

JOINT BOARD OF FISHERIES & GAME
Joint Board Committee
December 9, 2015
On Time Public Comment Index

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Comments of Charles Lean

Regarding expenditures/ budget cutting of the Boards of Fish and Game

Member of NNSAC (chair), Retired F&G Area Manager, Retired OSM Fisheries Resource Analyst, Have attended Board of Fish and Game Meetings since 1976 on annual basis.

I am concerned for the viability of the regulatory system if the regulatory cycle is lengthened any more. The failure of the Board system will marginalize the state fish and wildlife management and hand rural management to the Federal system. Budget cuts need to focus on support of the advisory committees, especially in rural settings where membership is widely distributed and centralized support is unavailable. 14 members all residing in different communities with insufficient resources to conduct a meeting and/or record the results will fail. Support staff are what keeps these remote communities in the system. When the public does not participate in the ownership of the resources regulations, the regulations loose meaning.

I was happy to see the fish and game cycles alternate and have a similar 3year cycle. By alternating years the ACs will have a mission each year and their relevancy will be sustainable. Gaps in annual cycles can kill organizations. One point missed in the supporting documents is the opportunity for AF&G Staff to educate the public in AC meetings. The annual discussions to tend to promote understanding, making regulatory decisions easier and keeping strong emotions under control. The other draw back to too much time between cycles is that the most important proposals will tend to be ACRs which create public notice problems.

Budget cuts to amenities, like coffee service and car rentals, are the least detrimental cuts I can think of. I hope the Board Members will feel as I do about keeping the bush ACs in the mix by allowing staff support to continue there. The proposal books are more often late than on time in our mail boxes. I must depend on the home page in order to read the proposals prior to the cyclic meetings. This printing cost could be cut since the printing of the proposals is already borne by the AC members in Nome.

I understand that the budget cuts are mandated from above and the Board staff and Board members are torn in their desire to conserve and maintain the function of the system. I believe the Alaskan Board system as it has functioned in my adult life has been the shining star of regulatory bodies. Thank you for doing what you can with the mandates you have.



November 30, 2015

ADF&G Boards Support
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau AK 99811

Members of the Joint Committee;

I am writing today on behalf of the Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) membership and its Board of Directors to provide our thoughts regarding cost saving measures and impacts to the Board of Fisheries' process.

CDFU has been the voice of commercial fishermen since 1935 and currently represents over 800 fishing families in the Prince William Sound and Copper River region of Alaska. It is our mission to preserve, promote and perpetuate the commercial fishing industry and fishing resources of our region for the benefit of generations of fishermen. The majority of our members are Alaskans living in Cordova, a small coastal Alaska community whose economy depends almost entirely on the commercial salmon industry. We appreciate Board Supports' effort to solicit public input, before taking action that could significantly change the nature of the Board of Fisheries process.

In light of the current fiscal situation in Alaska, we support the work to find reasonable efficiencies to reduce budgets while preserving the core functions initially intended of the Boards of Fish & Game. Additionally, we recognize tough decisions will be made and also support that the consideration of changes be done in light of their value to the Board process rather than their bearing on the bottom line.

With respect to the questions provided in advance of this comment period, please find our comments below.

1.) Changes to BOF meeting cycle.

We would support extending all regional meeting cycles to either 4 or 5 years rather than the 3-year/6-year cycle suggested in Option 3 of the Board Support Budget Overview. Extending meeting cycles would alleviate budget expenses for the Board of Fish and ADF&G staff as well as groups and individuals engaging in the process. Additionally, a longer cycle would better align with the life histories of salmon species, which could allow for better observation of effects resulting from adopted regulations.

3.) Methods to reduce the number of proposals in a given cycle.

The Board process in Alaska was originally designed to allow for the free flow of communication allowing the public an active role in the sustainable management of its natural resources. Considering change scenarios that condense the number of proposals in a given cycle could limit public access and reduce the public's ability to meaningfully participate. Because of the nature of the Board process, it is difficult to proffer solutions that meet the budget reduction needs as well as provide for public involvement in the process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing our engagement in this robust conversation as it develops, and hearing ideas generated from different groups through this exercise.

Sincerely,

Alexis Cooper, Executive Director
Director@CDFU.org



Submitted By
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Submitted On
12/3/2015 1:15:20 PM
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~~Dear Board of Fisheries,

Here are my comments on how I believe the Boards could operate in a more proficient manner and achieve savings in these financially challenging times;

Board Meetings and Expenses

- Change the cycles to every 5 years
- Combine meetings whenever possible. Example: The UCI and LCI meeting could be combined. This would derive huge savings because it would eliminate one complete set of Board and Staff travel expenses and separate equipment transportation and set up.
- Additionally, you could take this one step further and follow up or precede a BOF meeting with a BOG meeting for the same area. The benefit would be in equipment transportation and set up costs. You would also save in Board support staff travel.
- You might also be able to negotiate better meeting hall terms and lodging for longer term meetings.

