Federal Judge Denies Injunction Blocking Charter Halibut Plan

On April 26 a federal judge in Washington, D.C., declined to issue an injunction that would have blocked implementation of the new access limitation plan for the halibut charter industry in Alaska. The injunction was sought by a group of charter operators called Charter Operators of Alaska. They claim that if the new plan is implemented, 327 existing charter operators will be put out of business.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) have been working with the charter industry since 1993 to devise a means of controlling the size of the halibut charter fleet. The directed commercial catch of halibut is strictly limited through a quota share system but there is no equivalent limit on the guided recreational (charter) industry, which for many years has exceeded its guideline harvest level. Charter and commercial fishing advisors to the NPFMC have proposed various plans for controlling charter effort, but each was rejected before it could be put into effect.

The current limited entry plan provides for permits to be issued to operators who can demonstrate that they operated in 2008 as well as either 2004 or 2005. This means that most operators who started their halibut charter businesses in the last five years do not
In light of sharply declining halibut recruitment in area 2C (Southeast Alaska), NMFS imposed a one-fish, 37-inch maximum size limit on charter anglers in that region, a move that angers operators and is likely to drive prospective charter customers to other locations. (See The One-Fish, 37-inch Rule Explained below.)

The charter limited entry plan pertains to guided recreational halibut fishing in areas 2C and 3A only and does not limit participation in charter fishing for salmon and other species.

For more on the court decision, see the Anchorage Daily News report.

Charter Log Back in Publication, Goes Electronic
Welcome to the first electronic issue of the new Charter Log.

Charter Log is for charter boat operators and sportfishing guides, as well as for ecotour operators, recreational anglers and boaters, commercial fishermen, and anyone else with an interest in Alaska’s sport fisheries and other marine recreation and recreation-related business. It’s a free service of the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks. The last print Charter Log was published in spring 2010, and the conversion to electronic publication has been a long time coming.

Topics the Log will cover
- News
- Politics and management
- Crime and punishment
- Tech tips
- Business and financial
- Safety
- Conservation and environment

Charter Log in print was mailed to an extensive but dated mailing list. The first electronic issue is going out to people who gave us their email address. Please forward it to everyone you think might want to read it and encourage them to send us their email addresses so we can add them to the list.

This first issue is a little longer than most will be, due to the backlog of information and the seasonal uptick in activity, so pick and choose what you want to read, send me news or other content, and let me know what you think.

Terry Johnson
terry.johnson@alaska.edu
907-274-9695

The One-Fish, 37-inch Rule Explained
By now just about everyone connected to the Southeast Alaska charter industry has heard about the NMFS plan for controlling charter halibut catches in Area 2C, which goes into effect this season: a bag limit of one fish per person (this will be the third year of the one-fish limit, which first went into effect in 2009), with a maximum size of 37 inches. A 37-inch halibut is expected to weigh about 22.7 lbs.

The good news for the charter industry is that while the commercial fleet is again taking a big quota reduction (47 percent this year) the charter GHL (guideline harvest level) remains the same.

NOAA says the purpose of the new rule is to allow charter halibut fishermen the opportunity to continue operating while staying within the GHL. But operators say that the restrictions will put many of them out of business since clients will take their business to Area 3A where neither restriction is in place. Charter clients in Southeast tend to be nonresidents, who have the option of selecting where to go to fish. A bigger percentage of 3A charter clients are southcentral Alaska residents who use the road system to access their fishing opportunities.

According to a Juneau Empire report, an analysis by the Alaska Charter Association and Southeast Alaska Guides Organization suggests that the reduced bookings resulting from...
negative publicity about the restrictions, plus the occurrence of landed fish that are less than 37 inches may result in a charter sector catch falling as low as 80 percent of the GHL. ACA and SEAGO have asked the governor, the commissioner of Fish and Game, and both of Alaska’s U.S. senators to weigh in against the new measures.

