



Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) March 9, 2022 Meeting Minutes Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

The ABRT is established for the purpose of exploring the issue of bycatch and providing recommendations to policy makers with the goal of improving the health and sustainability of Alaska's fisheries and protecting Alaska's record as a leader of fisheries' conservation and sustainability. ABRT website: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.main>

1. Call to order

Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) meeting called to order at 9 AM by Chairman Jensen.

2. Roll call: acknowledge Task Force participants

Task Force Members present: John Jensen (Chair), Tommy Sheridan (Vice Chair), Ragnar Alstrom, Kevin Delaney, Mike Flores, Brian Gabriel, Linda Kozak, Stephanie Madsen, Erik Velsko, Senator Peter Micciche, Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang

Other attendees: Karla Bush Department of Fish and Game, Maddison Goldman for senator Micciche, Kari Winkel Department of Fish and Game

3. Approve Agenda: March 9, 2022, Approved

4. Approve minutes: February 11, 2022, Approved

5. Old Business

a) Review of Subcommittees

I. Science, technology, and innovation committee

- Members: to be further discussed and assigned by the Chair and Vice Chair
- Role of Committee: Formed as a foundational committee to explore specific issues and serve the needs of the other committees. Compile relevant available information for and upon request by other committees and describe how that information was collected. Also, to compile and describe relevant data and technology such as observer coverage and monitoring, developments in genetics, consideration of gear modifications, etc. To research making data more accessible to the public as well as accepting public input on the ABRT. To work with ADF&G on further developing the website and communications with the public.

II. Western Alaska Salmon committee

- Members: to be further discussed and assigned by the Chair and Vice Chair

III. Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Crab committee

- Members: to be further discussed and assigned by the Chair and Vice Chair

IV. Gulf of Alaska Halibut and Salmon committee

- Members: to be further discussed and assigned by the Chair and Vice Chair

Note: ABRT did discuss including Bering Sea Halibut but since the North Pacific Fishery Management Council has recently taken action on abundance-based management for this issue, the ABRT has decided to not take up this issue at this time.

b) Review draft work plan

- Chairman read the draft work plan, which is available on the ABRT website, and reviewed what the scope of the ABRT is and to whom they will make a final report.
 - Commissioner Vincent-Lang explained the hatchery vs. wild interactions as not a bycatch issue. This is being addressed by the BOF and ADF&G.
- ABRT discussed committee structure laid out in the work plan and agreed to what had been decided upon by the steering/workplan committee.
 - Possible outreach committee discussed, possible communication with directly affected communities. A discussion needs to be had on how to disseminate the information gathered/compiled/decided upon by the ABRT. Possibly use public listening sessions or other forms of outreach vs. a committee.
 - Possibly have each committee put outreach on their agendas and utilize F&G staff to send that out to the public.
 - Have other staff support like BOF staff or other ADF&G staff to help with dissemination of information. Commissioner Vincent-Lang to investigate this with ADF&G staff.

c) Review Task Force meeting Schedule

- April 19 update of sub committees and possible listening session
 - Distinction between listening session and public comment at the end of a meeting was discussed but not determined.
 - Requested that direction from subcommittees laid out before a listening session is had, so public comment can be made on how the ABRT plans on moving forward.
 - Request for listening sessions to be virtual to allow as much public engagement as possible.
- May 17 regular meeting possibly hybrid in person/virtual
 - Possibly have this be the listening session instead to allow subcommittees to provide structure and direction to the public discussion had at the listening session.
 - ADF&G to provide outreach regarding a public listening session and accept public input prior to the listening session meeting.

6. New Business: informational presentation

- **Presentation from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center Genetics Program staff:** *An overview of genetic stock identification of salmon captured in Alaskan groundfish fisheries.*
 - Made available in the ABRT reference library on the webpage here:
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.reference>
- ABRT members asked various questions for clarification and more information regarding the presentation. Presentation by Dr. Wes Larson begins 1hr 2min into recording and ends 2hr 2min into the recording.

7. Public Comment

- **Names and locations of people making public comments maybe incorrectly transcribed from the meeting audio; we apologize for any mistakes.**

- 1) Patrick O'Donnell: Provided data he received from Chuck Guthrie (AFSC) in response to a question he heard during the genetics presentation regarding the average weight of Chinook salmon taken as bycatch. In 2018, the average weight in the Bering Sea was 5.89 lbs. and in the Gulf of Alaska it was 5.09 lbs. In 2019, the Chinook salmon bycatch average weight was 6.40 lbs. in the Bering Sea and 4.60 lbs. in the Gulf of Alaska.
- 2) Louie Green Jr: Northern Norton Sound fisherman out of Nome, sees correlations on chum salmon bycatch peaking in 2007, correlation of low chum and low chinook returns into AYK. Norton sounds has had significant impacts on chum and Chinook salmon; ~15-20% amount of bycatch in Bering Sea is very significant to Nome/ Norton sound area. *Commented again later to report some historical information regarding Nome fisheries.
- 3) Casey McManus: Commercial crab fisherman Bering Sea, believes use of social media is helpful for public outreach. Suggests using it as an effective outreach tool.
- 4) Martin Nicholai: Bethel area subsistence fisherman from Kwethluk concerned about chum, Chinook, and silver salmon bycatch in Bering Sea causing openings to be few and far between for in river subsistence users. Wants the limit of salmon bycatch lowered to allow more escapement to the Kuskokwim and Yukon rivers for subsistence fisherman.
- 5) Stanislaw Shepard: Lower Yukon River, Mountain Village subsistence fisherman. We depend on the salmon Chinook, chum, and coho. Salmon used to be very big and now they are small; half to quarter of the size they were in the 60/70s. Interested in protecting the subsistence harvest of salmon. Concerned fishing issues going past three years which could cause a moratorium on the Yukon River. Thinks Area M/ False Pass should be a focus of the ABRT. *Commented again later on regarding historical chum crash in the 80s and noticed a pattern between what happened then and what is happening now.
- 6) Gabriel Buster: Lower Yukon River, Alakanuk, wants more information on trawler lights during the pollock fisheries to reduce salmon bycatch and for them to be considered more widely as something to help reduce bycatch.
- 7) Rebecca Skinner: Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Gulf of Alaska trawl catcher vessels. Appreciates presentation provided and appreciates the webpage for the Task Force. Request for clarification of how sub committees are being handled: Will there be public participation on the subcommittees? Chairman Jensen replied that the plan at this stage is to have ABRT members on the subcommittees; there will be opportunities for public participation at subcommittee meetings.
- 8) Ray Mendoni: Lower Yukon River, Alakanuk, appreciative of the Governor and the ABRT for looking into this matter and getting salmon returns back to the Yukon River for subsistence use. Thinks an outreach committee to engage the communities interested in bycatch would be very helpful.
- 9) Eric Osborne: Tom cod biomass down considerably this year and they are important forage fish. International study of fish found many silver salmon end up off the coast of British Columbia. Feels that Gulf of Alaska bycatch is under reported and needs more observer coverage. Believes the Gulf of Alaska is a statistic and is hopeful the ABRT can get things fixed there.

8. Task Force Comments

- Admin comments made by Karla Bush ADF&G
 - Dedicated email account for ABRT has been created: BycatchReview@alaska.gov
 - Dedicated staff for administrative support is in the recruitment process
 - Dedicated Zoom account has been requested
 - Website location and information provided
 - <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.main>
- Brian Gabriel: Does not want meetings of any subcommittees to run concurrently to allow participation by all interested ABRT members.

9. **Next Meeting Date April 19, 2022**
10. **Adjournment at 11:42 am**