Conduct of Board Meetings

- Eliminate the opening "Public Testimony" portion. Most is long forgotten by the time deliberations rolls around.
- Eliminate the "Committee Process" Very few proposals ever get concensus and that can become misleading when brought back to the Board.
- Group proposals by their nature (all sport boating related proposals, sport guide proposals, sport seasons and bag limits, Commercial area and time, commercial gear types, etc.)
- Have Staff RCs prepared for each group of proposals with staff comments and suggested action (support / oppose/ neutral) attached to each proposal. Staff may suggest actions on allocative proposals as well if they so choose.
- The Board Chairman would bring a group of proposals to the floor and allow public comment on any of the proposals in that group. He would preface the public comments by stating that, "Comments would be 3 min. max. and limited to new information only that is not included in the proposal or staff comments"
- Deliberations on a group of proposals would start immediately after the public comments. This would be an improvement on the old system because all Board members would hear all pertinent comments. The comments would be fresh in everyone's minds and direct in nature to individual proposals.
- We know from experience that in any group of proposals there are probably half or more that would be eliminated from consideration because of lack of support. This process could be speeded up if the Chair would ask, "Is there any support for this proposal"?, "hearing none...there is no action on this proposal".

I believe these changes would improve the process and provide cost savings.

Other Idea

- Professional Boards: When we are talking about billions of dollars in fisheries and game related industries it may be time to consider going to professional Boards with their own staffs of researchers.
- There could still be cycles where individuals, groups or agencies could submit proposals, then staff comments would be submitted on the proposals. The public would then get a chance to comment on either the proposals themselves or the staff comments relative to a proposal.
- After that it would be up to the professional board and their staff to decide if any changes in regulations or management plans were



necessary or appropriate regarding each individual resource or area in question.

This would bring more science rather than politics into the decision making process and should offer better protection of our resources for long-term sustainability.

Dwight Kramer
Kenai, Ak.



-----Original Message-----

From: glh@alaska.net [<mailto:glh@alaska.net>]

Sent: Thursday, December 03, 2015 7:51 AM

To: DFG, BOF Comments (DFG sponsored)

Subject: Five year cycle

Dear Chairmen of the Alaska BOF & BOG,

I believe one of the biggest cost savings to the State of Alaska, concerning the BOF & BOG, would be to go on a FIVE year cycle of meetings instead of the three year cycle that we currently are on.

Board meetings are expensive for the State of Alaska, and also for the individuals who participate in the process. I have attended every BOF meeting for Upper Cook Inlet finfish since 1986. With 14 plus day meetings, usually in Anchorage, the cost to participate is very expensive. With transportation, food, lodging, etc., I have conservatively spent \$30,000 at the BOF process over the years.

Concerned people would still have annual October "Agenda Change Request" meeting or the petition avenue to address potential unforeseen items out of cycle.

Thank you,

Gary L. Hollier
Kenai, Ak
907-252-5890



BOF/BOG Workgroup
PO Box 4 Petersburg AK, 99833

Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association
(907) 772-9323
email: pvoa@gci.net

November 30, 2015

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Board of Fisheries
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811
dfg.bof.comments@alaska.gov

RE: December Board of Fish and Board of Game Workgroup

Dear Board of Fisheries and Board of Game Members,

Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association (PVOA) is composed of almost 100 members participating in a wide variety of species and gear type fisheries. An additional thirty businesses supportive to our industry are members. Our members fish throughout Alaska from Southeast to the Bering Sea. Targeted species include salmon, herring, halibut, sablefish, cod, crab, and shrimp.

PVOA's mission statement is to: "Promote the economic viability of the commercial fishing fleet in Petersburg, promote the conservation and rational management of North Pacific resources, and advocate the need for protection of fisheries habitat."

PVOA members understand that the State's current fiscal situation is restricting on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game including the Board of Fish. We regret the idea of the current schedules changing, but understand the necessity. Our organization is grateful to have a voice in the process.

Our members agreed that Option 4, moving to a five-year cycle with Southeast and Kodiak as a meeting group is the best solution. However, we are adamant that Southeast and Kodiak would need to have separate meetings. The two places are geographically too far apart to combine them for a meeting. The travel would be too difficult. Coastal communities need to have access to the Board of Fish and one meeting concerning both areas would decrease the number of people able to attend.

If the current cycle changes to a five-year cycle, we feel that Board members' terms should also become longer term to match the cycle. Understanding all the fisheries is a great burden for Board of Fish members, especially new ones. PVOA believes longer-terms would help the Board maintain members with history and aid new Board members by allowing them more time to become familiar with the State's fisheries. PVOA members believe longer Board member terms would help meetings run more efficiently and consequently reduce the extended duration of meetings we expect to result from a five-year cycle.