NOAA Fisheries says the new restrictions are needed because of a declining stock of halibut in 2C, lower growth rates, and higher than target catch rates. The agency is acting on recommendation from the International Pacific Halibut Commission. It is intended to bring the charter sector into compliance with the guideline harvest level of 788,000 lbs. The industry has exceeded its GHL every year since 2004, and last year, even with the one-fish bag limit, the overage was 62 percent. Meanwhile the commercial quota has continued to decline, and last year the longline catch was 73 percent lower than it was in 2003.

This is also the first year of a license limitation program for the guided recreational sector of the halibut fishery, with permits being issued only to operators who could demonstrate participation in 2008 and in either 2004 or 2005. (See Federal Judge Denies Injunction... in this issue about attempts to halt the license limitation program in court.) More than 300 individuals who ran halibut charters last year are projected to be cut out by the program, including 40 percent of the 2C fleet according to a SEAGO estimate.

Read NOAA press releases at

- [www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2011/halibut031111.htm](http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2011/halibut031111.htm)

For more on the issue:
[http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/halibut/sport.htm](http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/halibut/sport.htm)

**NOAA Publishes Compliance Guide for Halibut Charters**

Any questions you may have concerning the charter halibut limited access program likely are answered in an eight-page online publication from NOAA Fisheries called Small Entity Compliance Guide. The publication describes the limited access program, defines permit types, provides definitions of terms used in the management plan, and provides contact information for management and enforcement agencies.

The heart of the publication, however, is a 36-point Frequently Asked Questions section that addresses questions on charter halibut permits, application process and eligibility, rod endorsements, leasing permits, transfer of permits, logbooks, incidental catches of halibut by guided anglers, combining permits in a single charter business, crew catch and retention of halibut, and other issues. Changes in regulations are highlighted in orange type.

The downloadable Small Entity Compliance Guide is available at:

**NOAA Clarifies Definition of Halibut Guided Trip**

NOAA has issued a clarification to its previously published rule that defined a charter fishing trip so broadly that families and friends could have been considered clients, a situation that would have required the boat operator to carry a charter halibut permit.

The Alaska Charter Association raised the issue of the previous NOAA definition at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s April meeting. ACA objected to the definition because the wording would have required that any Alaska-license fishing guide (including freshwater guides) would be required to have a charter halibut permit to take friends and family fishing and would be prohibited from catching
halibut. Furthermore, fish caught by friends and family would be counted against the charter allocation.

Subsequent to the Council meeting, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries branch in Juneau met to reconsider the language and on April 5 issued a press release clarifying the rule to correct the unintended discrepancies. Under the new language, charter halibut guides will not be required to have a charter halibut permit on board during a recreational halibut fishing trip if the guide is not being compensated to provide sportfishing assistance to the anglers on board.

A halibut charter permit will be required only if both of the following conditions are met: one or more persons on board are catching and keeping halibut, and a guide on the boat is receiving compensation (being paid) to provide sportfishing guide services.

NMFS realizes that compensation can take forms other than payment in money, and will consider specific circumstances of a fishing trip to determine whether sportfishing guide services have been provided for compensation.

Read the whole press release at:

Read the amended final rule in the Federal Register:
www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/frules/76fr19708.pdf

**Federal Register Publishes 2011 Halibut Fishing Regulations**

The complete set of 2011 halibut fishing regulations are published in the Federal Register and are downloadable at: www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/frules/76fr14300.pdf.

The 20-page publication includes a brief history of North Pacific halibut management, catch limits, the new restrictions on guided halibut fishing in Area 2C, the Council’s plan for catch sharing, rules on how to measure halibut length, general sport halibut fishing regulations, and other information pertaining to management of halibut fisheries in U.S. waters.

**Boater Busts Crime, Gets Award**

A boat owner in Washington state recovered some electronics that had been stolen from his boat, and won a $2500 reward from the Boat Owners Association of the United States (BoatUS).

