FISHERMAN POLICY
ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A guide for ocean harvesters to navigate the Alaska Board of Fisheries process

Winter 2022
The purpose of this toolkit is to provide fish harvesters in Alaska with the background knowledge and tools needed for engaging with the political process on a state level. Policy decisions made by the Board of Fisheries have direct effects on how fisheries are managed and therefore on the livelihoods of Alaskan coastal communities. In an era of climate change, competitive global markets and economic uncertainty, we hope that this toolkit empowers the next generation of fishery participants to make their voice heard.

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WHAT IS BOARD OF FISH?

The Board of Fisheries' main role is to conserve and develop the fishery resources of the state of Alaska. This includes all fishery resources, not just commercial but also personal use, sport and subsistence fisheries as well. The Board of Fisheries (BOF) is established under Alaska Statute 16.05.221 for the purposes of the conservation and development of the fisheries resources of the state.

The Board of Fisheries has the authority to adopt regulations such as

- Establishing open and closed seasons for harvesting fish
- Establishing open and closed areas for harvesting fish
- Setting quotas, bag limits, harvest levels and limitations for taking fish
- Establishing the methods and means for the taking of fish (gear type etc)

It's important for harvesters to be familiar with The Board of Fish and its process as it sets the policy direction for management and makes allocative decisions for fisheries in the state.

WHO SITS ON THE BOARD?

The board consists of seven members who serve three year terms. These board members are appointed by Alaska’s governor and later confirmed by the legislature. Members are appointed based on their “interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge, and ability”. They may or may not be harvesters themselves.
As a harvester you have the opportunity to engage with the policy process that will directly impact your fishery by participating in Board of Fisheries meetings. The Board makes decisions that result in policy change and management direction.

Valuable information you have:

- Log book data that speaks to harvest amounts
- Comments on effectiveness/limitations of time and area restrictions
- Your personal experience with fishery entry and operation
- In-season observations relevant to proposal topics
- Personal testimony about how a policy will affect your small business

Harvesters' observations can fill qualitative data gaps and create a more complete picture of particular issues. Your input, in the form of comments and public testimony, helps guide board member decisions by providing your observations on a multitude of issues.
REGIONS AND SPECIES

MEETING YEARS

2022-2023
- Alaska Peninsula/Bering Sea-Aleutian Island/Chignik Areas Finfish
- Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Areas Finfish
- Bristol Bay Area Finfish
- Statewide Provisions for Finfish

2023-2024
- Cook Inlet Area Finfish
- Kodiak Area Finfish
- Statewide (except Southeast/Yakutat, and Prince William Sound Tanner Crab) King and Tanner Crab

2021-2022
- Prince William Sound Finfish and Shellfish (except shrimp)
- Southeast/Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish
- Statewide (except SE/Yakutat/PWS) Shellfish

Finding Information

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game website is the best place to find information regarding the Board of Fisheries and meeting schedules. Bookmark this page for easy access or sign up for email updates via the links provided on the site. Most meetings are held in person within their respective regions. www.adfg.alaska.gov
Proposals are due a year before a cycle's official meeting. **Proposals suggest and amend specific actions to be taken.** Proposals may be written by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, official organizations of interest or individuals.

Written comments in response to proposals are due months before the meeting so that they can be printed and reviewed by the meeting participants. **Written comments come from interested organizations and individuals who wish to voice an opinion about whether or not they support a proposed policy change and why.** These comments become part of the public record for the meeting and can be made with an online form.

**Public testimony are comments made at the made in person at the meeting itself.** This testimony happens in person before the Board and attendees of the meeting. People wishing to testify about proposals and comments need to sign up and will be assigned a general time slot. Testimony is limited to three minutes per person. If a person wishes to speak on multiple proposals they need to list them all at once during their time slot as public testimony occurs before the Board deliberates.
Understanding the Cycle

Both regional and statewide meetings occur on a year-long timeline that begins with a call for proposals and ends with a meeting of board. Each regional and statewide meeting repeats this process on a three year cycle.

**April**
- Proposals concerning the regions and state wide focus of a given year are due.

**August**
- Agenda change requests due 60 days prior to first meeting.

**October**
- Meetings occur. Each lasts anywhere from 2–6 days.
- Comments on proposals due two weeks prior to first meeting.
- Proposal packet is available for review throughout summer on ADF&G website.
- Before Oct, relevant Department comments & data are released.

**March**

For example, if the Bristol Bay region is included in the 2025–2026 cycle, the call for proposals deadline will occur that Spring. The booklet of proposals including this regions and others up for consideration will be available in early Fall of 2025. The meetings will occur during that Winter and into Spring of the following year, 2026.
WHO TO WORK WITH

The best thing about becoming involved in the policy process is that you don’t have to do it alone. It’s important to remember that many people with different perspectives participate in the Board of Fish process. The most effective proposals and comments are often those that have drawn on multiple perspectives or received additional input.

