

## Excerpt from May 23 Stakeholder Meeting Notes

### Presentation

Linda Behnken is prepared to continue the presentation that began at the May 1 meeting on the topic:

*What are the various trends and status of the visitor – charter/subsistence/sport/commercial fish allocation? What is the effect of “visitor fishing” on fish allocations in Sitka area? (from Community category)*

On May 1, a panel of experts began the presentation on the first part of this question, but didn't include information about salmon and halibut fishing. Linda will present on salmon and halibut, also impact on visitor impact. She says one of the Stakeholders representing the charter fleet had some additional questions that she wanted to see answered in Linda's report, so Linda says she included those at the end.

Effect of visitor fishing –

How halibut quotas are set: IPHC (halibut commission) figures out the available biomass of halibut and then figures out what can be harvested on a sustainable annual basis. They deduct bycatch, wastage, subsistence estimates, sport needs, and charter harvest, and then what's left becomes the commercial quota. As any of the other areas grow, what's left for commercial changes.

In 1998, the north pacific fishery management council set upper bound on growth. One piece that was growing rapidly was charter; since then, their upper bound has been exceeded in last 6 years. It hasn't been managed effectively so far. There are other ideas about how to manage, such as having the ability to buy more quota as individuals or collectively as an industry. They're also looking at moratorium on charter fishing. Bob Chadwick presented at the last SH meeting on status and trends of resident vs. nonresident fishing in Area D. The resident harvest has decreased [see handout for details]; nonresident increased; there is a clear trend from resident to nonresident. Sitka charter had McDowell do a study on who are the people that come to charter – they found it to be primarily male, high income, west coast.

Key take-home points from Linda: [see handout]

Right now, the city does fund SCVB (visitor bureau) to bring more visitors into the town, therefore the city is promoting bringing more visitors in, having more visitors is driving the reallocation.

Tina's questions that Linda included:

Halibut bycatch numbers – area 2C, 340,000 lbs;

Wastage – info from commercial log book data – if it's too small or injured or dead, we're required to report.

What is expected of biomass over time – robust now, at historic highs, but likely trending down.

Commercial halibut catch in Sitka are over time – IHPC has that info, they made it available to Sitka LAMP, they're supposed to provide this on annual basis to Fish and Game, but they haven't. When I called them a month ago, they said they would, and recently they said they have given it to F&G, but I haven't gotten it out of F&G yet, but I will, and will bring to the SH.

Linda continues with a presentation on salmon status and trends:

Overview on Chinook and Coho; [see handout for details]

Nonresident catch increasing, resident decreasing

Commercial quotas have been going up; the troll allocation was reduced in 05-06, but still relatively high; with Coho they don't try to determine ahead of time.

70% of charter operators have addresses outside of Alaska.

Pacific Salmon Treaty – 1985 between Canada and US to protect stocks and divvy resources; at first only focused on commercial trolling, gradual erosion; expanded to include all groups; in 92 they “uncoupled” into own fisheries, done a lot to alleviate some tensions;

Split is 80% troll, 20% sport fleet;

Linda has reached the end of her presentation. Matthew asks the SH:

*Does everyone understand what has been presented?*

- SH: Do you have numbers to back up the statement about the rapid growth of charter?
- LB: Do have numbers, not on top of head – in 98, 25% allowance, gone up to
  - SH: The reason for the GHL was because of the growth of the charter fleet?
- LB: Yes – can get those to you. All from IHPC.
  - SH: Preferably in a chart. The figures I have don't say that.
- LB: For 2C? That's what we're talking about.

Another SH mentions that people that aren't involved with fishing may not understand what GHL is, or what a 25% buffer means – those numbers may be confusing. She asks Linda explains that GHL means Guideline Harvest Level.

The SH asserts that this is a contentious issue, and the Stakeholders definitely need to hear another perspective on the same topic, specifically they need to hear from the sport side, since this presentation is being given by a longliner.

Linda goes on to explain more about GHL:

Allocations are set for halibut – when you have any one of those pieces deducted (sport, charter), it affects the overall. The commercial fishers asked the halibut council to come up with a way to allocate from one sector to another.

Of the options to reallocate that were on the table, the council arrives at using what's been done for Chinook – establishing GHL based on charter's historic catch prior to that date. Plus they set it upper limit 25% over that baseline as a buffer for potential growth. The charter operators made it clear that they book clients in advance, they need a traditional season of historic length, so this part of the regulation is handled differently for the charter fleet. It was also established that if the fleet goes over allowance, measures would kick in to slow down the harvest. But for 3 years in 2C, it went over the allowance, and nothing was done. Council is revisiting this issues, and creating new measures to low down the harvest, such as that skippers and crew can't retain fish when out with client; and setting an annual limit on # of fish a client can take home. These are not officially in place yet, but will be next year. This was never meant to be a long-term fix, but a bridge to a more permanent solution to allow quota to move back and forth between the two fleets; that's why the charter fleet went into individual quota system, now being reorganized; charter wants to limit boats because new boats influence the overall also.

SH question: Where does the data come from for charter boats?

Census at dock, try to meet representative sample where boats are landing fish, also statewide survey; log book recently reinstated.

Matthew again asks: *Does everyone understand what's been presented?*

Yes.

Linda did a good job with GHL.

*Is there anything to strike from the report to accept it?*

The income level of the fishermen is irrelevant.

Anyone disagree? No. That detail is struck.

Clarifying Q: on the key point about reallocation, it's not an allocation between resident and nonresident, it's just that nonresidents are catching more. Residents can still go catch what they want, right?

A: yes, but actual numbers show a trend down. It's not an allocation, residents can still catch what they want, it's the harvest numbers.

SH comment: I would strike the "reallocation" word to "gradual shift in harvest from halibut or salmon between resident or nonresident"

SH question: Is the idea with that also that effort is the constant? Or did residents just quit fishing?

A: If you look at annual statewide harvest – king salmon resident harvest has gone up; resident days for 1993: 31,000 resident angler days, in 2004, 27,000. Nonresident harvests have increased.

SH comment: Halibut sport days – recently set subsistence for halibut, can put out longline for subsistence,

A: But really only affected last year's numbers

SH comment: I'd like to strike the portion about the mission of SCVB being to bring visitors to Sitka – that's extraneous,

SH question: What is the mission of the SCVB?

A: Can't say exactly, but talked with Philip, and it's basically to bring visitors to Sitka

SH: But you're comparing it to fish allocations, that's unnecessary.

*Matthew: Anyone opposed to striking the mission statement from the report?*

Several hands go up. One person comments that we're nitpicking. "We're not here to debate this issue, and it's not going where it needs to go. Let's deal with it later, and leave this the way it is."

A SH says she wants to strike the parenthetical comment saying that most charter clients are wealthy males. Several others point out that that detail has already been struck.

The same SH says she also takes offense to the statement that the growth in the charter industry affects the commercial. She points out that all those areas have an impact, not just visitor impacts. "In every year we're talking about overages from charter fleet, we did not meet or exceed halibut left on the table that was not caught. You're blaming the visitors for the erosion of the commercial catch, but all other user groups have an effect on commercial catch." She's referring to the part in Linda's report about the growth in the reallocation of sport halibut from resident to nonresident. She comments that it's about effort level, not allocation. Another SH comments that that phrase has been changed already. The first SH says Linda is still blaming the visitor industry for harvest levels. A different SH comments that she feels there are less fish, and that residents don't have the time to put in the effort to try. Someone else rephrases and says the fact is that resident effort has gone down, and we don't know why exactly.

The group attempts to restate this phrase in Linda's report about resident vs. nonresident harvest to "growth in visitor industry is one factor that has impacted a gradual shift in harvest of halibut from resident to nonresident in Sitka area in sport-caught, and a gradual shift of commercial to charter.

Kayla will send out this rewritten statement for SH approval in Linda's report.