



Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council (ABAC)

November 5, 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: am

Roll call: acknowledge Advisory Council participants.

Members present: Linda Kozak (Chair), Kevin Delaney, Brian Gabriel (vice chair), Stephanie Madsen, Karma Ulvi, Eva Dawn Burk, Erik Velsko

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

2. Approve Agenda: November 5, 2024, Approved with amendments

3. Approve Minutes: September 3, 2024, Approved

4. Commissioner Vincent-Lang addressed Bycatch Advisory Council

5. Presentations on Salmon Bycatch Research

- a.) **Bering Sea chum salmon marine distribution and survival Dr. Curry Cunningham, UAF College of Fisheries & Ocean Sciences**
 - Chair Kozak: Introduced the presentation and Dr. Cunningham
 - The presentation will be available on the Bycatch Advisory Council website in the references section.
- b.) **Bering Sea Chinook salmon marine distribution research Sabrina Garcia, ADF&G**
 - Chair Kozak: Introduced the presentation and Dr. Cunningham
 - The presentation will be available on the Bycatch Advisory Council website in the references section.
- c.) **Alaska Salmon Research Task Force report Ed Farley, NOAA**
 - Chair Kozak: Introduced the presentation and Dr. Cunningham
 - The presentation will be available on the Bycatch Advisory Council website in the references section.
- d.) **Bering Sea chum salmon genetics Jordan Head, Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute**
 - Chair Kozak: Introduced the presentation. The presentation will be available on the Bycatch Advisory Council website in the references section.

6. Public Comment

- **Tammy Chulick from Kasileof:** I am a sports angler and king salmon has been closed in Kenai and Kasileof, regarding these studies what is the direct correlation of trawl impacts on King Salmon. Been doing studies for two decades and nothing has changed. I don't see the correlation of studies providing solutions on incidents of bycatch.

- **Rebecca Schwanke lives in copper river basin:** Thanks BAC members has concerns that reflects previous speaker, actions are not being taken soon enough regarding the information provided.
- **Rebecca Skinner Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association:** Thank you for the presentations today it was helpful. Given the information around hatchery release salmon, has concerns with current regulatory scheme with federal fisheries is not set up to account for hatchery release vs wild. Regulatory process needs to recognize the difference between the two. Kodiak does not have access to the same data as the Bering Sea and the access to resources and tools is vastly different between the two. Responded to member Madsen that this will help with data extrapolation. Electronic Monitoring will help with keeping fisheries open as data will be more accurate and not made by extrapolation. Responded to Chair Kozak that yes that would be helpful especially in determining if bycatch is western Alaska fish or hatchery fish. Responded to Member Ulvi that there are hard caps on bycatch and reaching or by passing those caps close the entire fishery.
 - **Member Madsen** asked how EM will affect this data issue
 - **Chair Kozak:** Asked if genetic information like the Bering Sea would help GOA fisherman
 - **Member Ulvi:** Asked what systems are already in place to protect Chinook. 2000 bycaught fish is a lot of fish not going to Yukon families.
- **Craig Chythlook:** Supports more research to reduce western Alaska bycatch, a clear defensible definition of what pelagic trawl gear does, not what it is. Thinking about bycatch and societal impacts, taking a more holistic ecosystem based approach on fisheries management plans that take into consideration broader bycatch impacts instead of a single species management system when setting allowable limits think about tribal impacts, impacts to marine mammals etc. Current models do a poor job of considering anything outside of traditional western metrics of success. Recommendations from subsistence experts in the Council process is critical it allows that opportunity of representation and to fully utilize indigenous knowledge. Climate change is happening, and ecology is having issues dealing with these additional stressors. Maximum yield management priority is having devastating effects on Tribes and their sovereignty and relationships tribal peoples have with the land. Retrospective analysis is important but all state and federal entities need to better utilize tribal knowledge.
- **Neil DeWitt:** Dealing with bycatch forever instead of changing how fisherman fish change how we process it. Basically, bycatch utilization as suggested by ABRT member Field.
- **Nancy Hilstrand:** Comments regarding observer sampling should include taking of otolith to check for hatchery release.

7. BAC discussion and motions

- **Chair Kozak:** Calls for comments on bycatch research dissemination and organization and state engagement. Feels this format a few times a year just presenting bycatch information might be a way to move forward. Asked if the cultural impacts being studied by the NPFMC is sufficient or if Member Ulvi feels there should be further study of this matter. Points out that the GOA is just now becoming more electronically monitored. Asks for comment on if the type of meeting we had today would be a good way to share information with the public. Wants to focus more intently on state engagement in 2025. Move forward with bycatch townhall engagement.
- **Member Madsen:** Wants a way to track all of the bycatch research. How can this be conveyed to the public. Notified public that the pollock industry does receive information on a regular basis to inform salmon avoidance plans. The Kuskokwim Tribal working group is a contributing entity on chum salmon analysis and bring forth traditional knowledge to inform these issues.
- **Member Ulvi:** Happy to hear about the electronic monitoring. With Western Alaska seeing the impacts of declining chinook and chum, the caps are too high. They need to be researched and possibly reduced due to the declining stocks. Also like to see research done on the effects of bycatch on tribal communities and culture. Feels like there is a lot of research on salmon and chum but it is not being

connected to bycatch as much as it should be. Calls for more research and to look further in to cultural impacts despite the fact it was not an ABRT recommendation.

- **Member Eva Dawn Burk:** Appreciates the ability to provide input. Calls for a conversation on lower cap and conservation in line with indigenous knowledge. Touched on how cultural/historical knowledge is now being used to inform the new chum analysis plan and conservation corridor. Call for looking at the problems holistically and wants to look at state management of salmon. Policy and management actions are not accounting for the current issues going on.
- **Deputy Commissioner Baker: Offered** to go to different entities funding research to see if they have a list of bycatch projects funded.
- **Member Velsko:** Wants to structure the webinar to coincide with other entities meetings related to bycatch so the research being considered at a meeting could be presented to the public.
- **Member Delaney:** Appreciated high level presentations and noticed in the last 3-5 years that the fisheries in Alaska are going through a transformational phase. Due to these changes the ADF&G are having issues managing through these various changes.

8. Final BAC member comments

- **Member Madsen:** Retiring and this is her last Bycatch Advisory Council meeting. She was acknowledged and thanked for her service.

9. Adjournment by 12:01pm Next tentative meeting March 4, 2025