

Catch Accountability Through Compensated Halibut

Guided Recreational Pool Plan

Concept Development Update: December 1, 2011

Notice: This document serves as a basis for discussion and is a working document with no final actions implied.

Project Team

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A Long Term Solution

Guided recreational anglers in Southeast Alaska are facing dwindling opportunities to fish for Pacific halibut because of an insufficient allocation to meet their historical demand. Increasingly stringent regulations on Southeast anglers has curbed demand for Southeast Alaska fishing trips, which has destabilized many businesses and local economies. While reduced bag limits have been confined to the Southeast so far, guided anglers and communities throughout the rest of Alaska may soon face a similar fate.

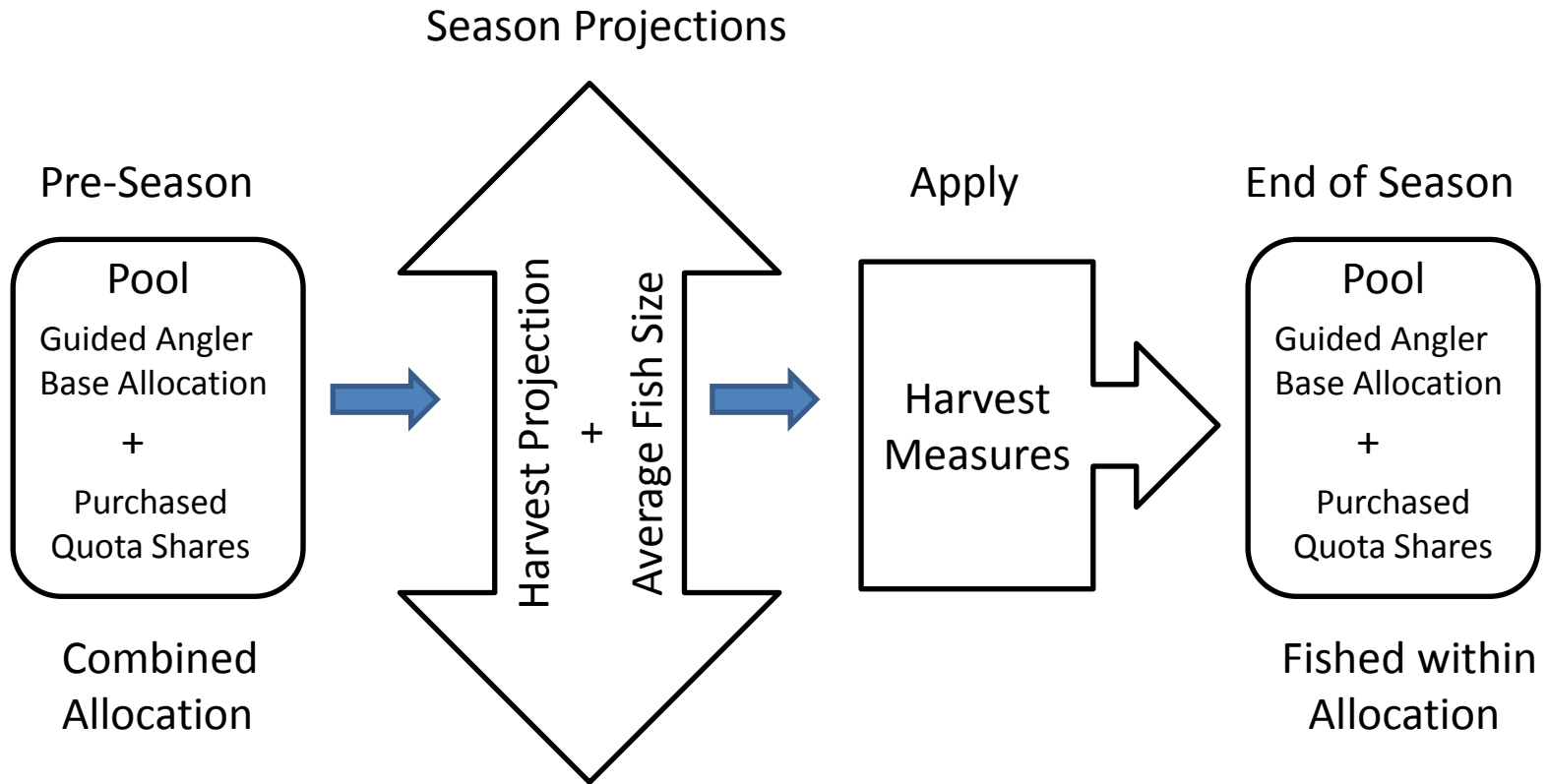
The CATCH Project hopes to provide a long-term solution to this problem by developing an innovative approach to using “catch shares” in a recreational fishery. Under a traditional catch share program, managers establish a fishery-wide catch limit and allocate specific portions of the total allowable catch to an entity. To prevent overfishing, each entity is required to stay within their catch limit. The CATCH approach will treat the entire guided recreational fishery as one entity. The program will be called the Guided Recreational Pool Plan as the regulatory allocation to guided recreational anglers would be “pooled” or supplemented with the purchase of Commercial Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) shares.

