Winter Reflections

As we move into the operational period of The Boat Company with the captains and crew set to arrive the first week of April, I sit back and reflect on this winter’s maintenance period. Not only is The Boat Company blessed with the best shore-side support staff and summer seasonal crew, we are also blessed with loyal and dedicated guests.

It takes an enormous amount of time, effort and finances to keep the M/V LISERON and M/V MIST COVE looking and operating beautifully. It takes an equal amount of time, effort and financing to make sure that our guests have the wilderness experience that a trip on our vessels has become synonymous with. In the following pages you will read about all of the great efforts that your generous donations have helped fund as we continue to fight the good fight to protect and preserve The Tongass National Forest and its surrounding waters and wild inhabitants.

Ok, now onto the fun stuff. Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram have taken over the airwaves so to speak. We find ourselves keeping in touch with, reconnecting with and experiencing friend’s lives all through social media. They have become a way to feel connected to each other even if there is a great deal of distance between us. Over the winter The Boat Company took on the task of bringing our social media into focus. We also streamlined our website so that it is now easily viewed across multiple platforms (computer, tablet and mobile devices).

We would like to encourage each and every one of you whom participate in Facebook to “like” The Boat Company’s Facebook page. Share us with your friends and family, it is the easiest way to help spread the wonderful experiences we know you all had aboard our boats. We are also in the process of uploading photos so if you’ve misplaced yours from your trip, you will be able to find them here to re-download.

Finally, for those of you looking to travel with us again, Kathy eagerly awaits your call, but don’t wait too long. We have sold out two years in a row and are within just a few cabins of making it three years in a row, with reservations already streaming in for 2016 and 2017. We hope to see you and your loved ones again soon.

Until our next printing, have a wonderful spring and summer.

HUNTER H. McINTOSH
“To see Alaska with The Boat Company is to see Alaska even some Alaskans never get to see.”

CATHERINE K. LISERON | MAY 24 - MAY 31, 2014

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Thank you for supporting our mission.
"A great trip in every respect. The crew was terrific and the activities were great. And who could complain about the scenery and the wildlife?!!"

TED M. [MIST COVE II] | JULY 5 - JULY 12, 2014
One of The Boat Company’s most important conservation programs involves working through administrative and legal processes in order to reduce halibut bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea trawl fisheries. After several decades of inaction, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service are nearing the end of a regulatory process aimed at reducing halibut bycatch in the Bering Sea. Halibut are among the largest fish in Alaskan waters, with some fish weighing up 500 pounds. They are caught commercially by hook-and-line fishermen and are prized by seafood consumers as the world’s premium whitefish. As TBC clients know, halibut are prized by sport fishermen – both for the angling experience and subsequent reward at the dinner table.

Unfortunately, the halibut resource has been declining since the 1990s, and short-term projections indicate a continued decline, even with low harvest rates. Commercial hook-and-line and sport fishermen have experienced significant catch limit reductions and substantial economic losses over the past decade in order to conserve the resource and promote stock rebuilding. In most areas, the allowed harvest has been cut in half – at least. In Southeast Alaska, The Boat Company’s clients and other charter fishermen now are limited to a daily bag limit of one halibut less than 42 inches, with no more than two halibut in possession per cruise.

In contrast, the Alaska trawl fisheries, which waste millions of pounds of halibut annually as bycatch, have not taken similar cuts. Much of this bycatch occurs in the Bering Sea, where roughly 82 million pounds of halibut were killed as bycatch from 2004 - 2013 in federal groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea.
- mostly by trawlers. Halibut bycatch in the Bering Sea immediately threatens the viability of small Bering Sea communities that depend on hook-and-line halibut fisheries. Bering Sea halibut bycatch also substantially affects the long-term viability of downstream commercial, recreational and subsistence halibut fisheries and the resource itself. Bering Sea trawlers have a fixed bycatch limit which was initially set at 6.2 million pounds in 1993 and reduced in 2000 to 6 million pounds – more than the entire catch limit for all southeast Alaska fishermen this year.

The Council began evaluating possible bycatch reductions for the Bering Sea fisheries in 2011. Since then, the bycatch problem has become a crisis for small Bering Sea fishing communities dependent upon the halibut fisheries where harvests have declined by two-thirds – from 3.7 to 1.3 million pounds. Meanwhile, halibut bycatch actually increased over the same time period. Small boat fishermen in these Bering Sea communities have seen their historical share of the resource drop in half as federal fishery managers have reallocated the resource to be wasted by large trawl vessels as bycatch.

Trawl bycatch in the Bering Sea also creates problems for halibut fishermen in communities far distant from the immediate area, from the Gulf of Alaska to the Pacific Northwest. Much of the Bering Sea halibut bycatch today occurs in a nursery area that was closed decades ago to bottom trawling in order to protect small, juvenile halibut, but which reopened during the 1980s. Bycatch in this one area alone can amount to as much as 40% of the total weight of halibut bycatch in the entire Bering Sea, and can exceed over one million juvenile halibut. Halibut are a highly migratory species, and 80% of the juvenile halibut killed in Bering Sea trawl fisheries would end up in other areas – including southeast Alaska – if they survived to adulthood.