Peter Hunt, of Oak Harbor, discovered that his boat had been burglarized at a local marina, so he went to the Internet where he found an ad on eBay for used electronics that seemed to match his and others that had been stolen in the area. He notified authorities, who arrested an adult and two teenagers and recovered $50,000 worth of stolen electronics, including a chartplotter owned by Mr. Hunt.

BoatUS gave him the reward as part of the association’s Theft Reward Program. Each BoatUS member becomes enrolled in the program by placing a BoatUS-issued theft reward sticker on their boat.

For more on the program, and for tips on preventing theft, go to http://www.boatus.com/Membership/theftProtection.asp.

**Grant Awarded for Catch Share Planning**

While one Alaska charter group is going to court in an attempt to block implementation of access limitation to the halibut fishery (see Federal Judge Denies Injunction… in this issue), two others are working together to increase allocations to the industry.

The National Fish and Wildlife foundation has awarded a grant in the amount of $205,000 to the Alaska Charter Association (ACA) and the Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO) to develop a plan for pooling guided recreational halibut quota under the new catch share program. The award is one of 18 nationwide provided from the NFWF Fisheries Innovation Fund. The fund is supported by the federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Walton Family Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

The project, called Catch Accountability Through Compensated Halibut (CATCH) is intended to devise a plan for purchasing halibut quota from commercial fishermen and using it to increase the guideline harvest level for the guided recreational sector. It could
become the first catch share program in the country that is established to manage the compensated transfer of harvest privileges between the commercial and guided recreational sectors.

The grant will pay for development of the program, including the costs of employing a director, an assistant and office overhead, and legal fees. None of the grant funds will be used to purchase quota shares. The staff and a board, yet to be designated, will have to identify sources of funds for making any such purchases. The committee that applied for the grant includes Richard Hamada and Greg Sutter of ACA, and Tom Ohaus, Russell Thomas and Forrest Braden of SEAGO.


CFAB Now Offering Financing for Charter Halibut Permits

Halibut charter operators who either lost out on the issuance of charter halibut permits (CHP) or want to expand their operations have access to permit financing through the Alaska Commercial Fishing and Agriculture Bank (CFAB).

CFAB, which is structured as a cooperative and requires prospective borrowers to purchase some shares, has long been a major player in financing commercial fishing vessels, limited entry permits, and individual fishery quotas. More recently it has done some tourism-related financing, such as loaning on charter boats. But so far it hasn't made a loan for a CHP.

CFAB’s Robert Clark says that CFAB has begun receiving inquiries about CHP loans but as of early May had not processed an acceptable application. As CHPs have only recently been issued, there is some uncertainty about value. He says that the bank will be watching the prices of sales as reported by brokers to gauge the correct price points for the various classes of permits.

The Alaska Division of Investments also makes fishing vessel and permit loans but has not yet received authorization from the legislature to finance CHP. Lujean Fedotov with the division says that two bills doing so were introduced this year but were bogged down in the legislative process and never went to a vote. They may be brought up again in the second legislative session which begins in January 2012.

New Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Regulations Posted

The Alaska Marine Safety Education Association (AMSEA) has posted a two-page summary of the new safety requirements for commercial fishing vessels that are being implemented under the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act of 2010.

Note: The new requirements apply to commercial fishing industry vessels only, not to sport charter or private recreational vessels. However, charter operators who also engage in commercial fishing will be bound by them. They build upon and modify regulations in place since passage of the Commercial Fishing Industry Vessel Safety Act of 1988, and are viewed by many as stricter and more onerous on vessel owners.

