When we started The Boat Company 30-odd years ago, the object was to introduce people to the earth’s last, largely unspoiled, temperate rainforest in the hope that they, too, would think it worth conserving/preserving.

It was also our intent to run the Company as close to break-even as possible. However, we knew that would be a bit of a challenge. One doesn’t operate a pair of 20 and 24 capacity vessels with an average crew to passenger ratio of 1 to 1.5 and expect to make a lot of money...or be able to set aside small amounts to pay for the inevitable and unexpected maintenance costs that would occur. In 2012 alone, we spent over $100,000 replacing a number of stainless steel gears and a drive shaft.

However, by and large, with the help of small contributions from past customers, plus support from a family foundation, we have not only been able to cover our costs, but also to participate in all of the conservation issues facing Southeast Alaska and the Tongass National Forest.

For instance we have contributed $75,000 over the past 3 years to the cost of the just decided lawsuit to preserve The Roadless Rule in the Tongass thus providing protection for hundreds of thousands of acres of old growth forest which in turn are home to Myriad Salmon spawning streams.

We would add we have never understood The Federal Government rational for promoting logging on SouthEast Alaska's economy (commercial fishing, tourism, etc.).

But 2012 sprung some unexpected surprises on us. When we started The Boat Company in 1980, the world’s population was estimated to be 4.5 billion. Today it is over 7 billion. Pressure to develop fishery and forestry resources has increased accordingly.

Halibut and King Salmon stocks have suffered steep declines. To put figures to that, the allowable Halibut catch for ALL Users (commercial and all others) in Southeast Alaska has declined in the last several years from over 13,000,000 pounds to under 4,000,000 pounds, causing a fair amount of economic distress. And...all indications are if the the decline is not reversed soon, the fishery could be entirely closed.

Most have felt the main reason for the decline has been the trawl fleets' operations in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). It is allowed by the regulatory agencies (IPHC, NOAA, NMFS, and NPFMC -see note 1) to catch and throw away 4,400,000 pounds a year (more than all others can catch and keep) and anecdotal evidence suggests that twice as much as that is actually being caught and thrown away.

All user groups in Southeast (commercial, sport, charter, personal, etc.) agreed that something had to be done. But getting all of them to work together at the same time within a limited time period proved difficult.

With time running out and with both its business and conservation interests at stake, The Boat Company assembled the necessary resources to file suit in the Federal District Court in Anchorage, Alaska seeking to block the Federal Government’s plans.

One of the main issues in the case is the use of observers (independent contractors put on fishing vessels to help keep the fishermen honest). The trawl fleet operates large vessels, the long-liners smaller ones. The trawl fleet catches 87% of the Halibut and the long-liners 13%. Not withstanding that, the Federal Government plans to saddle the long-liners with 90% of the cost of observer coverage versus only 10% for the trawl fleet.

In the meantime, the long-liners and Oceana (a marine conservation organization) have filed amicus briefs on our case.

This effort has put a dent in The Boat Company’s budget and it will be seeking help to cover the costs.

Note 1: IPHC = International Pacific Halibut Commission
NOAA = National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
NMFS = National Marine Fisheries Service
NPFMC = Northern Pacific Fisheries Management Council

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Erica A de Flamand
the-summerhouse.com
**the deer lake way**

**BY CARRINGTON GORMAN (PROJECT LEADER) & STEVE REIFENSTUHL**

NORTHERN SOUTHEAST REGIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION (NSRAA)

Mist Cove, Baranof Island, Alaska is the saltwater site where the Boat Company’s impressive M/V Mist Cove acquired its appellation, but the site is also the terminus of a unique and fascinating wild coho aquaculture program. Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association’s (NSRAA) biologists call it the Deer Lake project, named for the freshwater side of this magical place few people are lucky enough to experience. Some readers may have been here and had the opportunity to catch adult coho returning to Mist Cove while taking in the impressive view of the 340 foot vertical waterfall that surges out of Deer Lake. What many do not realize are the struggles, the science, and the patience of commercial fishermen in the 30 year evolution of this project deep in the heart of the Tongass wilderness.

The goal of this project from the beginning was to produce a large quantity of robust coho smolt to enhance the wild fisheries of Southeast Alaska. In the mid 1980’s this was accomplished by stocking Deer Lake with fry from nearby coho stocks (Deep Cove) and allowing them to grow in the lake on naturally occurring zooplankters. The lake had to lie fallow for a year after stocking to attain optimal zooplankton densities. Limnological and nutrient studies determined that we could stock every year by fertilizing the lake with nitrogen and small amounts of phosphorous. These primary nutrients significantly boost zooplankton production which the two inch fry consume voraciously. From 1986 to the early 1990’s this process was successful, but each year the number and size of the rainbow trout, an insatiable predator, grew. The irony is the rainbow trout are an invasive species from the lower forty-eight; stocked by the federal government decades ago. Eventually the rainbow trout became so numerous and large that over 50% of the planted fry no longer made it to spring emigration.

