or AP but simply said that he had planned all along to leave the position at the end of this year, and with the timing of issues what they are, he thought it reasonable to resign earlier so that a replacement could be selected and brought up to speed prior to anticipated crucial votes next winter.

He explains that he will be unable to attend the June meeting and feels it would be unjustified for the council to pay the costs of sending him to Dutch Harbor in October when no charter issues are expected to be discussed.

His letter expresses his belief that the council will vote on a halibut charter moratorium early next year. He says that if a moratorium vote is not taken earlier than next February, a moratorium won’t be implemented before 2009, if at all.

In his email announcement to his readers Preston made the case for a statewide organization reflecting the common interests of a diverse industry. He suggests that operators agree to assess themselves a per-seat fee to hire an industry advocate. An AP member is not the same as a lobbyist, he says.

He encourages other charter operators to apply for the AP seat he is vacating. That entails sending a resume and letter of interest to Chris Oliver, executive director of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Southcentral Freshwater Reg Changes

The Board of Fish in December passed a number of freshwater sportfishing regulation changes for Southcentral Alaska that may affect guides operating on those waters.

Included are the following:
• Arctic grayling fishing in the Gulkana River upstream of Paxson Lake is catch-and-release only. However, two fish, only one of which may be over 14 inches, may be retained. The same two-fish limit also pertains to Summit Lake and Gunn Creek.
• Bait is allowed in flowing waters of the Tonsina River drainage downstream of Tonsina Lake.
• Bait is allowed in Paxson and Summit lakes Nov. 1-April 15. The bag and possession limit for lake trout is reduced from two to one.
• Additional changes bring area waters into a conservative management category, and bring other regulations into compliance with various trout management plans.

These are brief summaries only. Be sure to study the new regulation booklet for details.

Fire Extinguishers Recalled

The Coast Guard has issued a notice that some fire extinguishers made by Strike First Corporation have been recalled. The notice comes by way of the Alaska Marine Safety Education Association newsletter.

The 2.5 pound and 5 pound dry chemical extinguishers assembled between Dec. 2002 and Feb. 2004 are covered by the recall. The company has determined that valve stem seats are oversize and may prevent the extinguisher from discharging properly when the lever is activated. The company is providing free retrofit kits for those units.

For details see www.strikefirstusa.com/bulletin002.htm or contact Klaus Wahle of Coast Guard Headquarters Life Saving and Fire Safety Standards Division at (202) 267-0256.
Oregon Captain Charged with Manslaughter

An Oregon charter fishing captain has been charged under an obscure nineteenth century law in the deaths of three passengers when his boat sank in rough seas.

Richard J. Oba of Winchester was charged with three counts of seaman’s manslaughter, and faces a maximum of 30 years in prison if convicted. The manslaughter charge, though historically little used, has been applied in a few cases recently where licensed mariners have been found at fault in accidents causing the deaths of their passengers.

Oba was skipper of the 38 foot Bertram Sydney Mae II on Sept. 19, 2005 on a charter albacore fishing trip with four passengers on board. Although the weather was calm in the morning, afternoon winds built dangerous seas on the Umpqua River bar, prompting the Coast Guard to close the river entrance to all recreational and uninspected passenger vessel traffic.

According to press reports, Oba repeatedly requested by radio that the Coast Guard lift the transit ban but the agency refused and advised him to proceed instead to Coos Bay. About 8:20 that evening a wave estimated at 12 feet high broke over the stern of the Sydney Mae II, throwing occupants into the sea, and a second breaker caused the boat to sink. Three passengers perished in the accident; Oba and one passenger survived.

The decision to file manslaughter charges revolved around two factors: the decision to approach the bar after being repeatedly told by the Coast Guard that it was closed, and the fact that the skipper alone was wearing a life jacket. The surviving passenger apparently told investigators that not only had the skipper not instructed his passengers to don PFDs, but also hadn’t informed them of their location.

Trial on the manslaughter charges was originally set for March 21 but has been postponed to July.

New Alcohol Testing Rule in Effect

Effective June 20, a new two-hour alcohol testing requirement is in place for all individuals directly involved in a serious marine incident. The 32-hour rule still applies for drug testing.

The regulation requires that individuals whose “order, action or failure to act is determined to be, or cannot be ruled out as, a causative factor in the events leading to or causing a serious marine incident” take the test.

