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MEETING UPDATE

For Immediate Release: January 1, 2022

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**Alaska Board of Fisheries
Southeast and Yakutat Shellfish and Finfish Meeting to be Postponed**

With great regret and disappointment, Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang, Alaska Department of Fish and Game in consultation with Chairwoman Märit Carlson-Van Dort and Vice-chair John Jensen, announce the Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish meeting will be postponed to a future date and location to be determined.

The meeting will be postponed out of an abundance of caution due to the record-breaking rise of COVID-19 cases in the United States, and a concerning sharp rise in Southeast Alaska. COVID-19 case counts in the country reportedly exceeded 486,000 on December 30, 2021, almost double the previous high sustained in January 2021. Cases in Southeast are increasing in almost every community. With the rise in cases post the holiday season, already key staff have contracted COVID-19 and are unable to participate. In addition, the nation and Alaska are facing serious transportation difficulties as weather and the pandemic are seriously hampering travel in the near-term.

The department and board take to heart concerns expressed by healthcare professionals who participated in the Ketchikan oversight group that helped Boards Support develop meeting mitigation measures. Conducting this intensely public 12-day meeting with potential attendance of over 200 people from around the state has the potential to cause a significant case spike in Ketchikan and lead to overrunning its hospital capacity already expected to strain from local infections from the holiday season.

The department and board are extremely disappointed with this postponement, and do not take its impact on the participating public lightly. It is the boards full intent to finish its meeting cycle this year. The department and board would like to express their sincere appreciation to the community of Ketchikan for its assistance and generosity in helping prepare for this meeting.