The new regs contain several provisions, including:

- "Parity" or equality of regulation between documented and undocumented vessels
- Replacing the Boundary Line with the three-mile territorial sea line
- Requirement for carrying a survival craft, in place of "lifeboats or liferafts"
- Record-keeping and a "safety logbook"
- Examinations and certificates of compliance
- Operator training
- Construction standards for smaller vessels
- Load lines
- Classing of vessels over 50 feet in length that operate outside three miles


Dipnetters Dodge Limits at Board of Fisheries

Kenai Peninsula dipnetters dodged the bullet in March when the Board of Fisheries declined to pass new restrictions on dipnet harvests. Of greatest concern was a proposal to lower
the household limit on dipnet salmon to 10 fish per season in the Cook Inlet personal-use fisheries. It also would have required dipnetters to take a class and obtain a card showing they had completed the class, before they would receive a dipnet permit.

Proposals limiting dipnet fishing had the backing of Cook Inlet commercial fishermen, who are concerned with the rapid growth of the dipnet fisheries. The state says that last July nearly 400,000 salmon were taken in the Kenai River dipnet fishery.

According to the Anchorage Daily News, Fish Board member John Jensen, a commercial fisherman from Petersburg, called the dipnet fishery a “subsistence fishery on steroids” and said he doesn’t want commercial fishing families to suffer due to the growth of dipnetting, but he doesn’t know of a way to impose orderly control on it. The same ADN story also quoted South-Central Dipnetting Association director Ken Frederico as saying that dipnetters have to respect commercial fishing as a viable industry, and he conceded that if dipnetting continues to grow, restrictions may be needed in the future.

Starting in 2012, Felt Sole Boots Banned in Alaska Lakes and Rivers

This is the final year that anglers can wear felt-sole wading shoes in Alaska’s lakes and rivers. Implementation is Jan. 1, 2012. The previous ban, passed in 2009, was limited to the waters of Southeast Alaska, and that implementation date was delayed from this year until the same Jan. 1, 2012, starting date.

The ban, supported by many sportfishing and conservation groups, as well as equipment manufacturers, is intended to prevent the spread of harmful invasive organisms and diseases. The ban covers all absorbent materials, so anglers can’t substitute carpeting or other fuzzy or porous sole materials to skirt the ban.

Tammy Davis, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) invasive species coordinator, says that while the state’s waters may not appear to be under immediate threat of invasion by didymo (rock snot), whirling disease, or other species or pathogens that could be transported in the fabric of felt soles, it is prudent to get ahead of the problem with preventive measures. The Board of Fisheries action last year imposes the ban only on anglers since it lacks jurisdiction over other people using the lakes and streams. The Board of Game is expected to adopt a similar ban on hunters.

Some retailers are selling felt-sole boots at bargain prices, without warning consumers that use will be unlawful after this year.

Conservation

Salmon Bycatch in Gulf of Alaska to Be Limited

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is one final step away from mandating a substantial reduction in the number of king salmon caught by commercial groundfish trawlers in the Gulf of Alaska. Last year GOA trawlers caught 51,000 kings, which are a prohibited species and may not be sold by trawlers. The same year saw poor king salmon returns in many river systems around the GOA.

At its April meeting the Council adopted a preliminary preferred alternative that would limit trawlers in the western and central GOA to a total of 22,500 kings. At the same time it mandates full retention of bycatch kings in the pollock fishery, and will extend the requirement for 30 percent observer coverage to trawl vessels less than 60 feet in length. Final action on the measure is scheduled for the Council meeting in Nome on June 6–14. Because all Alaska members of the Council voted for the measure and they constitute the majority of the voting members, it is likely that it will receive final approval in Nome. The timing will allow possible implementation by the middle of 2012.

Although the amendment analysis included an option to provide for a 25 percent overage in one of every three years, that option was not included in the preferred alternative. The Council did include a provision for a different set of bycatch limits to be imposed in case implementation is not accomplished at the start of the pollock season.

For more detail, see the Council Newsletter at www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/newsletters/NEWS411.pdf

Or the complete motion from the April 2 meeting at: http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/bycatch/GOAChinookbycatchMotion411.pdf
Crime and Punishment

Reminder: Party Fishing Prohibited in Alaska
A quick reminder: "Party fishing" is not legal in Alaska.

