

January 16, 2025

Honorable Senator Gary Stevens, Senate President State Capitol Building
Room 111
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Honorable Representative Bryce Edgmon, House Speaker State Capitol Building
Room 410
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Subject: Alaska Board of Fisheries Pollock Trawl Fishery Recommendations

Dear Senator Stevens and Representative Edgmon:

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) was established by the Alaska Legislature, “For purposes of the conservation and development of the fishery resources of the state”, (AS 16.05.221(a)), and has the authority to adopt regulations it considers important for “watershed and habitat improvement” (AS 16.05.251(a)(7)). Since its inception, the Board’s working protocol evolved into a strong, open public process to carry out its duties. This public process allows Alaskans to bring forward proposals for consideration within its delegated authority.

During the 2024 Prince William Sound and Upper Copper/Upper Susitna Finfish and Shellfish (except shrimp) Board of Fisheries meeting the Board considered [Proposal 17](#) brought forward by the Chenega IRA Council which sought to establish observer requirements in the Prince William Sound (PWS) pelagic trawl fishery, as follows: (h) The commissioner shall [MAY] require 100% onboard electronic observation and 50% physical onboard observers on a vessel during fishing operations. The Board took no action on this proposal because it was the understanding of the Board that it does not have the authority to require electronic monitoring (EM) on fishing vessels.

Ahead of the PWS meeting, members of the public, several Fish & Game Advisory Committees, Alaska Native entities, and local businesses [submitted comments](#) in support of Proposal 17. The board continued to hear public testimony in support of Proposal 17 or aspects of the proposal if the Board had the authority to require EM. During public testimony, the Board heard from pollock trawl fishermen that most of the boats that fish PWS already have EM equipment onboard the vessels because they are also participating in the Federal Gulf of Alaska pollock trawl fisheries EM opt-in program. They also noted in their public testimony that the use of EM would not be burdensome while fishing in PWS.

Currently, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Commissioner has the authority to require on-board observers of the state pollock trawl fishery in PWS but does not implement this authority due to lack of funding. The Board requests the Alaska State Legislature to (1) appropriate funds for ADF&G to carry out onboard observers and/ or electronic monitoring of the PWS pollock trawl fishery, and (2) authorize the Board to require EM in the pollock trawl fishery

in PWS. Monitoring the state pollock trawl fishery using the same methods as the Federal trawl fisheries will allow for better oversight, and more transparency, and grow public trust in the management of this fishery.

Thank you for taking the opportunity to review these concerns. The Board recognizes the broad responsibilities of the Legislature to promote economic development and the wise stewardship of resources for all Alaskans. The Board finds that clear delineation of Alaska's unwavering promise to protect salmon and fisheries habitat establishes a consistent and predictable business environment that will help all individuals and corporations wishing to do business in Alaska.

Sincerely,
The Alaska Board of Fisheries