An important component of this guided recreational pool plan will be the ability to keep guided recreational harvest within allocation. In order to achieve this, the management system will need to address the unique dynamics of the recreational fishery, in which demand fluctuates year to year, as does the size of fish in a region (this is significant because fish size is used to convert numbers of fish caught into an allocation based in pounds). The CATCH approach will accomplish this and keep the guided recreational harvest within allocation.

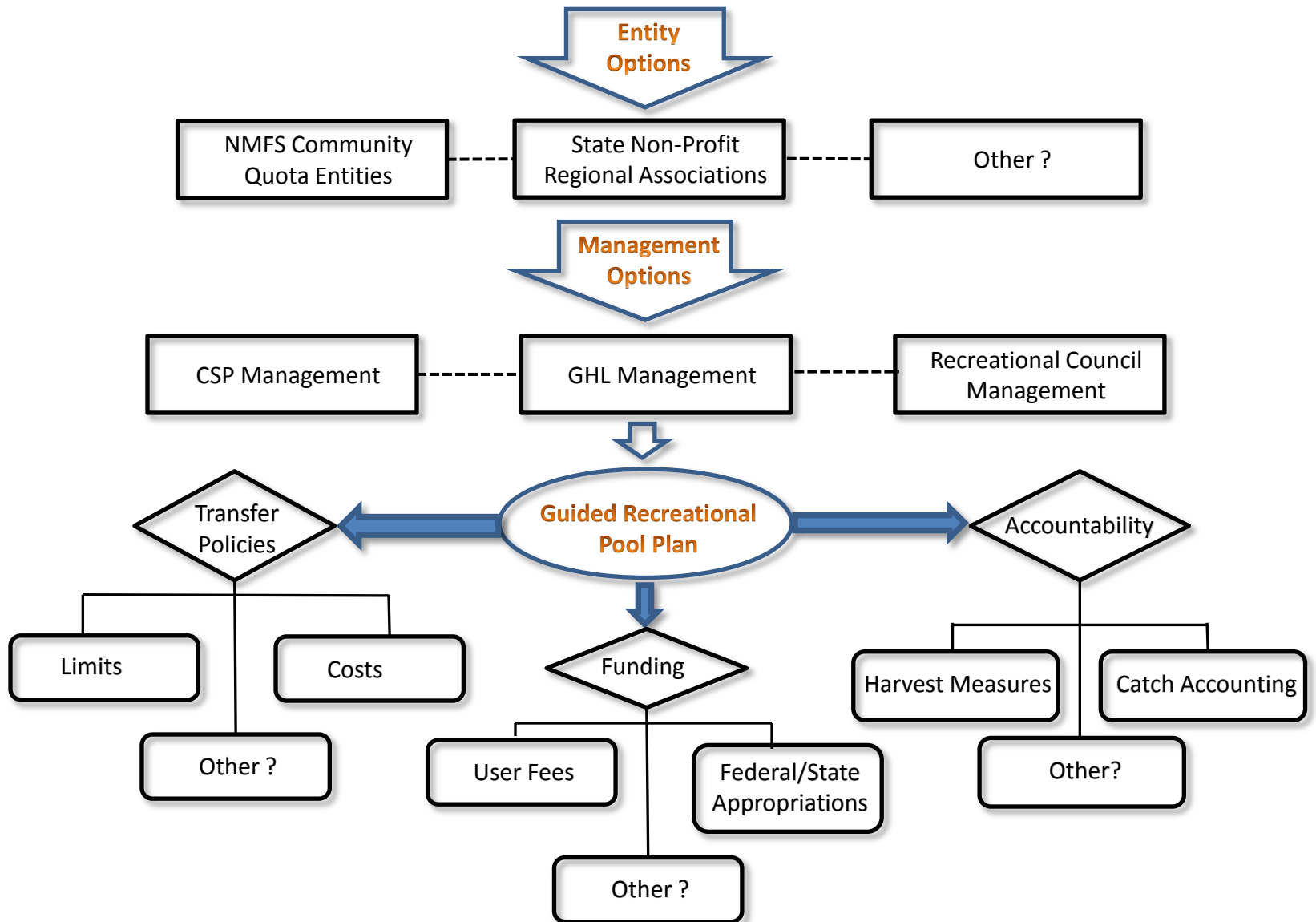
Though the CATCH concept was developed to allow the guided recreational sector to supplement existing allocations, in the broader picture, the transfer mechanism could benefit both the guided recreational and commercial sectors and could be applied to any fishery or user group nationwide.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan

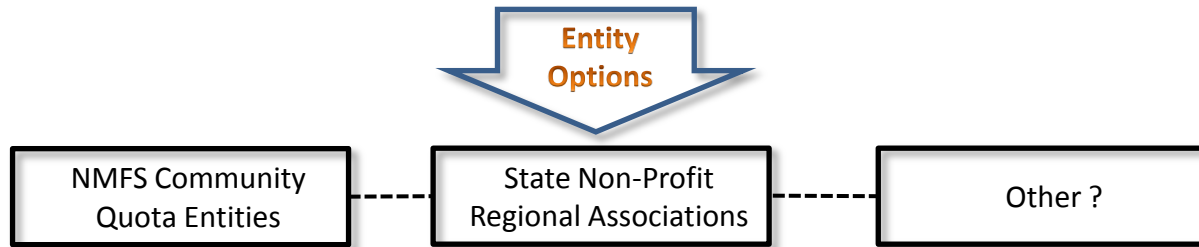
Process



CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan Components



Options for Holding Entity



NMFS Community Quota Entities

Establishment of an entity similar to a CQE (Community Quota Entity) .

Besides regional CQE's for Area 2C and 3A, the possibility of sub-regional CQE's will also be considered, i.e. Area 2C divided into inside and out-side waters.

Changes to federal IFQ regulations (CFR 50-Part 300.67) will be required. Amendments to allow sufficient quota share holding capacity and authorization to collect user fees to purchase halibut quota shares will have to be made.

State Non-Profit Regional Association

Establishment of non-profit regional associations (NPRA), authorized with limited authority by NMFS to collect user fees to purchase halibut quota shares.

Modeled after the State of Alaska Private Non-Profit Regional Aquaculture Associations.

Besides regional associations for Area 2C and 3A, sub-regional associations will also be considered.

Changes to federal IFQ regulations (CFR 50-Part 300.67) will have to be made to qualify NPRA as a buyer. Sufficient quota share holding capacity would also have to be established.

Management Options



CSP Management Plan

Guided Recreational Pool would replace the GAF (Guided Angler Fish) provisions under NMFS Catch Sharing Plan.

Guided recreational angler allocation would be supplemented by pool purchased halibut quota shares before harvest measures are applied.

GHL Management Plan

GHL stair-steps would be supplemented by pool quota share purchases before harvest measures are applied.

