

**Joint Interior Region Fish and Game Advisory Committee
Virtual Meeting on Fisheries Issues for the Yukon River
January 22, 2025 6:00pm**

DRAFT MINUTES

6:00pm Call to order
Zoom Moderator Kyle Campbell, Interior Region Coordinator, Boards Support
Meeting Facilitator Gale K. Vick, Chair, FAC Fisheries Subcommittee
Welcome Meeting recorded / Available
https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/g_QTEh5xz4XxcpTYgwKKliddungXcEuhdlZw1onNySWVvh7UjesYwoTcltfzbHxhtzDnSIQ8GccHI5p_tg8FVxyOnPY2PSjK?accessLevel=meeting&canPlayFromShare=true&from=share_recording_detail&continueMode=true&componentName=rec-play&originRequestUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fus06web.zoom.us%2Frec%2Fshare%2FVZy-dW85LfFh-mR7gT0OTDr4lQ68l9_CckhfOHymnjayw_rJCKcRG977g0ylrsR.eTmODnkcqg0a23pB

Introduction of attendees:

Gale K. Vick	Fairbanks AC / Fisheries SC chair, / BBAYK coordinator
Virgil Umphenour	Fairbanks AC / past Board of Fish / Yukon River Panel
Mark Richards	Fairbanks AC / Game Chair
Chuck Derrick	Fairbanks AC / President, Chitina Dipnetters Assn.
Al Barrette	Board of Game / Fairbanks
Andy Bassich	Eagle AC chair / Yukon River Panel
Walter Peter	Yukon Flats AC / Fort Yukon
Thomas Hyslop	Tanana-Rampart AC (TRM)
Julia Roberts Hyslop	Tanana-Rampart AC / YRITFC / First Chief, Native Village of Tanana
Janessa Newman	Tanana-Rampart AC, vice-chair
Harding Sam	Allakaket / Alatna
Jacob Mattila	Middle Nenana River AC
Carl Frank	Minto-Nenana AC co-chair
Olivia Irwin	Minto-Nenana AC co-chair / EIRAC / YRDFA
Eva Dawn Burk	Minto-Nenana AC / YRITFC / NPFMC AP / EIRAC co-chair
Charlie Wright	Tanana-Rampart AC / Chair / Yukon River Panel Chair, Eastern Interior Regional AC / Chair, Denali Resource Com. Secretary – Treasurer, Tanana Chiefs Conference Board
Louis Silas	Minto-Nenana AC
Percy Lolnitz	Middle Yukon AC / Chair, Koyukuk
Michelle Quillan	Middle Yukon AC / in graduate fisheries studies
Krystal Lapp	Upper Tanana /40 Mile AC / Healy Lake /Tanana Chiefs Conf.
Barb Carlson	Stoney River / Hulitna AC / (middle upper Kuskokwim)

BRIEF SUMMARY

The meeting focused on discussing upcoming board of fish proposals and the role of the A/Cs in preparing and providing commentary, with a particular emphasis on the decline in fish stocks and the need for more subsistence fish. The attendees also discussed the negative impact of hatcheries on wild stocks, the importance of unity and support for proposals related to the management of salmon

stocks, and the need for more aggressive action in their proposals concerning bycatch in the Bering Sea. The group also expressed concerns about the lack of priority given to subsistence fishing in the Yukon and the need for unity in pushing forward on these issues.

Gale Vick, the chair of the Fairbanks A/C Fishery subcommittee, welcomed everyone to the meeting focused on discussing upcoming board of fish proposals due in April. The meeting aimed to discuss the role of the A/Cs in preparing proposals and providing commentary. The attendees included representatives from various A/Cs, including Eagle, Yukon, Central, Upper Yukon, Koyukuk, Middle Nenana, Middle Yukon, Minto Nenana, Tanana, Ruby, and Yukon Flats. The meeting also covered the concerns of the attendees regarding the decline in fish stocks and the need for more subsistence fish. The discussion also touched on the upcoming Board of Fish meetings and the need for a good replacement for Stan Zuray from Tanana, who is resigning from the Board. The attendees also discussed potential joint concerns and proposals for the AYK and Area M regions.