If a strategy could not be developed to dramatically increase coho survival the program was going on the chopping block. In 2003 we set our sights on a solution for segregating the rainbow trout from the coho - net pen rearing. The concept was not a solution yet, not until much creativity and sweat were expended. Initially, the number of net pen reared fry small compared to the years when the lake was fertilized. The first net pen fish were held until the end of November and then released into the lake to over-winter. This strategy proved to be a failure as roughly twenty percent of the coho fry left the lake and went over the waterfall shortly after release in November. The fish had been released into the lake too early, a time when lake temperatures were still relatively warm, water flows high, and the metabolic processes of coho not yet sufficiently diminished. Live and learn.

The following year the fish were released into the lake in December; this time after the lake had turned over and temperatures cooled to less than 30 C. Very few fry attempted early outmigration and a higher spring emigration was observed, but it still did not meet our standards. The following year a new strategy was implemented: hold the fish over the entire winter in the net pens. Mother Nature countered this strategy by dumping so much snow on Deer Lake that the net pens sunk and released almost all of the fish into the lake anyway. However, survival rates increased and a larger emigration was accomplished.

To prevent the accidental release from the net pens, tops were created and sewn on the net pens the following winter. In the spring it was observed that roughly half the fish had escaped during the winter and the other half had stayed in the pens. Although not intentional, this process led to the highest fry to smolt survival rate in the project’s history at 76%. A new strategy to intentionally release half the fish into the lake and hold the other half in pens was implemented.
in 2009. However, the fish were released into the lake too early and many went over the falls. The fish that were held in the pens again escaped and fry to smolt survival dropped to 53%. This strategy was temporarily abandoned. After much thought new net covers were acquired and a new method for holding the fish in the pens was implemented. In 2011 all the fish were to be held in the pens at a high density. The result was the worst survival since the pen rearing strategy was started in the lake...back to the drawing board.

A plan to change the winter release location to get the fish further away from the outlet stream and waterfall was put into place, with the release date right before it looked like the lake was going to freeze over. A single net pen with an experimental cover design was employed, a last attempt at holding fish in pens overwinter. This strategy resulted in the highest survival rate in project history, 85%, and the largest emigration in project history for both the fish in the lake and those in the net pen. The Deer Lake project released over two million smolts in 2012; and now we await the expected 160,000 adults returning this summer.

Our current strategy is to replicate what we did with the 2011 fry. In 2012 we starting with 2.8 million Coho but added more pens with tops of the same design. At this writing survival in the pens has surpassed even last year’s record. The expected result is that we will see another record on the NSRAA books in June 2013.

After twenty-eight years of operations at Deer Lake we may have figured out a strategy in which we can, year after year, achieve our goal of producing a large quantity of robust fish to enhance the wild fisheries of Southeast Alaska. Commercial fishermen have invested $5 million in the Deer Lake project; it is a testament to their foresight and tenacity. Over these years the benefit to cost is 2:1 and return on investment is quite favorable. However, we fully intend to drive that B/C ratio higher in the coming years.
“[The trip] was a great Alaskan experience. I have already told at least a dozen people that they need to go, too!”

– T.J. Wilt
### M/V MIST COVE

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### M/V LISERON

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We were so lucky to have such a great group of fellow passengers - it was the trip of lifetime, but we would love to do it again! Our group is already talking about a Mist Cove reunion in 2014!

- CAROL & DON KIRKENDALL
Meet Our Crew

For 2013, The Boat Company is starting a new column, introducing you to a member of the Crew who you may meet during your own adventure with TBC. To kick it off, here is an introduction to one of our engineers, Kelly Barnett!

Name: Kelly Barnett
Hometown: Ottumwa, Iowa
Time working for The Boat Company: 5 years 5 months and 12 days
Job Title: Engineer
Job Description: I operate, maintain and repair all equipment on the M/V Liseron and the four skiffs on board

A little about myself: I am single. I have four beautiful nieces. I have been to over 30 different countries and completely circled the earth twice.

What other experiences in your life have contributed to your success with TBC? I believe serving in the United States Navy for twenty one years as a engineer and law enforcement may have helped.

What is your favorite thing about working for TBC? The M/V Liseron and working with Jose Bello

What is your favorite thing about Southeast Alaska? Seeing all the wild life and the customers

What is one thing you wish travelers took away with them after their trip with TBC? We need to preserve places like SE Alaska because there is not an endless supply of trees, fish or wild life in this world

What is one thing you can “teach” readers about the boats? We try hard not to have a negative impact on the places we go

What do you like to do in the “off season”? I like to put on my leathers and ride my harley. And I like going to the gun range to shoot my various collection of firearms.

“It was truly magical & we felt so very blessed to be able to bring our children and grand-children on this very special trip.”

– WALT & PATTY GAHM
Award-winning maritime malt Old Pulteney Single Malt Scotch Whisky celebrates the passion, commitment and achievement of the US sailing community with the 2013 Maritime Heroes award. Friends and families are encouraged to nominate an unsung hero, giving them the opportunity to receive the recognition they deserve, whether for charitable giving, community advocacy, sailing education or similar generous acts.

Cast your vote for your Maritime Hero beginning June 1 at: www.maritimeheroes.com
"This was not only the vacation - but the experience - of a lifetime. Difficult to put a superlative on the trip - it was spectacular!"

- JAMES CONNORS