Serious marine incidents are defined to include accidents that involve the following.

- One or more deaths.
- Injury to a crew member, passenger, or other person that requires professional medical treatment beyond first aid, or that renders a crew member unfit to perform routine duties.
- Property damage in excess of $10,000.
- Discharge of 10,000 gallons or more of oil.
- Discharge of a reportable amount of hazardous substances.
- A mariner involved in incidents described above is required to take either a breath or saliva test within two hours of the incident, unless prevented from doing so by safety concerns directly related to the incident.

A Coast Guard spokesman says that the rule means boats are required to carry test kits on board, unless they are able to convince a boarding officer that they can make it to a testing location within two hours of leaving the area where they operate.

The approved breath analyzer kits are reported by the Coast Guard to cost about $393 each and the saliva kits about $97.

However, the National Association of Charterboat Operators is referring its members to a company that sells single-application saliva test kits over the Internet. One type sells for $10 plus postage and another for $5 plus postage. Check the NACO Web site for more information, or go to www.charterboatdrugtest.com. NACO says the price is for members only but your editor ordered a kit on the Web site and was not asked for NACO member number.

The Coast Guard has issued a new Form CG-2692B to be used in reporting the results of alcohol and drug testing following a serious marine incident. It is available from the Coast Guard’s Marine Safety and Fishing Vessel Safety offices.

Sportfish Hatchery Bonds Sell

The State of Alaska is selling tax-free revenue bonds to fund new fish hatcheries to support anglers.

The state is issuing $66.9 million in bonds, according to the Anchorage Daily News. They will fund hatcheries in the Anchorage and Fairbanks area. Resident anglers will pay them off with a $9 surcharge and fishing licenses, while nonresidents will pay an additional $10 to $45, depending on the length of time their licenses are valid.

The new hatcheries are expected to open in 2009 and are intended to double hatchery production of salmon, trout, char, and grayling for stocking in Southcentral and Interior streams and lakes.

The sale is believed to be the first ever by a government for financing that is to be secured by sportfishing license fees.

The move in part was necessitated by the military because the two major sportfishing hatcheries currently are on Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base. Those hatcheries in the past used water heated by waste heat from power plants on the bases, but the military has taken those plants out of service.

The bond revenues will build a hatchery on the Chena River in Fairbanks (with additional federal funds), and an Anchorage hatchery on Ship Creek. In addition, some of the money will help support nonprofit hatcheries in Southeast.

The plan is based on 20 year repayment, but could occur in as little as ten years, depending on license sales. The surcharge will sunset as soon as the bonds are repaid.
The euphoria expressed by many over the North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s decision in December to scrap the halibut charter IFQ program and start over to design a new program for controlling growth in the charter sector has given way to intense disagreement about what that program should be.

Written testimony submitted to the council prior to its April meeting shows several factions emerging in the conflict. Many of the letters were reproduced form letters that used the same language to make the same points.

Commercial fishermen are virtually unanimous in supporting strict guideline harvest levels (GHL) control measures, and the Separate Accounting proposal submitted by the Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association. Under Separate Accounting, any overage by the charter sector would be made up by the charter sector, rather than being deducted from the total allowable catch, as it is currently.

Charter operators and recreational fishermen are far less able to form consensus. Some lament the apparent demise of the IFQ, or urge the council to adopt a modified IFQ option.

Many who opposed the IFQ on the grounds that it would have violated free access rights are advocating immediate adoption of a moratorium, and some say the moratorium should lead to permanent limited entry. Some are adamantly opposed to a moratorium in that it would violate free access rights.

Some recommend measures, such as prohibiting skipper and crew catches, which they say would bring the fishery into alignment with the GHL. Others believe the GHL should be ignored until entry controls are in place, others think the GHL should slide up and down with halibut abundance, some support separate GHLs for inside and outside waters, and others think the GHL should be scrapped altogether. The only point on which they generally agree is rejection of the Separate Accounting proposal.

Some long-time charter operators, whether IFQ supporters or not, feel betrayed by the council in its December action in that they had made decisions to forego expansion of their own businesses pending implementation of the IFQ program, only to see scores of newcomers flood into the fishery in the interim.

Copies of written public comments are available from the council.