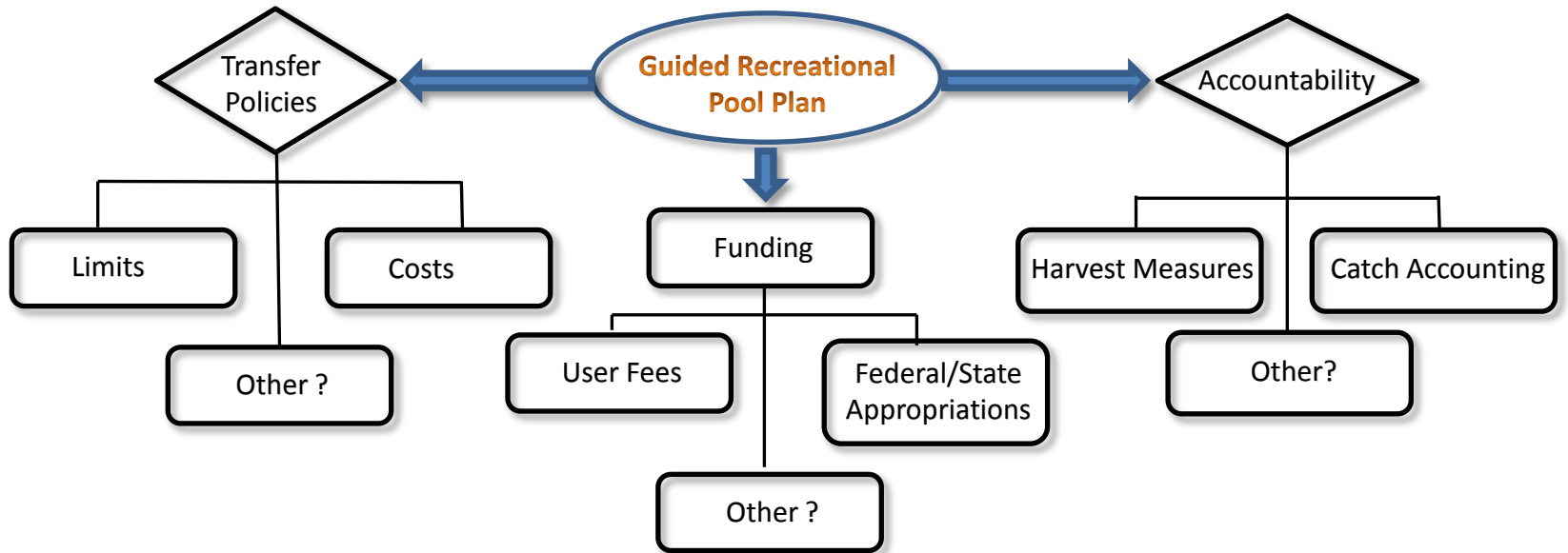
Recreational Council Management Plan

Recreational Council would seek authority from NMFS to make recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce similar to how the North Pacific Fishery Management Council currently operates with the exception that Recreational Council Members will be from the recreational fishery or their representatives.

Recreational Council may elect to impose a sector self tax to cover data collection costs. These funds would be kept separate from the funds raised for the purchase of halibut quota shares.

An expedited rule making process will be developed to ensure changes in regulation will be able to react, in a timely manner, to changes in the resource and guided recreational demand.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan Components



CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan Components



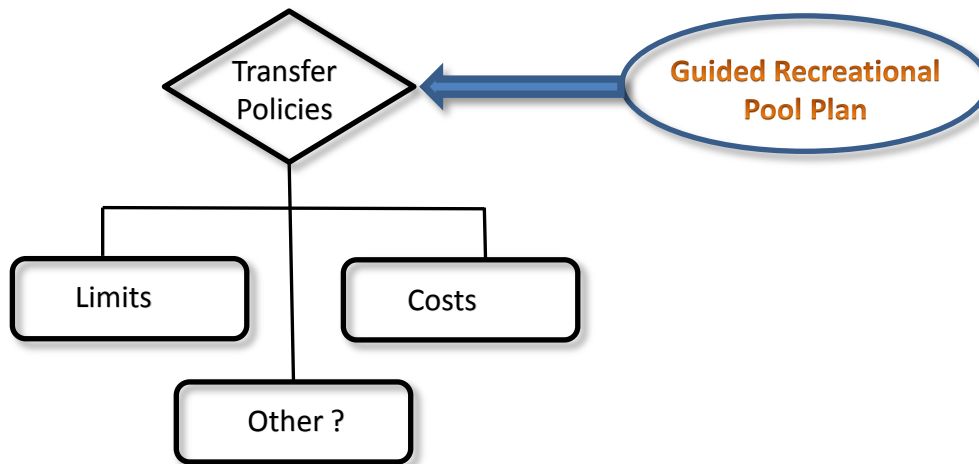
Guided Recreational Pool Plan

Initial allocations would be determined by the management plan in effect and their respective allocation to guided recreational anglers.

Purchase of commercial quota shares would supplement initial allocations.

