

# NOAA Fisheries Service

## Alaska Fisheries Science Center



### Protecting Conserving Managing Marine Resources in Alaska

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center is a scientific research organization responsible for the development and implementation of NOAA's scientific research on marine resources in Alaska waters. Our research focuses on more than 250 fish and 42 marine mammal stocks off the coasts of the Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska and Aleutian Islands.



U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service

## Alaska Recreational Charter Sector Research Development

To assess the effect of regulatory restrictions (currently in place or potential) on Alaska charter boat fishing operator behavior and welfare, it is necessary to obtain a better general understanding of the industry. Some information useful for this purpose is already collected from existing sources, such as logbook data. However, information on vessel and crew characteristics, services offered to clients, spatial and temporal aspects of their operations and fishing behavior, and costs and earnings information are generally not available from existing data sources and thus must be collected directly from the industry through voluntary surveys. In order to address this gap, AFSC researchers are evaluating existing data sources, developing potential survey materials, and evaluating data collection methods that would minimize the burden on survey respondents and maximize response rates. As of 2011, AFSC researchers are in the process of developing three data collection projects.

### Annual cost and earnings survey

A survey of Alaska charter business owners is being developed to collect annual costs and earnings information about charter businesses and the general business characteristics of Alaska charter boat operations. Types of data that will be gathered through the survey include information about costs and sources for services, equipment and supplies purchased by charter businesses, services offered to clients and associated sales revenues, crew and vessel characteristics, and historical fishery participation. In order to refine the survey questions, AFSC researchers conducted focus groups with charter business owners in Homer and Seward in September 2011. This survey is expected to be implemented in 2012, pending available funding, completion of the survey development and testing process, and clearance for the data collection by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act. Additionally, researchers from other NOAA Fisheries Science Centers have conducted, or are currently conducting, similar surveys of for-hire charter boat operations in other regions of the U.S.

### Trip-based survey

AFSC researchers have begun developing a survey to collect charter fishing trip information with the goal of understanding spatial and temporal variation across a sample of charter trips to supplement information reported in the ADF&G charter vessel logbooks. Data collected will include information about travel times and distances, input costs for a charter trip, types of non-fishing activities

occurring on a trip (if any), characteristics of charter clients, and factors used by guides to determine trip itineraries. In order to refine the survey questions and content, in-depth interviews were held with charter guides in Juneau and Homer in August 2011. This survey is expected to be implemented in 2013, pending available funding, completion of the survey development and testing process, and clearance for the data collection by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act. AFSC researchers plan to use the information collected, in conjunction with the annual cost and earnings survey results, to evaluate and understand the spatial and temporal behavioural patterns of Alaskan charter fishing vessel owners to provide further insights on the effects of fisheries regulations on the charter fishing industry.

### **Angler survey**

A final survey focuses on collecting economic data on Alaska sport fishing from resident and non-resident anglers, including anglers who fish on charter vessels. This survey is expected to be implemented in 2012 as well, pending approval by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget under the Paperwork Reduction Act. It will collect information about where charter clients and non-guided anglers saltwater fished in Alaska, what species they targeted, and their preferences for different types of fishing experiences, as well as information on their spending on goods and services, including lodging, travel, meals, guide services, and other expenses associated with fishing trips and visitation to Alaska.

These research projects are an independent effort initiated by staff scientists at NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Fisheries Science Center to fill some of the gaps in data available currently to support analysis of the economic effects of management decisions on saltwater sportfishing participants, including the charter industry, and associated communities. Data from these projects will be integrated with currently available data sources and used in economic models and other analytical approaches to identify the effects of measures already implemented or to evaluate hypothetical or proposed management alternatives. Statistical summaries and results from analyses of data collected through the surveys under development will be reported publicly when the research is completed. The research is being funded by NOAA Fisheries' Office of Science and Technology through an internal competitive research grant process. Please address any comments or questions about these projects to Drs. Brian Garber-Yonts ([brian.garber-yonts@noaa.gov](mailto:brian.garber-yonts@noaa.gov)), Dan Lew ([dan.lew@noaa.gov](mailto:dan.lew@noaa.gov)), or Amber Himes-Cornell ([amber.himes@noaa.gov](mailto:amber.himes@noaa.gov)).