The Council began taking additional steps to address this problem last year. The Boat Company provided testimony and comment letters urging the Council to consider a 50% reduction. At its June 2014 meeting, the Council proposed moving forward with a regulatory amendment package that included options to reduce the bycatch limits between 10 and 35%. However, recommended catch limits issued in the fall for Bering Sea fishing communities in 2015 declined even further. In December of 2014, the state of Alaska and its six Council members asked NOAA Assistant Administrator Eileen Sobeck to take emergency action to reduce Bering Sea halibut bycatch, noting that the recommended catch limit for the region would have given trawlers roughly 90% of the resource to take as bycatch.

NMFS prepared a draft environmental assessment for review at the Council’s February 2015 meeting in Seattle. The Boat Company and a diverse group of halibut stakeholders successfully encouraged the Council to increase the range of possible halibut bycatch reductions to 50% because of the current stock condition and long-term impacts caused by the bycatch of juvenile halibut. The Council received dozens of comments from individual sport, commercial and subsistence fishermen, as well as commercial and sport fishing organizations, conservation groups and municipalities asking them to take action.

The Boat Company’s testimony and comments focused on the Council’s legal obligations to minimize bycatch, to ensure fair and equitable resource allocations, and to protect the economic vitality of fishing communities. Various interests, from tribal government representatives to hook-and-line fishermen to small community fishermen from the Bering Sea, were appreciative of The Boat Company’s written comments, oral testimony and advocacy on behalf of all stakeholders of the halibut resource. Final action will take place in Sitka in June 2015.

For more info: www.theboatcompany.org
providing wilderness recreation experiences, particularly for non-resident visitors. The new plan would limit the wilderness values compromised by recreational over-use, the proposed limits on guided access are unreasonable. While The Boat Company has long advocated for the protection of wilderness areas and in no way wants to see privately owned yachts. Tongass National Forest, essentially reserving wilderness areas for local residents and independent travelers on privately owned yachts.

The Boat Company's tours feature wilderness recreation opportunities along the shorelines of remote areas in the northern half of the Tongass National Forest such as the Kootznoowoo Wilderness (Admiralty Island), South Baranof Wilderness and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness. The Forest Service manages access to these areas through the Shoreline Outfitter Guide management plan and the Tongass Land Management Plan. The Boat Company's operations are specifically designed to meet standards for wilderness recreation in these plans in order to provide quality wilderness recreation opportunities to our clients.

The Forest Service is now in the process of revising its outfitter guide management plan for wilderness areas utilized for recreation and wilderness education in The Boat Company's tours. The existing plan sets carrying capacities for wilderness recreation designed to achieve an appropriate number of guided visitors based on an encounter standard that strives to limit encounters to less than three groups per day in wilderness areas. The Boat Company believes this standard has been unrealistic for portions of wilderness areas, particularly along shoreline access points, and has long advocated for a more flexible standard. However, the new plan includes a proposal to limit guided visitor access to many Wilderness areas to between 8 and 13% of the available recreational carrying capacity. The proposal is considerably more restrictive than wilderness recreation management policies implemented elsewhere in the Tongass National Forest, essentially reserving wilderness areas for local residents and independent travelers on privately owned yachts.

While The Boat Company has long advocated for the protection of wilderness areas and in no way wants to see wilderness values compromised by recreational over-use, the proposed limits on guided access are unreasonable and unfair to visitors who cannot visit Wilderness without engaging the services of outfitter guides. Because of the remote nature and difficulty in accessing northern Tongass wilderness areas, outfitter-guides are essential to providing wilderness recreation experiences, particularly for non-resident visitors. The new plan would limit the Alaska experience for many Americans by restricting them to visiting only easy to reach communities like Sitka or Juneau and other non-Wilderness destinations or areas reserved for guided larger groups.

The Forest Service’s rationale for its approach reflects an emphasis on opportunities for wilderness users who seek complete solitude throughout northern Tongass Wilderness Areas. Although the Wilderness Act defines a wilderness as an area that provides “outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,” the proposed restrictions on guided use would prioritize opportunities for solitude to the exclusion of other quality wilderness recreation experiences. The agency has created a new encounter standard which would attempt to provide solitude for 4 out of every 5 days during a wilderness visit when solitude seekers would be free from significant encounters with other human beings or even boats along saltwater travel routes adjacent to the wilderness.

The new standard is not realistic, and does not even reflect encounters within actual wilderness. In general, we think the Forest Service already overestimates the number of groups that may encounter each other in many wilderness recreation use areas. An area may be able to accommodate several groups in one day through, for example, sharing an area at different times to use a two hour hiking trail or because visitor groups take deliberate action to avoid encounters with other groups. The new standard exacerbates this problem because most of the perceived threats to solitude for wilderness enthusiasts are related to fishing boats, cruise ships and other vessels seen in non-Wilderness areas. In actuality, there are numerous places and times within the thousands of acres of northern Tongass wilderness areas where solitude seekers can find no or low encounters. Indeed, other wilderness managers in southeast Alaska have conducted monitoring within the wilderness, and have found that encounters, even with higher allocations for guided visitors, were well below forest plan limits.