UPCOMING BOARD OF FISH MEETINGS FOR 2025

- (a) Board of Fish Southeast and Yakutat finfish Jan 28- Feb 9th, 2025 Ketchikan
- (b) Board of Fish Statewide, March 11-16th, Anchorage

MAIN DISCUSSION ON PROPOSALS FOR NEXT BOARD CYCLE (2026)

BOARD OF FISH **Proposals due April 10, 2025.**

One shot at this every 3 years.

Board of Fish call for proposals for subsistence, personal use, sport, guided sport, and commercial fishing regulations for

- (a) Bristol Bay finfish
- (b) Arctic/Yukon/Kuskokwim finfish
- (c) Alaska Peninsula/ Aleutian Islands/Chignik finfish areas
- (d) Statewide finfish areas. This includes proposals affecting PNP (private-non-profit) hatchery egg production.

PROCESS ISSUES

- (1) Each AC has a timeline for submission and approval of proposals to submit.
- (2) Where are subject areas we have joint concerns and can share proposal submissions
- (3) Need proposal writers and then strategize on how to support each other as much as we can

PROPOSAL ISSUES

Suggestions for proposals – but not limited to

- Stocks of Concern (SOC),
- mesh size impacts,
- creating conservation corridors for salmon,
- reducing hatchery egg production,
- having an in-depth hatchery committee meeting,
- methods to further reduce intercept of chum and Chinook in Area M,
- observer coverage in Area M
- reduced seine net depth statewide, but especially Area M

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Gale and Virgil: Hatchery issues

The Fairbanks AC has been putting in proposals to reduce hatchery egg production in PNP hatcheries for years at the Board of Fish. A bunch of us on this line have been reviewing peer-reviewed papers that strongly correlate hatchery production with negative impacts on wild stocks. In the BSAI, mostly Asian hatcheries but some evidence of cross-over from the Gulf of Alaska. Chinook are getting smaller and less abundant all over the state of Alaska, not just the AYK. Virgil gave a good history of how GOA hatcheries directly impacted the Yukon River.

Andy Bassich / Eagle

- (1) Review of hatchery proposals
- (2) Reduce incidental harvest on Chinook / concerns about 4" mesh
 - a. There was a study that noted that no fishery is sustainable with anything larger than 6" mesh.
 - b. Historical net sizes on Yukon likely contributed to loss of big Chinook
- (3) Salmon are getting smaller and fecundity going down dramatically
- (4) Really important to work with State legislature
- (5) Canada is far ahead of Alaska on rebuilding
- (6) Marine phase and riverine phases both important in "gravel to gravel" management
 - a. Outmigration, marine life, in-migration
- (7) Creating salmon conservation corridors primary – an Area M and BSAI bycatch issue
- (8) Stocks of Concern not adequately addressed
- (9) ADF&G does not break down discrete stock escapement
 - a. Only drainage wide (also Anvik and Andreasky) for summer chum
 - b. Leads to extirpation

Eva Dawn Burk: Discussion at North Pacific Council on bycatch

- (1) Talked with the Commissioner who wants to do a "step-down", like triggers used in Area M at 2023 Board meeting
- (2) CDQs also interested in salmon corridors
- (3) Need to increase genetics/ identify test fisheries/ too much fishing effort over very broad area
- (4) We need to talk about escapement goals or lack thereof
- (5) Need more Chinook at the Border and in smaller tribes
 - a. Recommend ASL proposal **

Olivia Irwin: Yukon River Rebuilding Plan will be discussed at YRDFA pre-season meeting April 24th-25th at Pikes Landing in Fairbanks. Goal will be to identify data gaps and research priorities.

Walter Peter: Maybe we should stop fishing altogether.

Krystal Lapp: Healy Lake Tribe will support all proposals addressing interception at Area M. in the 1970's there were thousands of chum and Chinook (?) now completely crashed.

Carl Frank – impacts on pollution in big boats in area m

Olivia Irwin – anyway that we can influence on future production of vessels
also trawl nets – more of a council issue?