Party fishing is the practice of pooling the catches of all the anglers on a boat to reach a limit (two halibut per person, other than in Southeast Alaska) for all people on board. Each angler is restricted to his or her own daily bag limit and one fisherman can’t catch extra fish to make up for a shortfall by another.

An Anchor Point charter operator was fined $10,000 last year and lost his sportfishing guide license for three years for allowing party fishing on his boat. State troopers do undercover stings by sending officers as clients on charter boats. Remember that the state considers lodge and boat owners responsible for violations committed by hired guides or by clients under the guides' supervision.

Fishing Guides Get Jail Sentences
At least two Alaska sportfishing guides have been handed jail sentences and fines so far this year for allowing clients to exceed bag limits and for falsifying records on trips taken last year.

SITNews in Ketchikan reports that Superior Court Judge David George sentenced Sitka sportfishing guide Eric John Morisky, a guide for Dove Island Lodge, to a fine of $18,000 with $11,000 suspended and to 210 days in jail with 160 suspended for permitting violations by clients and making false entry in his saltwater logbook. He was also sentenced to 80 hours of community service and revocation of his sportfishing guide license for this season, in addition to five years probation. The sentences resulted from three misdemeanor offenses that included helping a client take an over-limit of king salmon and failing to enter in the logbook over-limits of yelloweye rockfish and halibut. His offenses also included pulling shrimp and crab pots while clients were on board.

The sentence resulted from a plea agreement, in which the State agreed to drop other charges. Troopers, working undercover as paying clients, documented the offenses and filed charges. Morisky had previous sportfish guide violations for which he was fined.

The Seward Phoenix Log reports that District Court Judge Margaret Murphy sentenced Arthur C. Murphy to 90 days in jail with 80 days suspended, fined him $5,000, and imposed 40 hours of community service and six years' probation. She also revoked his sportfishing guide license for two years.

Murphy was charged by troopers for allowing clients to exceed bag limits, retaining halibut while working as a guide, wasting fish by throwing overboard halibut that had been on deck for 40 minutes, and falsifying logbook entries.

Tech Tips

This space in Charter Log is dedicated to reader tips on boat and motor maintenance, fishing gear, business management, and other topics of interest to readers. I'll start it off in this issue with some vessel/motor maintenance tips. I know that each one of you has tips on boat maintenance or other aspects of the business that would be useful to others. Please send them to me and I'll include them in future issues of the Log.

—Terry Johnson, editor

Should Aluminum Boats Be Painted?
If you have an aluminum boat and are thinking of painting it, or if it's already painted and you want to maintain it, you might be interested in a new blog entry by Steve D'Antonio. Familiar to readers of several recreational boating

publications, D’Antonio is a marine industry technical consultant and for many years managed boat repair facilities on the East Coast.

Many people consider raw aluminum unattractive and prefer to dress up their boats by having the hull, decks and houses painted. Modern coatings provide lustrous and durable color patterns and are popular particularly with owners of expensive yachts. However, as D’Antonio notes, the Coast Guard and many commercial vessel builders and operators for the most part leave vessels unpainted, and for good reason. Exposed to salt air and water, aluminum quickly develops its own powdery surface which provides excellent protection against corrosion as long as certain conditions are met. The surface must be exposed to a free exchange of air, and the alloy must not be kept in close contact with more noble metals such as copper. Under some conditions, painting can actually induce corrosion by trapping moisture and denying the surface the air it needs to protect itself.

Aluminum can be attacked by two kinds of corrosion: galvanic corrosion that results from an exchange of electrons between dissimilar metals, and poultice corrosion that appears when water gets to the surface but air cannot. Paint has no effect on galvanic corrosion but can be a causative factor in poultice corrosion. The latter usually is more of a cosmetic problem than a structural one, but unchecked poultice corrosion can weaken and eventually destroy the structure.

