



Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council (ABAC)

April 16, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

1. Call to order

The Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council meeting was called to order by Chair Kozak at 9:00 am

Roll call: acknowledge Advisory Council participants.

Members present: Linda Kozak (Chair), Kevin Delaney, Brian Gabriel, Stephanie Madsen, Karma Ulvi

Introduction of new members: Eva Dawn Burk, Erik Velsko

Other attendees: ADF&G staff: Annie Bartholomew, Kari Winkel, Art Nelson

2. Approve Agenda: April 16, 2024, Approved

3. Approve Minutes: October 24, 2023, Approved

4. Election of Chair and Vice chair for 2024

- **Linda Kozak Chair 2024**
- **John Jensen Vice Chair 2024**

5. Reports

- **Review of bycatch townhall meetings in 2023 and plans for 2024**
 - **Chair Kozak:** Reviewed with BAC members where ADF&G townhalls have been held in 2023. Chair called for input from BAC members for future 2024 townhall locations and dates.
 - **Vice Chair Jensen:** Going to provide further information for townhall in Petersburg.
 - There was general discussion by members regarding potential areas and coordination with meetings such as the Alaska Board of Fisheries.
- **Updated progress report on ABRT recommendations.**
 - **Chair Kozak:** Introduced the topic and called for input from BAC members. Reviewed recommendations from the taskforce and what has been accomplished and what areas may still need to be addressed.
 - **Member Madsen:** Notified the BAC and public of a NPFMC Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) meeting upcoming that may be of interest.
- **Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee report.**
 - **Member Gabriel:** Spoke to the work of the subcommittee and reviewed a report that is posted to the BAC website. It was noted that the subcommittee met four times and identified challenges and issues that would need to be addressed when considering utilization of bycatch. The subcommittee did not make a recommendation about suggesting that regulatory action be taken in order to more fully utilize bycatch.
 - **Member Delaney:** Asked about utilization and Member Gabriel further clarified.

6. **Public Comment**

- a) Kiril Basargin: Spoke about the need to control trawl caught bycatch and take immediate action for accountability and to pay restitution to harvesters and communities.
- b) Nancy Hilstrand: Expressed desire to ensure that if bycatch is utilized, no compensation should go to the owner. Bycatch should be put back into the ocean as part of the food web.
- c) Carl Wassilie: Subsistence harvester and biologist. Has concerns about USDA purchasing pollock for food distribution programs.
- d) Julian Ramirez: Alaskans depend on the food and water security to harvest seafood. Any transport of bycatch is taking food out of the mouths of Alaskans.

7. **Action**

a) **Discussion on Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee report**

- **Chair Kozak:** Introduced the topic for discussion to decide if making a recommendation to the Commissioner is warranted.
- **Member Madsen:** Provided some input on the work down by the subcommittee and that the report is good for providing information to the Commissioner. No other action is suggested.
- **Member Gabriel:** Feels the information provides good background information on the issues and challenges for anyone interested in the topic.
- **Member Delaney:** Feels the analysis of barriers and benefits has been done here and no further action is necessary.
- **Member Ulvi:** No recommendations, but not supportive of bycatch utilization.
- **Member Velsko:** Appreciates the work done but thinks it should be left on the back burner.
- **Member Dawn:** Feels as someone who lives on the Yukon it is hard to feel good about utilizing bycatch in the way it has been proposed makes sense to be put on the back burner.

b) **ABRT recommendations to prioritize**

- **Chair Kozak:** Introduced this agenda item and called for BAC input. The BAC had a good discussion with several recommendations. There is a desire for virtual meetings before each NPFMC meeting be better noticed to the public. Agrees with recommendation of utilizing townhalls in connection with other meetings. Suggested an annual virtual BAC meeting run more like a townhall with the Commissioner attending.
- **Member Madsen:** Notes SOA is working with Pacific states regarding bycatch reduction techniques. Wants the State to provide more real time data in an easier to consume manner. Recommends townhalls with communities that are harder to reach out to. Encourages support for electronic monitoring in the legislature. Monitoring and accountability is important in all fisheries both SOA and Fed.
- **Member Jensen:** Continue on with townhall meetings and talking to the public directly about bycatch and what the state is doing to address it.
- **Brian Gabriel:** Recommends that townhalls linking up with Board of Fish meetings is a decent way to garner further public participation.
- **Member Ulvi:** Wants to add Tribal consultation and the state working more with Tribes directly.
- **Member Delaney:** Noted some additional dates and locations for townhalls in conjunction with Board of Fisheries meetings.
- **Member Velsko:** Abundance Based Management is important and is one of the big differences between the Bering sea and the Gulf of Alaska. This needs to be made consistent between the two places.

Final Recommendations for Consideration:

State Engagement:

- Continue pre-Council (NPFMC) virtual meetings and look for ways to provide better notice.
- More bycatch town hall meetings are encouraged.

Management:

- Continue working on Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections.
- Work to implement authority for electronic monitoring in state managed fisheries.
- Consider development of abundance based management for halibut in the GOA trawl fisheries.
- Rationalization of the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries could help to reduce and manage bycatch.

Other:

- Real time report on salmon genetics in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is an important tool and the emphasis on developing this is encouraged.

8. Final BAC member comments

- **Member Jensen:** Spoke to salmon genetics in Dutch Harbor and that there will be a quicker turn around on that.

9. Set next meeting date: September 3, 2024

10. Adjournment by 10:50