Commercial halibut quota shares would be purchased from willing sellers.

Guided Recreational Pool Plan: Transfer Policies



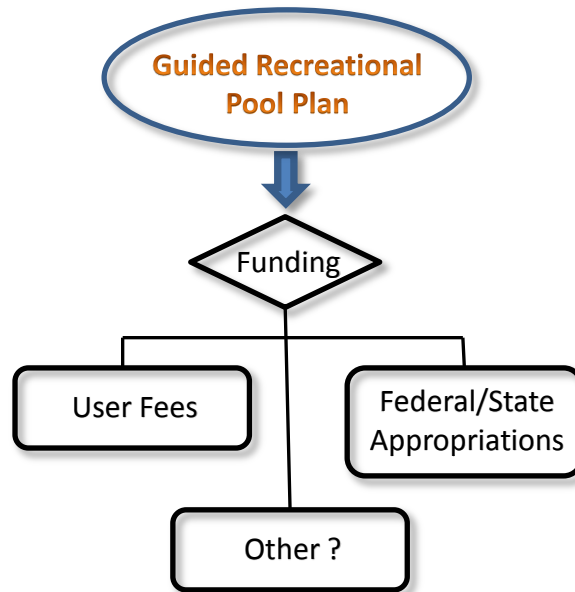
Limits

Caps on the amount of annual purchase of quota shares may be needed to ensure quota share availability for new entrant participation in commercial fishery.

Costs

Cost recovery fees could be attached to funding mechanism such as a one or two percent tax on halibut stamps.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan: Funding Options



User Fee – Halibut Stamp

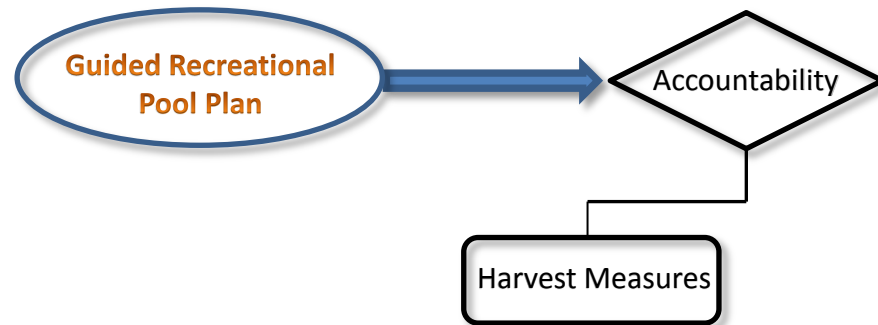
A purchased license to fish from this pool in the form of a halibut stamp would be used to fund purchases of halibut quota shares.

Initial quota share purchases may require a loan from the State or Federal government with the revenue stream from the sale of halibut stamps used to retire loan debt.

Appropriations/Grants

Purchase of quota shares for the guided recreational pool would be open to governmental appropriations and private grants if available.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan: Accountability Options



Harvest Measures

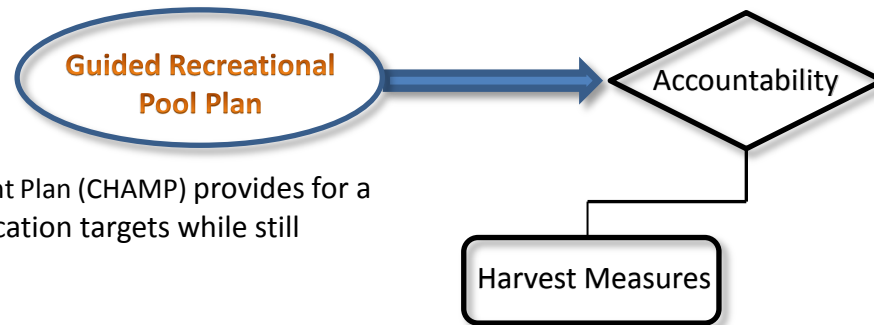
Option A:

A simple suite of traditional harvest restrictions would be used (two fish of any size, two fish with one of a maximum size, one fish of any size, and one fish of a maximum size). The least restrictive rule would be selected that would keep guided angler harvest within their pooled allocation. Either through existing mid-season forecasting methods or future electronic daily data collection and reporting systems, an unanticipated over harvest of allocation would be projected and an appropriate season closure date would be announced. If an under harvest was forecasted, either a less restrictive harvest measure could be announced or at the end of the sport fishing season, the commercial sector would be allowed to fish the underage.