It’s a somewhat complicated technical matter that is best explained by D’Antonio himself. His blog entry describes the two kinds of corrosion and how to identify each, the conditions that cause them, and how to prevent or treat them. Even non-aluminum-hull boats likely have aluminum structures and equipment, if nothing more than window frames, and D’Antonio’s article explains how to protect those parts from corrosion.

The blog entry is at: http://stevedmarineconsulting.com/blog/index.php.

**Reasons That Many Sinkings Occur in Spring**

It's a fact that of all small boat sinkings, about three-fourths are at the dock. Many of those occur during springtime as result of inadequate maintenance and inspection.

*Seaworthy*, the magazine of boating safety and maintenance published by BoatUS, lists the five top reasons that boats sink this time of year:

1. Missing or damaged hose clamps.
2. Unsecured engine hoses, often caused by freezing that pushes hoses up and off seacocks.
3. Heavy rain and snow that get into the boat through leaking ports and deck hatches.
4. A broken sea strainer, resulting from freezing.
5. Leaking stuffing box.

BoatUS provides a two-page spring commissioning checklist with 38 recommendations for getting your boat into shape for a safe and trouble-free season. For the whole report, go to www.BoatUS.com/pressroom/release.asp?id=638

**Secure Those Connections**

If you've ever had electrical system problems, including an engine that won't start or electronics that don't function, the problem could be battery cable connections. The wingnuts holding the cables to the battery posts are tight and the cables feel snug, but the juice isn't getting to where it needs to be. Solution: chuck those wingnuts and replace
them with stainless steel hex-head nylock nuts. Torque them down with a socket wrench. But before you do, clean the terminals and connectors and treat them with a touch of dielectric grease. The locknuts will hold more firmly, preventing vibration and the eventual opening of space which allows entry of moisture and eventual corrosion.

Change That Impeller

I’ve often seen the recommendation that an outboard motor’s cooling water impeller be changed every year, which never made any sense to me because they rarely seem to wear out unless used in very silty or sandy conditions. Then I attended a lecture for sailors on outboard maintenance and the lecturer/mechanic explained that since impellers rarely wear out, they rarely get checked or changed, so the lower unit seldom gets removed. The result is that the stainless steel bolts become firmly corroded into the cast aluminum housings, making them extremely difficult to remove when lower-unit service, including impeller change, is required. Changing the impeller requires removing the bolts and drive shaft, giving you a chance to not only check and possibly replace the impeller, but also to grease the shaft splines and treat the mounting bolts with an anti-seizing compound. It's a good time also to remove the prop and grease the splines of the prop shaft too.

Noted

What to Do in Response to a Tsunami Warning

The tragic earthquake and tsunami in Japan this year highlights the vulnerability of people and vessels in and around ports on the coast of Alaska. As the ‘64 Good Friday quake amply demonstrated, many Alaska ports are susceptible to damage from tsunamis. If a tsunami is predicted, what is the best course of action?

Oregon Sea Grant has issued a set of guidelines in a publication called Tsunami Awareness for Fishermen and Mariners, which is downloadable at: http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/gpubs/onlinetips/g07004.pdf. It offers tips for avoiding the worst consequences if you are at sea (head for water of at least 50 fathoms and stay there until advised by authorities ashore that it is safe to return to port), in port (get out to sea or move your boat out of the inundation zone if time allows), and at home (get out of the inundation zone). It describes how a tsunami is generated and what to expect in terms of local confusion and disruptions. It also has tips for surviving an earthquake.

A second publication called Three Things You Need to Know About Tsunamis contains facts about understanding the difference between local and distant earthquakes, how to assess the threat, where the danger zones are, how to connect with loved ones, and other points that are equally valid for mariners and residents. It has been updated since the Japan quake and is available at: http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/themes/hazards/documents/The-Three-Things-You-Need-To-Know-2011.html.

