

ALASKA BYCATCH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Report to Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang November 20, 2024

The Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council (BAC) was formed on March 10, 2023 to advise the ADF&G Commissioner of opportunities and provide advice on implementation of the recommendations provided by the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT). A link to the order creating the BAC is show below:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/abrt_commissioner_order1.pdf

Current Members of the BAC:	Linda Kozak, Chair	Brian Gabriel, Vice-Chair
	Eva Dawn Burk	Kevin Delaney
	Karma Ulvi	Erik Velsko
	Stephanie Madsen	

Assistance for all virtual meetings was given by ADF&G staff with special thanks to Kari Winkel, Art Nelson and Annie Bartholomew.

Meeting Reports

Three virtual meetings were held in 2024 with all meetings open to the public and testimony was taken at every meeting. Attendance ranged from 40-140 individuals. Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker attended each meeting.

Complete meeting information is available at the following website:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.meetinginfo>

Following is an abbreviated review of the three meetings held in 2024.

April 16, 2024

Two new members of the BAC were introduced; Eva Dawn Burk and Erik Velsko. Elections were held and Linda Kozak was selected as chair, with John Jensen as vice-chair.

A review of the ADF&G townhall meetings in 2023 was given and a general discussion was held regarding potential locations for 2024 townhall meetings.

An update on ABRT recommendations was given, along with a report from the Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee. The BAC members did not make a recommendation on bycatch utilization, but forwarded the report to the Commissioner.

Suggestions were given regarding state engagement and providing more real-time information for members of the public. These included finding ways to increase public participation at virtual

pre-Council meetings held by the State of Alaska, attempting to utilize other public meetings for townhall bycatch meetings, and having the state work more directly with Tribes.

Four management recommendations were suggested for priority:

- 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.

September 3, 2024

It was noted that vice-chair John Jensen had resigned from the BAC. Brian Gabriel was elected as vice-chair to complete this year's term.

The focus of this meeting was to review research that would assist bycatch management considerations. Dr. Chris Siddon provided an overview of the NPFMC process to address research priorities and the bycatch-related research priorities recently adopted by the NPFMC.

There was continued discussion about possible townhall meeting locations and timing. It was suggested that each member consider recommendations for invites to the Commissioner

November 5, 2024

The focus of this meeting was to receive an update on salmon research activities that would help inform the development of salmon bycatch management actions. The meeting was well attended by the public with a total of 140 individuals at the meeting. All members of the BAC were present.

Presentations were provided by:

- Dr. Curry Cunningham, UFA College of Fisheries & Ocean Sciences
- Sabrina Garcia, ADF&G
- Ed Farley, NOAA
- Jordan Head, Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute

Following public comment, the members of the BAC discussed how best to track bycatch research and provide good information to the public. It was suggested that an annual virtual meeting with various presentations might be a good way to provide information to the public.

The BAC determined that the focus for the 2025 meetings would be primarily to address the state engagement recommendations made by the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force. While some recommendations are being initiated by the State of Alaska, a review by the BAC was suggested.

Stephanie Madsen announced her retirement and that this would be her final BAC meeting. Her substantial contributions to this effort, both at the ABRT and BAC were noted and she was thanked for her service.

Bycatch Advisory Council Subcommittee Report

Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee:

This subcommittee was formed by Chair Kozak and the purpose was to address the ABRT recommendation that improvements needed to be made to bycatch utilization. Members of the subcommittee were Brian Gabriel (chair), Duncan Fields and Chelsae Radell.

The subcommittee met four times between November 20, 2023 and March 12, 2024. Public testimony was taken at each meeting. Attendance ranged from 15-50 individuals, with the BAC was represented at each meeting. Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker attended three of the four subcommittee meetings. The issue of bycatch utilization was fully addressed, with presentations by Jim Harmon with SeaShare, Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker (overview of Gulf of Alaska bycatch regulations) and Chelsae Radell presenting the processor perspective on challenges in requiring bycatch utilization.

The full report can be viewed at the link below:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624_abac_report.pdf