

**Question: How many fish caught makes a good experience—are we over fishing? What’s too many a) sport fishers? b) charter fishers?**

Most of this question is subjective and could only be answered definitively through a comprehensive survey of Sitka residents and Sitka charter clients. However, I did what I could by talking to a cross section of Sitka residents.

**Key points:** How many fish caught makes a good experience?

Charter fishery

1. How many fish caught makes a good experience varies widely by client. Some are happy with one fish; others are satisfied with one fish if that one fish is a king salmon; and still others want to reach bag limits.
2. Expectations significantly affect a client’s measure of “a good experience.” Advertising, “weigh-in charts,” and especially charter captains influence expectations. In some charter destinations (Hawaii, Costa Rica) clients are not allowed to retain fish; those fish are the property of the charter captain or are released. Sitka charter clients expect to retain fish to eat throughout the winter because salmon and halibut are delicious and freeze well. Traditions also affect client expectations (i.e., many charter clients are repeat customers and want to take home as much or more fish than during their last visit).
3. Cruise ship charter clients expect, or are satisfied with less fish than lodge clients.
4. Sitka’s second largest lodge limits clients to two 50 pound fish boxes. 100 pounds of fish fillets translates into 1# fish 3 times per week all year round. According to charter operator associated with this lodge, repeat customers frequently indicate that they can just barely finished that much fish in a year (for reference: ADFG subsistence division estimates that Sitka’s subsistence average annual per capita consumption of **all** subsistence resources is 209 pounds. This includes venison, marine mammals, plants, eggs, seabirds as well as seafood.)

Sport fishery

1. Sitka sport fishermen want to go home with a fish to eat—one or two seems to satisfy most, but my sample size was very limited.

**Key points:** Are we overfishing??

1. With a few exceptions (abalone, certain crab sp.), Sitka’s marine resources are generally considered to be healthy and abundant. However, localized depletion in the near-town area of halibut, ling cod and rockfish has been noted by local fishermen and fishery managers. Sitka Sound has been closed to directed commercial rockfish fishing since 1987 and ling cod since 2000. Charter operators have been forced to run farther from town to provide clients with a reasonable opportunity to catch fish (10 years ago it was rare to see charter operators on the outer coast of Kruzof Island; now charter vessels regularly travel to the outer coast and beyond (Khaz Bay and Whale Bay) (Pete Wyland, pers. comm.).

**Key Points:** What’s too many sport/charter fishers?

From the commercial perspective: too many charter fishers would not a problem if charter harvest remained within established allocations and did not erode the commercial quota or compromise resource health.

From the sport perspective: too many charter fishers is not a problem provided sport fishermen can still catch fish for themselves and their family and can find times and places to fish when the charter fleet is not present.

From the charter perspective: Some Sitka charter operators consider charter numbers in 1990 “enough.” Others have supported a moratorium on new entrants for 10 years. Most agree that a moratorium is needed in order for charter harvest to remain within the charter allocation for halibut and king salmon.

Sources:

ADFG subsistence report, 2004.

Personal communications:

Various commercial fishermen

Charter operators: Kent Hall, Wayne and Vicki Brown, Tom Ohaus (sp??), Pete Wyland .

Sport fishermen: Gary Gouker, Joanna Perensovich, Tom Budd