

Excerpt from May 1 Stakeholder meeting notes:

Presentation from Tory O'Connell and Bob Chadwick

Requested information: What are the various positions on the visitor – charter/subsistence/sport/commercial fish allocation. What is the effect of “visitor fishing” on fish allocations in Sitka area?

Linda Behnken introduces the topic, saying that the Steering Committee suggested putting together a panel to address this question. As Linda talked about the question within her committee, they decided to change the wording from “various positions” to “various trends and status of impacts.” Matthew asks the SH if anyone is opposed to that word altering – no one is.

Tory is a biologist with the Department of Fish and Game. She introduces her presentation as an overview of some of the resource allocation decisions that have been made and why. She focuses primarily on lingcod and rockfish and how local fisheries have been affected in Sitka Sound and outer Baranof Island.
[see presentation handout]

From Tory's presentation:

Lingcod was the first species we hit a wall on in terms of allocation.

Longline fishery – got very good at catching fast, became concerned about stock management – we did a closure in the winter,

Management wasn't effective – we hadn't incorporated recreational catch into the big picture – we tend to minimize the effects of rec fishing on stocks, but the charter catch was 40%, and a lot of that was coming from areas we had closed, this was something we hadn't considered.

Asked board of fish for help to include rec fishing in the divisions

They took it another step – looked at it regionwide through advisory committees

Came up with a 5-year harvest history average the divided by who took the fish. Those percentages determined the allocations for the users (%s in handout).

This % varied by management area – depended on where it had been fished.

Current management is complicated – it's divided by how fish are caught.

It has improved since we implemented these.

Since we put in these quotes, the commercial harvest has been low – easier to control

Sport fish harder to control – not actually controlling effort, in fact they've overharvested their allocation.

Rockfish:

Cannot be released (lingcod can), also habitat specific, don't migrate much. They live a long time, hard to manage.

Commercial – managed by est. total takes from all fisheries, if there's room, allow for directed fishery.

Board of fish – about to hit max;

Bycatch: could shut down other fisheries also.

We want to reduce catch of all these species and accurately document.

Asked board of fish to help – they decide to look at 5-yr harvest history, 84% of rockfish assigned to all commercial, 16% to charter.

Unlike lingcod, can't release – need to be spot-on in data we're collecting,

Not easy to know how many fish there are and what's too much – can't ignore extraction.

Tory directs SH to a National Academy of Science report.
Allocation is important to stock assessment.

Bob Chadwick is a sportfish manager biologist
From Bob's presentation [also see handout]:
Additional tools we're implementing through DSR – reduction in bag limits, annual limits on yellow eye, area closures as needed
Also added creel person to program,
New requirement in log books for charter – included space for yelloweye catch and release; also record by angler's license number
Other fisheries regulated: king salmon, halibut (federal)

3 ways we track harvest mortality effort: statewide harvest survey – subsample # of license holders through mail, they report their catch for the year
Creel program – estimate king stocks, expand for coho, halibut, rock, ling
log books required by charter and freshwater guides
also sometimes we have remote onsite creel – 2000-2001 at Redoubt; others.

Statewide survey: harvest for Area D Baranof and Chich; majority in Sitka
Marine angler days – not talking about freshwater.

In 1993 – started asking residency

Q: you send out a survey to people that get licensed?

A: we subsurvey all licensees.

Q: the %s in your report – do they include subsistence?

A: only sportfish.

Board of Fish – King Salmon report (handout)

of registered charter vessels – 291 in Sitka area, includes freshwater boats

Q: broken down by resident and non-residents?

A: I'll try to find that answer for you.

Next page: active vessels

Every vessel required to log when it charters – if they turn in at least one log from 1/2 day, they're considered active – there were 214 active vessels in Sitka.

- 16% fished 1-5 days;
- 27% 6-25 days;
- 36% 51-100 days;
- 5% over 100 days per year.

Q: Is this info submitted voluntarily?

A: it is enforced – they are required to fill it out daily, send it in weekly. We managers have been directed to walk the docks and check log books this summer. It's not to their benefit to not send them in. Fines if they're late. Can cross-check with creel.