Option B:

Harvest ticket alternative: Through an algorithm, harvest tickets would be issued in numbers of fish based on total guided recreational allocation (base allocation plus purchased QS) and distributed on a first come first serve basis. A fair and equitable distribution method would be selected that would take into account the varying means by which guided recreational anglers access the fishery. If in-season data collection and projections suggest additional fishing opportunities exist beyond initial harvest ticket issuance, additional harvest tickets may be issued at that time. Fishing stops when all harvest tickets are used. If an unanticipated high angler demand occurs, not all guided anglers would have equal opportunities to fish.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan: Accountability Options



Option C: CHAMP

The Charter Halibut Allocation Management Plan (CHAMP) provides for a broader tolerance level in reaching allocation targets while still achieving conservation goals.

Sub-Option A:

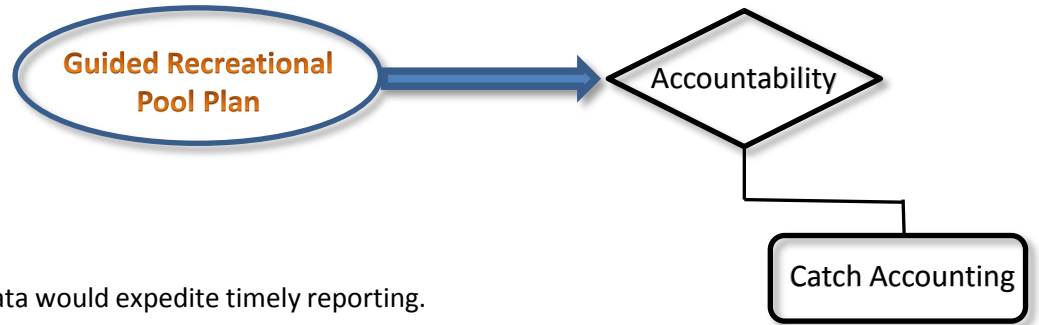
In times of low abundance, guided anglers would be managed under the least restrictive harvest measure that would be projected to achieve a harvest of 80-90% of the regulatory allocation for the upcoming season. If at the end of the season the harvest is below this 80-90% threshold, the under harvested difference would be rolled over to the next season's allocation. On the other hand, if at the end of the season the harvest is over 110% of that season's regulatory allocation, the overage difference would be debited from the next season's allocation.

Sub-Option B:

In times of low abundance, guided anglers would be managed under the least restrictive harvest measure that would be projected to achieve a harvest of 80-90% of the regulatory allocation for the upcoming season. As abundance increases this percentage would increase until eventually 100 percent of the regulatory allocation is again used.

The initial purchase of quota shares for the pool would be applied to supplement the guided recreational base allocation until a sufficient amount is purchased that would cover potential overages of the guided recreational base allocation due to fluctuations in angler demand and average fish sizes. Beyond this set aside amount (buffer), purchased quota shares would work towards lessening harvest restrictions.

CATCH Guided Recreational Pool Plan: Accountability Options



Catch Accounting

Electronic reporting of charter log book data would expedite timely reporting.

The addition of halibut length measurements to log books would refine average fish size data collection.

Harvest tickets or jaw tags could be used as a separate catch accounting tool if the charter log books are not deemed verifiable and/or timely enough to expedite regulatory processes.

CATCH Project Summary

The CATCH Project is a collaboration between the Alaska Charter Association (ACA) and the Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO) to develop the first ever pool-based catch share plan for a charter recreational fishery. The Project is funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Fisheries Innovation Fund.

Stakeholder outreach meetings were conducted during the summer of 2011 to disseminate information on the project and to gather input on various aspects of the conceptual design. Further research and refinement of the conceptual design is currently in progress. An economic study is also being conducted by The Research Group from Corvallis, Oregon, to provide economic impact information on the transfer of IFQ quota shares between the commercial and guided recreational sectors. A stakeholders committee will meet in March of 2012 to discuss the Project's findings and to make recommendations on component alternatives. The Project is scheduled for completion in December of 2012.

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