BOF/BOG Workgroup
PO Box 4 Petersburg AK, 99833

Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association
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PVOA's suggestion to reduce the number of proposals would also create revenue for the Board. Our organization recommends an entry fee on proposals. We believe that if a person has to pay to submit a proposal, they will consider longer whether it is worthy of entering. This income would help some of the costs of the Board process and may reduce the overload of proposals. Since the budget cuts we have noticed that it is increasingly difficult to obtain proposal books. We think it would be appropriate if some money from a proposal entry fee went to covering the cost of proposal books. Many of our members mentioned they have a hard time reading whole proposal books from a computer screen.

We believe a five-year cycle and fee on proposal entries would generate savings and some income for the Board of Fish. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and including the public in these decisions. We can be reached to answer any questions at pvoa@gci.net

Respectfully,

Megan O'Neil
Executive Director



Submitted By
Richard Person
Submitted On
11/30/2015 7:19:33 PM
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Primarily I think the board cycle should be extended to 4 or 5 years. Under no circumstances do I think UCI should be brought up every year.

Please see my survey results for more ideas.



Tad Fujioka
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Sitka AK 99835

Joint Boards of Fisheries and Game
Board Support Section
PO Box 115526
Juneau AK 99811-5526

Dec 2, 2015

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the BOG & BOF's plans to change their processes to fit the current and future budget situations. As a member of the Sitka AC for about a decade, I have long been impressed with the degree of public input inherent to the current board processes. Not only are the people who have the most direct knowledge of the resources given the opportunity to comment on potential regulation changes, but the current meeting schedule is frequent enough to allow regulations to change in response to resource population fluctuations. The challenge facing the Boards today is to significantly reduce costs without sacrificing too much of these two great strengths.

While I have heard suggestions to expand the Board of Fish cycle from the current three years to four, five, or even six years, I believe that this would be greatly sub-optimal. Firstly, this timeframe is so long that the boards will be unable to routinely respond to changes in abundance or price-both of which are barely able to be met with the current 3 year cycle. Secondly, the quality of the decisions made by the board are likely to suffer as the length of cycle increases. Already the breadth of proposals that an individual board member must become informed on is vast. Many proposals that do end up passing, are submitted multiple times before they are eventually accepted. In many cases this is due to board members (at least the ones that are re-appointed) becoming more educated on the issue during their second or third meeting. Unless terms for board members are similarly extended, the board's institutional knowledge will suffer if the meeting cycle is extended. This will result in proposals that are worthy but complex (as many good ones are) never getting understood well enough to be approved. Thirdly, the extended time frame will mean that the stakes for the resources users will be proportionally higher. There will be many more proposals, and even more acrimony. With so much on the line, tempers and emotions will be even more frayed. Board members, staff and resource users will all suffer from this intensity.

If budgetary reality demands significant change, rather than extending the traditional meeting cycle, I suggest that the Boards look to using video conferencing and more reliance on written communications during their meetings. Staff reports & public testimony could easily be conducted via video conferencing. Assuming that the many Fish & Game offices all around the state have high speed Internet, even committee testimony and deliberations could be done this way. The only activity going on at the current Board meetings that requires that people be in one another's physical presence is the unofficial (and frequently undesirably) backroom lobbying. There would certainly be some adjustment needed to get used to video meetings on the part of all participants- board members, staff and the public, but I see regular video meetings as potentially resulting in better management than infrequent traditional meetings. It may take some experimenting to determine the optimal usage for this technology. Perhaps it could be standard practice to conduct certain portions of all meetings via video conferencing, or perhaps a region's meetings could alternate between entirely virtual and traditional with one of each every six years.

Besides costing less, virtual meetings would have at least one other advantage over traditional meetings. One of the greatest criticisms of the current system is the unequal influence of different



members of the public. After attending several meetings, it is apparent that the fate of many proposals rests not with any arguments presented in RCs, PCs, or committee testimony, but with off-record lobbying that opposing members of the public are not present for and hence, not able to rebut. By having Board members stay in their hometowns (or at least the closest town with an ADF&G office equipped for video conferencing) they are much less available for such backdoor access. Reducing opportunity for informal personal communication will increase the importance of the formal communication. Record Comments would become more important and should continue to be posted on the Internet in near-real time as they typically are now. It is this sort of official communication (with official records) that should be the basis for the decisions made by the Boards.

If electronic meetings is too radical of an idea to be considered acceptable, a simple step to reduce the number of proposals under consideration would be to eliminate the option of electronic submission. By requiring that a proposal be submitted in hardcopy, the proposer would have to invest more time and planning (particularly if the proposal form was lengthened) into their submission, thereby reducing the number of lower-quality proposals. Just as electronic communication would make the board meetings less costly, eliminating that option for proposal submittals would make creating a proposal slightly more difficult (but still easily enough accomplished for anybody who is motivated.)

If this alone did not reduce the number of proposals sufficiently, a more extreme alternative would be to require that all proposals be co-sponsored by at least one local Advisory Committee. Not only would this require that the applicant plan ahead, but would also eliminate many of the proposals that are ridiculous or vindictive. By increasing the influence of the ACs this would inherently give more power to the public and allow staff and the Boards to concentrate on those proposals with at least some legitimate public support.

Thank you for considering my thoughts,

Tad Fujioka