

Date: May 14, 2025
To: Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang
From: Megan O'Neil, Chair
Subject: Bycatch Advisory Council Report and Recommendations

In 2025, the Bycatch Advisory Council (BAC) focused their efforts on ways to achieve the state engagement recommendations in the Bycatch Task Force Final Report. Below are the six recommendations from this section and the status of their work:

1. The State of Alaska should establish a process for providing bycatch-related information and resources to Alaskans in a format that is understandable and easily accessible. Website development with bycatch-related links, as well as bycatch informational forums, and other forms of outreach are recommended – in progress
2. State of Alaska federal fisheries staff should continue to offer the public an opportunity to provide input on NPFMC issues before each NPFMC meeting - occurring
3. State of Alaska should support legislative action to remove sunset of the Education Tax Credit Program – extended to January 1, 2028
4. State of Alaska should work with other entities, including the State Department, to request that the State Department, through bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels with Russia, request information on the bycatch of Chinook salmon and chum salmon taken in Russian domestic fisheries – in progress
5. Using the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force as a template, the state should establish a permanent bycatch advisory entity - completed
6. It is recommended that the State of Alaska work with the Alaska Board of Fisheries, stakeholders and a bycatch advisory entity to develop a State of Alaska Bycatch Policy – not started

The BAC met on March 3rd to review a progress report on the management, research, and state engagement priorities outlined in the Bycatch Task Force Final Report and heard public testimony. The members unanimously agreed that to more fully implement the research and state engagement recommendations, a dedicated ADF&G staff member position should be created to be the primary contact for bycatch-related information, website development, and outreach to the public.

At this meeting, BAC members also agreed to hold a meeting on April 24th to help educate the public on how to engage in the Board of Fisheries and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council processes. This came from a recommendation in the Final Report

under the Western Alaska Salmon Committee and followed this year's theme on state engagement recommendations. Both the BOF and NPFMC have training sessions at times, however, they are in-person. With the BAC's virtual format, we hoped to reach more of the public without necessitating the cost of travel, which we heard can be prohibitive in public comments.

On April 24th, Executive Director Art Nelson of the Board of Fisheries provided a presentation, and Chair Carlson-Van Dort was available to answer questions. And Dr. Diana Stram presented on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and responded to questions. Both presentations are posted to the BAC website. The BAC also heard public testimony during this meeting.

The BAC is currently working on an agenda for a fall meeting. There is interest in a format similar to the November 2024 meeting with presentations on the latest bycatch research.

Current members of the Bycatch Advisory Council are: Rachel Baker for ADF&G, Eva Dawn Burk, Kevin Delaney, Brian Gabriel, Megan O'Neil, Chelsae Radell, Karma Ulvi, and Erik Velsko