

Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council

Date: April 29, 2024

To: Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang
Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker

From: Linda Kozak, Chair

Subject: Bycatch Advisory Council report and recommendations

The Bycatch Advisory Council (BAC) met on April 16, 2024 and received a report from the Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee. This subcommittee was chaired by member Brian Gabriel and other members were Duncan Fields (harvester) and Chelsae Radell (processor). The subcommittee met four times and considered issues and challenges that would need to be addressed by the State of Alaska prior to initiating regulatory actions to require utilization of bycatch. These include regulatory, economic and logistical challenges. Public testimony was taken at each subcommittee meeting.

Following the report and further public comment, the BAC discussed the issue. It was determined to forward the report to you, without recommending action on developing a proposal for this issue. The entire issue of bycatch utilization is very complicated and there are many challenges that need to be considered when addressing more full utilization for prohibited, regulatory and even economic discards. We believe the identified issues will be helpful to you as background information on this important issue.

That report was posted to the bycatch website and a link is shown below:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624_abac_report.pdf

Additionally, the BAC members considered recommendations by the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force in order to suggest additional priorities for your consideration. It was recognized that several initiatives are in the process of being analyzed, while others are under consideration. A report of those issues which were identified is attached.



Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council (ABAC) Report to Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang April 2024

Members of the Bycatch Advisory Council:

Linda Kozak, Chair
Kevin Delaney
Karma Ulvi

John Jensen, Vice-Chair
Brain Gabriel
Erik Velsko

Eva Dawn Burk
Stephanie Madsen

The members of the Bycatch Advisory Council met on April 16, 2024 and identified the following recommendations for consideration.

State Engagement:

- Continue pre-Council (NPFMC) virtual meetings and look at ways to provide better notice to interested parties.
- More bycatch town hall meetings are encouraged with suggested times and locations in conjunction with Board of Fishery meetings or other events where members of the public would be able to attend. A recommendation would be to hold a virtual town hall meeting in November with the Commissioner and the Bycatch Advisory Council members.
- The State of Alaska is encouraged to continue working directly with Tribes.

Management:

- Continue work at the NPFMC toward finding solutions for Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections.
- Electronic Monitoring is an important tool for state-managed fisheries. The BAC supports efforts to create and pass legislation providing for EM authority.
- Consider development of Abundance Based Management for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska. This action would assist in making bycatch regulations between the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska more consistent.
- Rationalization for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is recommended in order to more fully manage and control bycatch of prohibited species.

Other:

- Continue the emphasis and focus on salmon genetics and working toward more real-time reporting of salmon origins for the Bering Sea pollock fishery.