Are new vessels being created?

What are the regulations on new vessels ***

Percey Lolnitz – thanks for putting the meeting together

Following discussions – we have to be unified **

We have been dealing with Area M for so many years

It is beyond my imagination that the State is not listening

On hatchery fish – they dump millions of fish into the ocean

Whose idea was this?

We heard over 20 years ago that it was competitive

Michelle Quinlan – We all know that the boards have been stacked with commercial fisheries for decades, and even though we have huge numbers of people testifying, we still get opposition from the Board. We need to think long term and about citizen's initiatives to enact state laws to have required seats on the Board. There are a lot of AC members here who suggest future strategies. We need a more broadly based membership.

Gale – you are right. There are no designated seats for the AYK or Bristol Bay. A lot of work, sacrifice and time to be on the Board. The concern I have is that there are a lot of commercial fishermen who don't care if it is a wild fish or hatchery fish. And we know that over time even hatchery fish cannot sustain their rate of production. We cannot depend on hatchery fish to feed us. Hatchery fish do not feed ecosystems. This all circles back to protecting wild salmon. The three biggies are hatchery impacts, bycatch and intercept. We can do something about all these 3 things. We need to have people on the Board that do care about wild fish.

Andy: reiterated how important it is for all of us to work together for a unified voice. How can the Board of Fish and the Council be restructured?

Gale: We do have the Constitution on our side, the Sustainable Salmon Policy, and precautionary measures. The question is do we follow them? The answer is no (not enough.) We can ask legislators that when they interview people for BOF, ask them about their commitment to wild stock. But that is no guarantee.

Chuck Derrick – that's why it is important that when board vacancies come up it is important to find appointees that are like-minded and are able to go through the confirmation process.

Gale – Stocks of Concern – not at the level they should be on the Yukon. The Board is supposed to be getting a report from ADF&G. (Talk with the Department!) Chinook, summer and fall chum and now coho need to be on a "conservation" concern. Yukon River Panel is working on a rebuilding plan for Chinook according to the Treaty, but we need a river-wide comprehensive plan for all our stocks.

Andy: Most important for all of us to get behind “Gravel to Gravel” and protect and manage salmon throughout their entire life cycle.

Charlie Wright 4” mesh doesn’t help - fish are falling out
We have to start thinking that every egg counts

Barb Carlson – interested in 4” mesh discussion

Virgil: Stan Zuray and I have been trying to get that 6” mesh restriction since the early 1990’s

Michelle - Is there already a number determined for proposed hard caps on chinook and chum bycatch for area m? A citizen initiative would require a signature campaign to enact state law for designated seats, this would get it on the next ballot for voter approval. That’s my understanding.

Virgil – S/E escapement does NOT count undersized fish – get reg on this
Also jack salmon do not get give reproductive success, so we need details on ASL.

Julie Roberts– Tozitina River Project - track down from 2000’s

MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:00pm

NEXT MEETING: Monday, February 24th, 2025 Fairbanks Fisheries Subcommittee
<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=process.acinfo&ac=fairbanks>

FOLLOW UP

1. All ACs to draft proposals addressing concerns for their specific areas.
2. Fairbanks AC to brush off previous Area M proposals and adapt new language accordingly.
3. Gale to send out meeting minutes and a calendar with important fisheries dates to all interior region ACs.
4. All ACs to consider drafting a joint proposal for a statewide sustainable salmon review.
5. Gale to schedule a follow-up meeting in March, after the TCC Convention.
6. Charlie Wright to organize a fisheries war room at the TCC Convention.
7. Gale to investigate potential regulations regarding vessel pollution and size in Area M.
8. Olivia to finalize agenda for the Yukon River Preseason meeting on April 24-25.
9. Crystal and Gale to meet and document the salmon history of the Upper Tanana region.
10. All ACs to consider supporting proposals to reduce bycatch of all salmon species.
11. All ACs to consider proposals on mesh size restrictions for the Yukon River.
12. All ACs to consider proposals addressing escapement goals for chum salmon on discrete river systems.
13. Gale – send out info charts on year class and fecundity