

UPPER LYNN CANAL Advisory Committee
December 8, 2025
On ZOOM

I. Call to Order at 17:30 by Adam Smith, Chair

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 13

Adam Smith (Chair)

Mark Sogge (Vice Chair)

Derek Poinsette (Secretary)

Tim McDonough

Kathleen Menke

Lee Nash

Marvin Willard, Jr.

Craig Loomis

Nicholas Szatkowski

Darren Belisle

Alaina Birkel

Kip Kermoian

Rafe McGuire

Members Absent (Excused): 2

Teresa Katzeek

Ryan Cook

Members Absent (Unexcused):

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 8

List of User Groups Present:

III. Fish and Game Staff Present: Hannah Manninen (ADFG Wildlife Conservation)

IV. Guests Present:

V. Approval of Agenda - unanimous

VI. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes - unanimous

VII. Reports

- a. Chair's report
- b. ADF&G - none
- c. Others - none

VIII. Public Comment - none

IX. Old Business – Letter RE 24-Mile boat launch from November 5 meeting

At the Nov 5, 2025 meeting a motion passed unanimously to submit the following correspondence via email (sent on Dec 16 from Poinsette's address):

TO: Kate Kanouse, ADFG Habitat

*CC: Brian Willard, Chilkat Indian Village Tribal Administrator
Kimberley Strong, Chilkat Indian Village Council President
Tom Morphet, Haines Borough Mayor
Alekkha Fullerton, Haines Borough Manager
Dylan Krull, ADFG Habitat
Greg Albrecht, ADFG Habitat
Nicole Zeiser, ADFG Commercial Fisheries
Andy Steven, USFWS
Brad Garasky, Alaska State Parks*

The Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee (ULCAC), at its November 5 2025 meeting, voted unanimously in support of closing the existing river boat launch that is approximately 1/4 mile downstream of the Wells Bridge on river right. Vehicles driving on the road leading to the boat launch area, and on the boat launch beach itself, are doing harm to productive salmon spawning habitat.

The ULCAC, also by unanimous vote, would like to see a new boat launch constructed at the Wells Bridge to replace the one that is being closed down.

Thank you,

Derek Poinsette
Secretary, ULCAC

Attached: ADFG Trip Report dated 9-30-2025 RE: 24-Mile Boat Launch

Motion by McDonough/Loomis 2nd: Have Sogge draft and send a letter opposing a Haines Borough proposal to build a cruise ship dock in Letnikof Cove. Passed unanimously.

The letter below was sent via email from Poinsette's address on Dec 12:

DATE: December 8, 2025

FROM: Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee

TO: Haines Borough Planning Commission

*CC: Haines Borough Assembly and Mayor
Manager Alekka Fullerton
Planner Chen Wu
Clerk Michael Denker
Harbormaster Henry Pollan
Ports and Harbors Advisory Committee
Tourism Director Rebecca Hylton*

In the communities of Haines and Skagway, the Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee (ULCAC) is, in part, tasked with addressing fish and wildlife issues, and providing a local forum for discussion of those issues. Currently, the Haines Borough is considering entering into a partnership with American Cruise Lines to construct a cruise ship dock in Letnikof Cove, providing the cruise ship company with guaranteed docking rights.

By unanimous vote at its December 8 meeting (13 of 15 members present), the ULCAC is opposed to the construction of a cruise ship dock in Letnikof Cove.

The proposed development would fundamentally change the historical uses of Letnikof Cove and the entire Chilkat Inlet. Cruise ship activity would negatively impact the ecological productivity of the Inlet, and it would harm the vitality of the commercial, subsistence, and sport fishing activities that form the cultural and economic foundation of Haines.

Chilkat Inlet is an extraordinarily productive body of water. All five species of salmon pass through the Inlet on their way to spawn, and they rear in its waters as juveniles. The adult sockeye run to Chilkat Lake is among the largest in Southeast Alaska, and the Chilkat River mainstem sockeye, also a large run, are some of the earliest sockeye returning to Lynn Canal. Historically, the Chilkat/Klehini River chum salmon return has been the largest chum return in Southeast Alaska. The Chilkat River coho run is the second largest in Southeast Alaska, and pink salmon returns can also be quite robust.

Juvenile salmon use the Inlet's nearshore waters for essential early development. If juvenile salmon are able to leave the Chilkat estuary with substantial growth and large body size, their chances of marine survival are greatly increased. The 1981-1983 Haines Area Estuary Study (D. Karns, 1983) looked at the duration of juvenile chum salmon residence in the Inlet, their growth, and also their distribution. The chum were found to move into Letnikof Cove soon after leaving the river. Any increase in large-vessel traffic in this narrow, sensitive area would disrupt this vulnerable life stage.

Cruise ship activity may also alter the behavior of eulachon, which are known to be highly sensitive to noise and disturbance. Increased ship traffic or changes to the shoreline habitat could cause eulachon to abandon the Chilkat River entirely. Such a loss would have far-reaching ecological and cultural consequences—affecting people, terrestrial and marine mammals, bird populations, and the broader marine ecosystem of which they are an essential component.