Re: Residency for charter boats – we don't ask that, the only way we can determine would be their mailing address, but that doesn't necessarily mean anything – trying to cross reference with other lists.

Clarify: By resident, you mean resident of Alaska?

A: yes.

Matthew then refers back to the requested information item that these presentations address. He asks if everyone understands what's been presented.

Q: did the change in the boundaries have an effect – gain/lose activity?

A: lost Elfin Cove – 12-13 boats during that time. Little drop in # of registered vessels.

Q: There's two different numbers for the number of sport fishing vessels - 291, 214?

A: 291 registered, only 214 operated.

Q: Do you have any problem with reporting? Are the lodges honestly reporting?

A: I'd like to assume everyone is honest. There's always that question on any fishery, in any walk of life. If someone tells us or it doesn't make sense we follow up on it.

Q: Are sport fishers allowed to fish everywhere?

A: for the most, yes

Q: no matter the size?

A: rod limit of 6 rods – charter can't fish

Q: how does it work when commercial boat has IFQ, also takes on charter people?

Allowed to take commercial and charter? Laws on that?

A: can't have sport caught and commercial caught of the same species

Q: But you can for different species? I've heard of boats selling one-day crew license and taking tourists out

A: certainly anyone can buy crew license

Q: Guided sport fishers are required to turn in log; how do you know what commercial fishers retain and catch?

A: Other ways beyond enforcement offices – there's the transfer of product to processor, there's a secondary check at the dock. In terms of discard – for the most part self-reported, also have regs on that. Vessels over 60 ft have mandatory observer. Also there's a very intensive sampling – generally there are biologists on the dock counting fish. Not perfect, but we've had mandatory log books, for at least 20 years. There are severe penalties for not reporting.

Q: How is charter halibut fishing managed inside LAMP?

A: Vessel limit of 35 ft. No fishing in LAMP during summer; shoulder season under 35 ft allowed in Sitka Sound with limit; over 35 never allowed.

Commercial IFQ fishery, very time regulated. More micro-managed.

Q: Was there a reassessment of rockfish habitat that happened recently?

A: In this area, there was an increase in available habitat; SE overall there was a decrease. Expected to continue changing – hard to predict.

Q: Halibut – selling just halibut on the boat; does 10% of their weight come off the bycatch of yelloweye – every pound of halibut 1/10th is yelloweye?

A: look at halibut survey data, that they're just looking for halibut – over the course of a season, not every catch – don't have micromanagement skills to fine tune that yet – in next year or two, hoping to just use fish count; think we overestimate harvest and impacts halibut, but it's better for the fishery in the long run to overestimate the harvest.

Q: Are subsistence takes incorporated?

A: even harder to get a handle on those numbers – no reporting requirements. That is an issue and will affect resources. Subsistence has priority – rather than being spot-on in our

estimates, probably overestimate in other areas. Cannot manage fisheries without being able to account for fish coming out.

Q: Bycatch for halibut and rockfish – not for sport fish?

A: that's one of the reasons the board decided to make this allocation. Just like in halibut, problem with angler responsibility – if you're in a high bycatch area you should move – it will affect your fishing in the future if there's a lot of bycatch.

Tory recommends to the SH that they should look at Pacific Fisheries website – lots of information there.

Q: If the charter operators have log discrepancy and the operator says it's my the client – do you buy that?

A: It's hard to buy that; charter is the guide and aid

Q: For subsistence fishing – don't we have to turn in a clear report of our take? Why not required for halibut, etc.

A: Halibut is a federal fishery.

Q (to Bob): Does your log book provide enough definition that you could pinpoint high areas of bycatch to steer charters away from that area?

A: it strikes fear in charter fleet to talk about closing areas; should be able to curtail and reduce mortality; I've promised charter fleet that before we close, we will talk about ways to do that with them.

Q: What about the education part for charters – we've worked a lot with longliners to recognize those areas and stay out them

A: We're providing rockfish ID pamphlets in log books for charters now.