BIOLLOGISTS & RESEARCHERS

The best opportunity for collaboration between harvesters and biologists happens before BOF meetings. While drafting proposals harvesters and biologists can and should meet to discuss areas in which their interests align or even spaces where compromise can be reached for a co-supported proposal. Reach out to your regional ADF&G biologist about your topic of interest. The office may be able to provide additional research resources and context for proposal decisions.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

Reach out to your regional or local advocacy organization that can focus on common causes to build support, garner additional perspectives and work collectively on issues. These groups have a mission to work for and with fishermen to effect beneficial policy change. Proposals and comments supported or submitted by organizations carry the weight of collective energy and validity.

FELLOW FISHERMEN

Connecting with fellow fishermen about policy issues is perhaps one of the most important steps individuals can take towards common goals. Many regional fishing policies affect more than just one town or port, and finding common groups with other fishing communities can be a direct way to build networks across the coast.
The Board of Fisheries relies on both public testimony and written public comment to inform decisions. Comments are included within board member workbooks and become public documents. **Comments must:**

- **Be submitted by mail, fax, in office, or through Board Support website.**
- **Be 100 single-sided pages or less from any one individual or group.**
- **Fit on 8½” x 11” paper with adequate margins for three-hole punching.**
- **Web link to external documents or multimedia are not accepted.**
- **Include the author's name and contact information.**
- **Cite sources for charts or graphs.**

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October 5, 2020  
Board of Fisheries  
Mr./Mrs. Chairperson  

Members of the Board,  

RE: Proposal 22, Support  
I am a skiff fisherman and salmon setneter, and fish halibut out of a 22ft cabin skiff. I am writing in support of Proposal 22. I wish to see the ability for small boat fishermen to longline slinky pots in the Pacific cod fishery in Kachemak Bay waters of the Cook Inlet management area.

Under the current management structure and allowable gear types of the fishery, small boats like mine are logistically excluded from important access points. This was an important open access fishery for small scale fishermen, with a gear type that was workable in a small vessel. A small boat such as mine cannot pot fish conventional cod pots. The weight and space are not workable on my small vessel. Long lining slinky pots would be workable, but are designed to be long lined and cannot be fished as a single pot.

I would be able to immediately participate in this fishery from my home as a day fishery if longlining slinky pots was allowed. Allowing long lining slinky pots in the Pacific cod fishery in Kachemak Bay would contribute directly to local food security, would enable a small-scale fisherman like myself the opportunity to participate in this open access fishery, and would bolster small scale markets.

Allowing for the use of slinky pots here in Kachemak provides an opportunity for me to benefit as a small-scale fisherman by diversifying the fisheries I participate in, and provides increased opportunity, that is currently otherwise lacking in my area. It also promotes diversification, and small-scale fishing, which are the oldest and the most sustainable form of fishing. Thank you for lending this comment your full consideration.

Sincerely,  
John Fishermen  
Email@email.com
Reach out to your regional or local advocacy organization (AC) that can focus on common causes to build support, garner additional perspectives and work collectively on issues. These groups have a mission to work for and with fishermen to effect beneficial policy change.

REGIONAL AND STATE ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING FISHERMEN SUPPORT

- Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers
- Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation
- Alaska Jig Association
- Area M Seiners Association
- Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association
- Alaska Scallop Association
- Alaska Trollers Association
- Alaska Young Fishermen's Network
- AYK Tribal Consortium
- Bristol Bay Fishermen's Association
- Bristol Bay Reserve
- Concerned Area M Fishermen
- Cordova District Fishermen United
- Fishing Vessel Owners Association
- Groundfish Forum
- Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
- Kodiak Crab Alliance Cooperative
- Kodiak Seiners Association
- North Pacific Fisheries Association
- Northwest Settnetters Association
- Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance
- Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association
- Southeast Alaska Seiners Association
- Southeast Herring Conservation Alliance
- United Catcher Boats
- United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters
- United Fishermen of Alaska
- United Cook Inlet Drift Association
CONTACTS

TO SUBMIT COMMENTS:

**Online:** boardoffisheries.adfg.alaska.gov
**Fax:** (907) 465-6094
**Mail:** P.O. Box 115526 Juneau, AK 99811-5526

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME:

**Mailing address:** P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526
**Physical address:** 1255 West 8th Street, Juneau, AK
**Phone:** 907-465-4110

Find blank comment letter templates, meetings updates, schedules and more at: [www.ADFG.Alaska.gov](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov) > Regulations > Board process

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Alaska Marine Conservation Council

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fish@akmarine.org

This toolkit produced by Kinsey Brown, M.A. Anthropology on behalf of Alaska Marine Conservation Council.