Oregon Sea Grant also has online two videos on tsunami preparedness, both featuring OSU Sea Grant’s hazards specialist, Pat Corcoran. Three Things You Need to Know: http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/video/flash/three_things.html. It is three minutes long. Reaching Higher Ground, 14 minutes, is at: http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/video/flash/reaching-higher-ground.html.

Alaska Ocean Observing System Data Available Online

The Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS) is a regional consortium of research and monitoring agencies that collect and process environmental data from the coast of Alaska. AOOS administration and data management contractors in Anchorage offer these data sets in various forms that are useful to mariners, recreational boaters, scientists, and anyone who needs real-time information on the sea and coast.

The AOOS website has four sub-sites devoted to real-time sensor data, forecasts and models, Arctic monitoring, and seabird studies. The real-time sensor portal presents a range of environmental data in 35 categories, collected from monitoring stations maintained by NOAA, the Coast Guard, and other agencies.

What does this mean to boat operators? Here is a scenario: you want to depart Whittier for a fishing and sightseeing trip to the outer islands of Prince William Sound. Before leaving home you go to the AOOS site, click on “Access Data,” click on “Real Time
Sensors,” enlarge the state map to bring up Prince William Sound, and click on any of more than 40 locations along the outer rim of the Sound. There you will find information such as current temperature, wind direction and speed, wave height, barometric pressure, and even birds you may find at some locations. There are also webcam views of some of the sites.

AOOS displays data from 3,000 sites all over the state, including some well off shore, which are supported by 14 different agencies and organizations. AOOS is part of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, and is supported largely by NOAA.

Halibut.net a Site Worth Visiting, Even with All the Advertising

Amid the growing plethora of websites, newsletters, e-magazines, videos and other media devoted to sportfishing, one site stands out for its focus, full-service content, and relevance to Alaska saltwater anglers: www.halibut.net.

The creation of John Beath, of Monroe, Washington, halibut.net is a portal into a wide world of halibut angling lore, fishery management news, products and entertainment media including videos and a color online magazine called GoFish. The magazine takes a perspective much broader than either halibut or Alaska, but the editor’s loyalties and affiliations are largely here and Alaska features prominently in each issue.

Mr. Beath is a sort of one-man-band of angling entrepreneurship, doing everything from writing, editing, and publishing articles and books to lecturing, doing website design, Internet radio broadcasting and videos, designing and manufacturing tackle, and hawking both his own creations and those of other equipment makers. It’s hard to believe he has any time to go fishing, but apparently he does a lot of it. His talks at the Great Alaska Sportsman Show are filled with useful tips as well as basic knowledge about halibut biology and behavior.

Halibut.net links to other sites with similar content on lingcod, salmon and other angling topics.

Indications Are That Rescue 21 Is Fading

The Coast Guard’s much-touted and long-awaited Rescue 21 distress calling system is in danger of fading away, at least in Alaska.

Rescue 21 is the system, employed in other parts of the country, that uses microburst transmissions on VHF Ch. 70 to send a distress message to specially equipped Coast Guard radio stations. Every modern marine VHF radio has the digital selective calling-based emergency button that is capable of sending the transmission, and if the radio is connected to a GPS receiver, the vessel’s position is transmitted along with the distress call. Problem is, in Alaska no one is listening.

The Coast Guard originally announced an implementation date of 2007, which was put back to 2012, and now is delayed to 2017. The Project Resident Office in Juneau is slated to close in a year and a half, with no receivers installed.

Bill Benning, chief technical officer for the Marine Exchange of Alaska, was a Coast Guard communications officer and on the planning team for Rescue 21 prior to his retirement, and he says that, based on his knowledge of Coast Guard funding, he doesn’t think the money will be there to complete it.

“Even if they do complete it in 2017,” he says, “it would be a very scaled-back version.”