Thus, The Boat Company is encouraging the Forest Service to substantially modify its plans for wilderness recreation and instead develop a carefully crafted, site-specific approach that allows for reasonable levels of guided visitor access to northern Tongass wilderness areas while still achieving a balance that accommodates unguided use. There is an extensive body of literature related to wilderness recreation management that recognizes the difference between the types and location of encounters with other wilderness visitors, particularly at wilderness access points, suggesting that finer scale zoning of wilderness areas can generally solve problems of perceived crowding. The Boat Company’s goal is to ensure that the Forest Service will consider such a solution.

In order to achieve this, The Boat Company has contracted with Confluence Research Consulting, a recreation management consulting firm, to review the Forest Service’s recreation capacity analysis and draft outfitter guide management plan for the northern Tongass. Dr. Bo Shelby and Dr. Doug Whittaker have been involved in numerous recreation studies and planning efforts on behalf of governmental, non-profit and private entities and have substantial expertise in visitor impact management and recreational setting carrying capacities. The Boat Company hopes that their work can assist the Forest Service’s evaluation of how to provide quality wilderness experiences for all users.
“My appreciation for the Boat Company, what it stands for and the way it shares that with others... it grows with each trip.”

JUDY B. | MIST COVE | AUG 9 - AUG 16, 2014
The Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries historically have high levels of bycatch of non-targeted marine life, including chinook salmon, halibut and crab. Increasing the accuracy of bycatch reporting in the trawl fleet is critical – it is widely believed that actual bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is much higher than reported because of inadequate monitoring. Onboard observers are the only reliable method for collecting bycatch data from the trawl fisheries. Most Pacific Coast trawl fishery managers require 100% observer coverage. However, in the Gulf of Alaska, observer coverage levels have historically been low, with a required coverage rate of 30% prior to 2012.

In 2012 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implemented changes to the observer program that the agency hoped would fix data quality problems and eliminated the 30% coverage requirement. The Boat Company and other fishery stakeholders anticipated that the agency would improve coverage of the trawl fisheries that remove the largest volumes of halibut and chinook as bycatch. But NMFS established an expensive and inefficient observer program that diverted observer coverage from trawl vessels to smaller vessels that use lower impact, selective fishing gear. The observer coverage levels for the trawl fisheries fell to as low as 13% - well below coverage levels previously considered a minimum standard by the agency. This decline increased the uncertainty about NMFS’ estimates of chinook and halibut bycatch. The Boat Company then filed a lawsuit challenging the agency’s decision under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

In August 2014 United States District Court Judge H. Russel Holland ruled in favor of The Boat Company, finding that NMFS arbitrarily ignored the potential impacts of increased observer program costs and lower observer coverage levels. Judge Holland directed NMFS to prepare a supplemental Environmental Assessment, which NMFS intends to finalize by May 2015. The Boat Company’s legal counsel and staff will be participating extensively in the process.

Additionally, The Boat Company will be funding scientific research designed to inform the North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s and NMFS’ review of observer coverage levels needed to accurately estimate halibut and chinook bycatch in the trawl fisheries. The University of British Columbia’s Fishery Science Centre will be providing a peer review and statistical analysis of NMFS’ program, including recommendations for improvements as needed to provide scientifically sound recommendations for observer coverage levels in the trawl fisheries. A graduate assistant, under the supervision of the Centre’s Research Chair in Fisheries Assessment, will evaluate whether NMFS’ bycatch estimates are statistically reliable.

“The staff was unerringly polite and helpful; very solicitous of passengers’ needs. The food was excellent, creative and well presented. Wonderful job using the ‘daily catch’!”

BOB & LESLIE B. | LISERON | JUNE 28 - JULY 5, 2014

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# Cruising Schedules

## 2016

### M/V MIST COVE

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To reserve your trip, contact: 877.647.8268 | kathy@theboatcompany.org

## 2017

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Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Remove skin and bones from fish.

Roll fish in flour and brown in oil on both sides in a large frying pan or dutch oven.

Place vegetables (previously prepared) around fish and season with salt and pepper.

Add water and bake in a moderate oven at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Transfer fish and vegetables to a hot platter.

Make paste of flour and butter and add it to the remaining liquid in the pan, stirring constantly.

Pour this gravy over fish and vegetables and serve hot.

Halibut Pot Roast

**INGREDIENTS**

- 3lb chunk of Halibut
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup cooking oil
- 6 carrots
- 6 medium onions
- 2 cups chopped celery
- 6 potatoes
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 2 cups water

**GRAVY**

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup flour

**PREPARATION**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Remove skin and bones from fish.

Roll fish in flour and brown in oil on both sides in a large frying pan or dutch oven.

Place vegetables (previously prepared) around fish and season with salt and pepper.

Add water and bake in a moderate oven at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Transfer fish and vegetables to a hot platter.

Make paste of flour and butter and add it to the remaining liquid in the pan, stirring constantly.

Pour this gravy over fish and vegetables and serve hot.
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