Chilkat Inlet is an important area for the production of shrimp, crab, halibut and many other fish. In recent years herring have been returning to the Inlet, spawning between Ayiklutu and Twin Coves. Large schools of juvenile herring have been residing in Paradise and Letnikof Coves. Marine mammals are common throughout Chilkat Inlet, including humpback whales, orcas, Dall and harbor porpoise, harbor seals, and sea lions.

Bringing cruise ships into Chilkat Inlet would also directly impact the commercial fishing fleet that is the backbone for the economy of Haines. Commercial salmon fishing occurs throughout the summer and fall in Chilkat Inlet. The Inlet is narrow, and it is not uncommon for gillnets to stretch continuously from the east shore to the west shore. The nets are moved often. There is no open corridor that a cruise ship could move through. It would be a gross disservice to the commercial fleet for the Borough to establish a cruise ship route through one of the most important fishing areas in Lynn Canal.

Subsistence gillnetters rely on the same waters—often fishing directly off Letnikof Point, in Letnikof Cove, and between Twin Coves and Glacier Point. Cruise ship traffic would compromise their access to traditional food and undermine the cultural continuity tied to these practices.

Additionally, Chilkat Inlet is heavily used for shrimp, crab, and longline gear. Letnikof Cove and the area around Letnikof Point are often crowded with buoys. Even smaller

cruise ships require wide maneuvering space, especially in the Inlet's frequently windy conditions. Stationary buoys and the gear attached would inevitably be at risk.

Bringing cruise ships into Chilkat Inlet would degrade the estuarine environment that supports local subsistence and commercial harvests. This threatens food security, cultural practices, and traditional livelihoods that have sustained Haines for generations.

Cruise ships would also add another layer of risk to already-stressed salmon runs and increase the likelihood of a catastrophic pollution event in one of the most important estuaries in Southeast Alaska.

For decades, the Borough-owned dock in Letnikof Cove has served Haines residents and visitors by providing moorage for small vessels participating in commercial, subsistence, sport, and personal-use fisheries. It is an important access point for marine recreation and a welcome harbor for small boats traveling throughout Southeast Alaska. It has also traditionally been the home port of sport fishing on the Chilkat Inlet side.

These longstanding community uses are sustainable, appropriately scaled, and compatible with the ecological needs of Chilkat Inlet. Converting this facility into a cruise ship dock would displace these traditional uses.

Given the Inlet's ecological sensitivity, its central role in sustaining the commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries, and its importance to the cultural and economic life in Haines, constructing a cruise ship dock in Letnikof Cove is an unacceptable risk.

The Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee therefore stands unanimously opposed to the construction of a cruise ship dock in Letnikof Cove.

Sincerely,

Adam Smith

Chair, Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee

X. New Business – BOG Proposals

Proposals 1 & 2 – NO ACTION

Motion Menke/Nash 2nd to support

YES: 2 / NO: 11 -- motion fails – no action

Proposal 3 – OPPOSED

Motion McDonough/Poinsette 2nd to oppose

YES: 13 / NO: 0 -- motion passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: This would discourage hunters from spending time carefully identifying billies. Hunter convenience is not a good enough reason to allow same day airborne hunting.

Proposal 4 – SUPPORT

Motion McDonough/Smith 2nd to support

YES: 13 / NO: 0 -- motion passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: This makes sense for more effective conservation of a sensitive and highly regulated species.

(Kip Kermoian had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Proposal 5 – OPPOSED

Motion Loomis/Belisle 2nd to support

YES: 4 / NO: 8 -- motion FAILS

Motion Menke/Nash 2nd to oppose

YES: 8 / NO: 4 – motion PASSES

REASON TO OPPOSE: Proposals to liberalize hunting regulations should go through the AC process and ADFG staff. This one did not.

REASON TO SUPPORT (4 vote minority): This would increase hunter opportunity.

Proposal 6 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/Poinsette 2nd to oppose

YES: 12 / NO: 0 – motion passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: Proposals to liberalize hunting regulations should go through the AC process and ADFG staff. This one did not.

Proposal 7 – OPPOSED

Motion Poinsette/Smith 2nd to oppose

YES: 12 / NO: 0 -- passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: Proposals to liberalize hunting regulations should go through the AC process and ADFG staff. This one did not.

Proposals 8 & 9 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/Szatkowski 2nd to oppose

YES: 8 / NO: 4 -- passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: There is not yet enough information on cougars to start a hunting season. Need to allow the species to establish itself here first, if there is an ecological space for it, and then there can be a managed hunt.

REASON TO SUPPORT (4 vote minority): Proposal came from an AC. You should be able to shoot a cougar if you see one.

Proposal 10 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/Willard 2nd to oppose

YES: 8 / NO: 3 / ABSTAIN: 1 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: This is one of the only ways that ADFG can track beaver populations and harvest levels, and collect data.

REASON TO SUPPORT (3 vote minority): It seems unnecessary to seal beavers. There are lots of beavers out there. It is inconvenient for trappers.