At this point, Linda Behnken comes forward to present some information on the subsistence angle of this question (another expert was scheduled to present, but unable to attend, so Linda is providing some of his information).

[see subsistence handout]

Overall picture of subsistence: Average subsistence take is 209 lbs per person per year; includes venison, plants, kelp, eggs, plus seafood

20% of households participate

Halibut – never defined as subsistence species until 2003; considered sport for personal use in federal language – new measures implemented to liberalize what kind of gear could be used; Sitka is in area 2C for halibut – 16.8% of total halibut in 2C taken in Sitka; 2C reports 60% of state total.

2003 – change in how subsistence halibut monitored – resulted in estimated double of sub halibut take – probably not huge increase, just better estimate.

LAMP area – defined by local residents through collaborative process – less people than this process, but it took 5 years.

Q: how do you know where they're subsistence fishing?

A: recording in survey process – for Sitka LAMP they try hard to get better estimates.

Q: decrease from 2003-2004 in LAMP; why?

A: no change in gear; may be result of effectiveness of fishing? Certainly concern about allowing skates of gear and that affect – collaborative group met to talk about LAMP –

through consensus, agreed to limit hydraulics in summer, and number of hooks on skate – should come into effect sometime this summer – should further control

LAMP = Local Area Management Plan – something the fishers of Sitka (all groups) met after concerns that this area was depleted; started before subsistence was defined as “subsistence.” When subsistence definition came in and skates of gear allowed, the group reconvened, worked on further restrictions for subsistence gear in 2C and specifically in LAMP;

LAMP covers Sitka Sound to Biorka, and part of Salisbury Sound. Sitka is the only town that managed to do a local plan like that.

Q: Do you know trends before 2003 for halibut?

A: Don't have that with me. No huge trends – status quo.

Matthew focuses SH attention to the first half of the question on the board:

What are the various positions on the visitor – charter/subsistence/sport/commercial fish allocation?

Everyone indicates they understand what has been presented.

He breaks down the debriefing based on the three presentations:

Anything on the commercial report to be stricken?

- The line about how availability of data from sport fish resulted in fishery closure – is that to say the sport fish harvest is to blame?
 - Tory – availability of the data from the sport fishers did make a difference; not to say that it's their fault, just that we could include that information.

Any points on that report, in addition to what's on the record, important to retain, to show we have a common understanding?

Sport presentation – anything to strike? No.

Any additional key points to retain?

- Right now, they're not able to determine residency of charter operations.
- Careful about speculation on numbers – make sure our information includes the numbers of days the vessels fished.
- Other presenters are working on some of these issues.

Q: The people who have asked questions about resident v. nonresident – you're asking about charter guides, but don't we also need that information for commercial and other fishing?

A: We're looking at local v. nonlocal business in general

Comment (from charter guide): I'm feeling kind of put under the gun – if one sector is being put under the gun...if we're trying to get info for all sectors about fisheries and the extraction of a resource that affects us – if we're asking questions about residencies about guides; shouldn't we also want to know about commercial nonresidents and how much they take away?

Another SH indicates she has that information.

SH comment: My recollection is that asking that question about residency was not about fish, but about Sitka economy, wanting to know on a broader scale what revenues leave the community.

Back to sport presentation – what do we need to retain:

- Halibut est and yelloweye est – stocks are up, but availability close to town is down, especially with halibut

- We haven't been presented information on what's happening currently as far as potential charter boat moratorium; fleet has gone from 2/day unlimited annual to 2/day with limit of 5 annually.
 - Presentation on second half of the question will address that

Anything from subsistence report to be stricken?

- Do we need to keep all the information about poundage outside of Sitka area?
 - Gives perspective – worth knowing. Helps to see how LAMP area figures in.

Anything additional to add to report to close the first half of this question?

- Trends on halibut – parked and moved into part 2 of the question.

The Stakeholders close the first of the two question on this card – 1/2 red dot.

We'll pick up on part 2 of this topic on May 22, as well as polishing up any other remaining loose ends on questions that have been presented but not closed.