



Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council (ABAC)

March 3, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

1. Call to order

The Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council meeting was called to order by Chair Kozak at 9:03 am

Roll call: acknowledge Advisory Council participants and introduce new members

Members present: Linda Kozak (Chair 2024), Brian Gabriel (vice chair 2024), Eva Dawn Burk, Kevin Delaney, Megan O'Neil, Chelsae Radell, Karma Ulvi

Other attendees: ADF&G staff: Art Nelson, Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker, Kari Winkel

2. Approve Agenda: March 3, 2025, Approved with amendments

3. Approve Minutes: November 5, 2024, Approved

4. Election of 2025 Chair and Vice-Chair **** Moved to next meeting*****

5. Review 2023 and 2024 meeting focus and recommendations and Introduction of focus for 2025.

Chair Kozak: Provided a brief overview of previous meeting focus and recommendations via a power point that is available on the website.

a) ABRT State Engagement recommendations

b) Progress report

6. Public Comment

- Laine Welch: Why has the State not formulated a bycatch policy yet. Applauds effort to provide more out reach but the primary need of the public is to simplify the language. Example of the crab industry they refer to the catch as poundage and bycatch as individual crab. Metric tonnage should be converted to poundage so as to be more easily understood. Understand and respects the need for scientific language, but it is so confusing and full of scientific jargon and acronyms and it is very intimidating to the public. Urges simplification of language when it comes to bycatch.
- Benjamin Allen: Halibut fisherman in looking at the reports appreciates the knowledge and information. Concerned about recruitment numbers, knowing if the catch is small immature fish vs adult mature fish, feels this would rule out some concerns.
- Kevin Suydam: Utilization would be contradictory to the goal it would be an incentive to bycatch as opposed to an inhibition. Crab fishing in Kodiak affected by the Pollock industry has decimated crab and halibut. Use EM to keep trawl off the bottom and save the crab. Was horrified to see the council increase crab bycatch and sees this as an admission of guilt that trawl is dragging the bottom. Feels pollock is being over fished as well and the crab fisheries in Kodiak are just gone. Feels that crab fisherman and pollock industry could coexist and EM to keep the nets off the bottom is pretty simple.

- Caitlin Yeager: With At Sea Processors Association appreciates the work on the education sunset credit and hopes the work will continue in the future and keep the credit going.
- Craig Chisbuck: Continue to prioritize tribal engagement and fund and support that. Takes issue with the state not having an established bycatch policy. One of the things most concerning about the policy is the lack of continuity and engagement at both the State and Federal level. Should be looking at bycatch collectively on the state and federal level at the same time. When we are looking at how to value and enumerate impacts we are continuing to silo areas and not looking at it as one collective bycatch issue. Continue to find ways to work with tribes on social and economic impacts and consolidate the federal and state work. At the Federal level one of the biggest unknowns is ocean survival and intercept. Consolidating these efforts would lead to better bycatch understanding. The ongoing and real time genetic work being done by tribes should be included. NOAA is engaging with coastal communities but the engagement is very low and the out reach should be more broad so the engagement includes all user groups and not just industry. It also needs to support travel to these events for engagement. Have legislature create a budget for bycatch and provide funds for travel.

7. **BAC discussion and motions**

- **Chair Kozak:** Called for discussion by members, thinks this body has done some great things in encouraging the State to engage more complete on the topic of bycatch. Concentrating this year on how the State can better reach out and engage with members of the public. Called for DC Baker to comment on State engagement. Would like a recommendation to Commissioner for dedicated State resources to be put in to bycatch. Monitoring, creating a comprehensive list of research projects across entities. Calls for ADF&G to provide dedicated staff to this issue to keep up on the website and create solutions to the issues brought up by the BAC. Motions for Budget discussion to occur with Commissioner. Call for consideration of a sub committee being set up to flesh out a proposal for a bycatch budget. Pointed out to Member Ulvi feedback is occurring and is updated in the progress reports. Calls for more state out reach on what mid water trawl is and does.
- **Member Delaney:** Thanked Chair Kozak for her acumen as Chair for this body.
- **Vice Chair Gabriel:** Appreciates the State engagement that has occurred around board of fish meetings and holding bycatch townhalls in a place and time when people will be there to engage. Points out the goal of these meetings is to fund research that is helping with the issue of bycatch and move forward a State plan regarding bycatch as a whole. Recommends to ask Commissioner for a proposed budget for bycatch issues.
- **DC Baker:** Speaking directly to research issues was not able to find a comprehensive research tracking system but the individual entities do track their own research. Asks the council to provide some priorities for the department, are research priorities most important or how to make the data more comprehensible. IS it just specific information on the website or reports through the BAC. The work of this body in bringing together a bigger picture of what is most important to the public would help the state to make further progress on these issues.
- **Member Ulvi:** In support for the motion of enacting a budget for bycatch issues. Are we getting updates on recommendations provided to the State? Agrees a training on how to engage in the Board process would be beneficial. Asks that the language used to be more easily understood.
- **Member Radell:** Agrees with details that need to be fleshed out with this motion. Expects the position to work with both State and Federal bycatch data and the frequency of the data being updated.
- **Member O'Neil:** Suggest ADF&G to provide how to engage in the Board process for members of the public.
- **Member Burk:** Agrees with the training for Board of Fish and NPFMC and has some prepared materials which might help. Offers support for this and can provide some training materials.

8. **Final BAC member comments**

- **Chair Kozak:** Appreciates both the ABR and BAC members and on her final day as a member thanks everyone for the good work done and in continuing to provide this means of communication of the public to the State on bycatch.
- **Member Gabriel:** Thanks Chair Kozak for her service and has enjoyed working with her over the past few years.
- **Member Ulvi:** Thanks Chair Kozak for her leadership and appreciates her reaching out and explaining things.
- **Member Radell:** Thanks Chair Kozak for her service.
- **Member O'Neil:** Thanks Chair Kozak for her participation in everything over the last few years.

9. **Adjournment by 10:34 am Next meeting April 24, 2025 at 9am**