Proposal 11 – NO ACTION

Motion Birkel/Belisle 2nd to support

YES: 5 / NO: 6 / ABSTAIN: 1 – motion fails – no action

Proposals 12 & 13 – SUPPORT

Motion Poinsette/McGuire 2nd to support

YES: 9 / NO: 3 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: Using night vision technology is not fair chase. Allowing use of advanced tech for hunting is a slippery slope toward mismanagement. Hunting with night vision tech could also be dangerous.

REASON TO OPPOSE (3 vote minority): Should be able to shoot wolves and coyotes with night vision tech.

Proposals 14 & 15 – OPPOSED

Motion Szatkowski/Menke 2nd to oppose

YES: 7 / NO: 5 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: Proposals didn't go through AC and ADFG staff. Fishers are still a rare and uncommon species. Liberalizing harvest should only be done with good data to support. There is very little data on fisher populations and habits in Southeast.

REASON TO OPPOSE (5 vote minority): Fisher take is incidental. It is inconvenient for trappers to have to avoid catching more than one fisher.

Proposal 16 – OPPOSED

Motion Poinsette/Smith 2nd to oppose

YES: 12 / NO: 0 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: We already fixed the late vs early waterfowl hunting season problem in Southeast just a few years ago. These proposed dates are WAY too late for northern Southeast hunters.

Proposal 17 – SUPPORT

Motion Poinsette/Loomis 2nd to support

YES: 11 / NO: 0 / ABSTAIN: 1 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: This would be a really good way to conserve grouse in the spring when hens are nesting. It is easy to ID male grouse at this time of year. The final regulation should distinguish between sooty and spruce grouse and have different bag limits for each.

Proposal 18 – OPPOSED

Motion Loomis/Poinsette 2nd to oppose

YES: 12 / NO: 0 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: We would only support this proposal if it was passed along with a restriction on harvesting spring hens, as in proposal #17.

Proposal 26 – SUPPORT

Motion Smith/Loomis 2nd to support

YES: 11 / NO: 0 / ABSTAIN: 1 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: This will specifically target and reduce the unsustainable harvest of nannies.

Proposal 28 – NO ACTION

Motion Menke/Loomis 2nd to support

YES: 3 / NO: 7 / ABSTAIN: 2 – fails – no action

(Rafe McGuire had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Proposals 31, 32 & 33 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/Birkel 2nd to oppose

YES: 11 / NO: 1 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: These proposals did not go through an AC and ADFG staff. Questions of whether to liberalize hunting opportunities, open new hunting areas, and perhaps increase harvest, need to be supported by sound science.

REASON TO SUPPORT (1 vote minority): This could increase hunting opportunities.

Proposals 34 & 35 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/McDonough 2nd to oppose

YES: 11 / NO: 0 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: There could be issues with public safety and with user conflicts in these areas.

Proposal 36 – SUPPORT

Motion Menke/Smith 2nd to support

YES: 11 / NO: 0 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: Alpine birds, like ptarmigan, seem to hatch later and grow slower than grouse farther down the mountain.

Proposals 44, 45, & 46 – SUPPORT

Motion Menke/Smith 2nd to support

YES: 10 / NO: 0 / ABSTAIN: 1 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: Resident hunters are losing opportunities to non-residents in some drawing hunts. This will ensure that residents will always have opportunities when they are available and have preference over non-residents.

Proposal 47 – OPPOSED

Motion Menke/Loomis 2nd to oppose

YES: 11 / NO: 0 / ABSTAIN: 1 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: Black bear meat needs to be salvaged in the spring. It is wanton waste if it is not. This would not be an effective way to try and reduce the number of black bears. That kind of predator control would need to be managed by ADFG wildlife biologists using good science. There is no evidence that killing bears and wasting the meat would have any impact at all on the deer population. The problem with deer on POW is caused by widespread habitat destruction from clearcut logging. The deer need more healthy habitat for numbers to increase, not fewer black bears.

Proposal 48 – SUPPORT

Motion Menke/Smith 2nd to support

YES: 8 / NO: 0 / ABSTAIN: 3 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: This is an ADFG proposal that is supported by good science.

(Lee Nash had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Proposal 52 – OPPOSED

Motion Poinsette/Szatkowski 2nd to oppose

YES: 6 / NO: 1 / ABSTAIN: 3 – passes

REASON TO OPPOSE: There is not good scientific evidence that killing more wolves would cause the deer population to increase. The problem with deer on POW is caused by widespread habitat destruction from clearcut logging. The deer need more healthy habitat for numbers to increase, not fewer predators. If there was more and better deer habitat, then there would be more deer.

Proposal 54 – SUPPORT

Motion Menke/Poinsette 2nd to support

YES: 7 / NO: 3 – passes

REASON TO SUPPORT: This would increase safety in the field, and accountability from trappers. This works very well in other areas, like Yukon Territory, where trappers are not anonymous. This would promote harmony and understanding among different trail user groups.

REASON TO OPPOSE (3 vote minority): People will vandalize traps and harass trappers. It is inconvenient for trappers.

XI. Other

Next meeting: January 6, 2026

Adjournment: 22:00

Minutes Recorded By: D.Poinsette

Minutes Approved By: A.Smith

Date: