

**PWS/Valdez Advisory Committee
Monday, January 26th, 2026
Zoom Only**

I. Call to Order: [Time] by [name of chair/acting chair]

II. Roll Call

Name	Present	Excused/Unexcused
Nick Crump	Yes	
Dan Eames	Yes	
Bruce Bowman	Yes	
Patrick Day	Yes	
Brett Wilbanks	Yes	
Jens Saxum	Yes	

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 4

List of User Groups Present:

III. Fish and Game Staff Present:

Heather Scannell, Jeremy Botts, Martin Schuester, Todd Johnson, Joe Loboy.

IV. Guests Present:

Mike Wells, Rowan Miller, Thane Miller, Justice Cousins, Hope Finley.

V. Chair Report

Nick made a report discussing elections to add new members and elect new officers.

VI. Approval of Agenda

VII. New Business

- a. Member Elections for 2 expiring seats, 9 vacant seats, and 2 alternates
 - i. Expiring Seats: Dan Eames and Nick Crump

Nick Crump nominated himself to be re-elected to the committee, seconded by Brett Wilbanks.

Dan Eames nominated himself, seconded by Pat Day.

Thane Miller nominated by Rowan Miller, seconded by Patrick Day.

Rowan Miller nominated by Rowan Miller, seconded by Nick Crump.

Justice Cousins nominated by Thane Miller, Seconded by Nick Crump.

Hope Finley was nominated by Thane Miller, seconded by Nick Crump.

All nominees were elected by unanimous consent.

b. Officer Elections

Nick Crump nominated himself for chair, seconded by Dan Eames.

Dean Eames nominated for Vice Chair by Thane Miller, seconded by Jens Saxum.

Rowan Miller nominated for Secretary by Thane Miller, seconded by Bruce Bowman.

All officer nominations were confirmed by unanimous consent.

c. Public Comments

No Public Comment.

d. Board of Fisheries Statewide Finfish Proposals

i. Starting with proposals 170-172

ii. Other proposals as requested

e. Other Fish and Game Business as Needed

Alaska Board of Fish Statewide Finfish and Supplemental Issues Meeting

March 17-March 20, 2026 | Anchorage, AK | Comment Deadline March 2, 2026

Proposal Number	Proposal Description		
Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal, Voting Notes
<i>Note: Effective September 2019, when abstentions occur, the action or decision of a majority of the remaining members at a meeting at which a quorum is present is an act of the committee. For example, a vote tally of 7-6-2 means the motion carries. Members abstaining from voting must provide an explanation that is included in the committee record.</i>			
<i>Subsistence Fisheries</i>			
162	Prohibit commercial transport services in subsistence fisheries, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Dan Eames, Seconded by Justice Cousins. The overall sentiment of discussions was that there shouldn't be any

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			unnecessary impediments limiting lawful users' access to the resource. Motion to oppose passes by unanimous consent
<i>Commercial Fisheries</i>			
<i>Groundfish Gear and Closed Waters</i>			
11	Close state waters to commercial groundfish fishing with trawl gear west of 170 ^o W. longitude, as follows		
Oppose	4	5	Motion to oppose by Thane Miller, seconded by Pat Day. Brett Wilbanks, Dan Eames, and Bruce Bowman mentioned they support this proposal due to concerns with habitat protection and bycatch from trawling while Hope Finley suggested we take no action on this proposal because of its vague and arbitrary nature. Motion to oppose this proposal went to a roll call vote which ended with 4 votes to oppose the motion, 5 votes to support the motion, and one abstention by Justice Cousins because he didn't feel comfortable voting on an issue outside of PWS.
163	Define all trawl gear operated inside state waters as non-pelagic and develop new performance and monitoring standards to allow state-waters pelagic trawling to occur on a case-by-case basis, as follows		
Oppose	4	5	Motion to oppose by Pat Day, seconded by Thane Miller. Brett Wilbanks expressed his support for monitoring bottom contact by trawl gear to reduce impact on habitat and reduce bycatch. Rowan Miller questioned the feasibility and legality of electronic monitoring. Marin Schuster of ADFG provided some context and information about implementation costs. Ultimately, the motion to oppose passed 5 to 4 with one abstention by Justice Cousins because he didn't feel informed enough to comfortably weigh in on this issue. Main concerns are about the feasibility of the technology and the fiduciary burden on the state (ADFG).

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164	Establish bottom contact monitoring requirements for pelagic trawl gear operated inside state waters, as follows		
Oppose	4	5	Motion to support made by Bruce Bowman, seconded by Brett Wilbanks. Discussions revolved around concerns for protecting habitat and limiting bycatch. Martin Schuster commented that costs for this would be on ADFG and would run into funding constraints without help from the legislature. The committee voted to oppose the proposal 5 to 4 with one abstention by Justice Cousins. Although the committee voted to oppose this proposal it was a close vote and the committee mostly agrees with the conceptual sentiment that technological advances have potential to reduce bycatch, potential harm to the seafloor habitat, and could help improve the public's trust in how this fishery is prosecuted. Main concerns are about the practicality of the technology and the fiduciary burden on the state (ADFG).
165	Establish salmon excluder requirements for all pelagic trawl gear operated inside state waters, as follows		
Support	5	2	Motion to support made by Rowan Miller, seconded by Brett Wilbanks. Dan Eames and Bruce Bowman noted that technology development often follows regulatory requirements. Further discussion from Martin Schuster (ADFG) was centered around what salmon excluders are, how they're theoretically used, how many king salmon are usually caught as bycatch, when observers are used onboard trawlers or at the processing plant, and what the observer program looks like. Motion to support passed with 5 in favor, 2 opposed, and 3 abstentions by Pat, Hope, and Nick due to not feeling there was enough information to make an informed decision.
166	Amend statewide definition of a mechanical jigging machine, as follows		

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No Action			The committee voted to take no action.
167	Prohibit vessels from having other groundfish gear or equipment onboard while participating in a groundfish fishery using mechanical jigging machines or hand troll gear, as follows		
No Action			The committee voted to take no action.
168	Prohibit vessels from having more than one groundfish gear type onboard when participating in a state-managed groundfish fishery		
No Action			The committee decided to take no action.
169	Create a definition of groundfish coil spring or 'slinky pot,' as follows		
Support	10	0	Motion to support, with amendments, by Brett Wilbanks, seconded by Justice Cousins. The committee supported this proposal with the amendment that the definition should end at "collapsible frame" without restricting the number of openings. Motion to support this proposal passed by unanimous consent.
170	Reduce the permitted egg take level of each hatchery permit containing pink and chum salmon by 25% of the current permitted capacity for those species, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Patrick Day, second by Bruce Bowman. Discussions revolved around the significant and unnecessary economic harm it would cause to regional stakeholders including commercial fishermen, charter fishermen, the surrounding communities, the hatcheries themselves, etc. The proposal lacks any substantiated, conclusive hard evidence to support its theoretical claims. Brett expressed that although he will be supporting the motion to oppose, he still had concerns about possible ecological concerns hatcheries may have on PWS, but public comments from VFDA CEO Mike Wells seemed to mostly satisfy his concerns. Overall, the sentiment was this proposal would not help fisheries in

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			other areas; it would only harm PWS fisheries. Motion to oppose this proposal passed 10-0.
171	Amend Prince William Sound hatchery permits to reduce pink salmon egg take capacity, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose made by Patrick Day, seconded by Thane Miller. Discussions revolved around there only being unsubstantiated speculation that hatchery fish are having any negative effects on wild stocks. Research on this topic is ongoing through the wild/hatchery interaction study being conducted by the Prince William Sound Science Center. Rowan Miller referenced other studies that have shown that while straying is natural, it's also a self-regulating issue, which is why after 50 years of hatcheries in PWS there are still many unique distinguishable genetic stocks of wild fish. ADFG biologist Heather Scannell noted that her observations of PWS wild stocks indicate they are healthy. VFDA CEO Mike Wells also made comments opposing this proposal. Motion to oppose this proposal passes 10-0.
172	Board generated regulations that places a moratorium on pink and chum hatchery production		
Oppose	1	9	Motion to oppose by Thane Miller, seconded by Patrick Day. Discussion started off by discussing how there's already a comprehensive system and process in place for issuing or amending hatchery permits through regional planning teams and the commissioner of ADFG. A moratorium issued by the board of fish would sidestep that entire process and may raise unnecessary legal challenges to its authority. Also, hatchery expansion is limited by factors such as developable sites with sufficient fresh water supplies and the enormous costs associated with expanding infrastructure to accommodate more fish, therefore current hatchery operations are already near max capacity due to these constraints. Ultimately, the motion to oppose this proposal passed 9 to 1 with 9 members

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			agreeing that the proposal was unnecessary and unwarranted, while Brett voted to support the proposal only with the intent to continue researching and studying these concerns.
173	Provide emergency order authority to define fishing boundaries when regulatory markers are lost, destroyed or otherwise absent, as follows		
Support	10	0	Motion to support made by Patrick Day, seconded by Dan Eames. Dan stated that there are instances where this has already been done informally where latitude and longitude were used instead of physical markers. The Committee voted to support this proposal by unanimous consent.
174	Allow the engine of a purse seine vessel or skiff to be shut off when the purse seine is deployed, as follows		
Support	6	3	Motion to support by Hope Finley, seconded by Justice Cousins. Dan raised concerns about engines not starting in certain situations. Thane called the current regulation “silly” and unnecessary. This would allow people to set their seines or let it set while they sleep at night. In opposition, Pat stated that he didn’t support this proposal as a seine net is used as an anchor at times, even though that is illegal. The abstention vote didn’t know enough to decide. Motion to support this proposal passes 6 support, 3 oppose, 1 abstain.
<i>Dipnet Gear Definition</i>			
175	Modify dipnet mesh-size and configuration, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Bruce Bowman, seconded by Jens Saxum. Thane Miller and others supported reducing mesh size but not the rope restriction. Bruce noted that this was directed at the Copper River. The rope issue also is more for control than for added depth. The Committee voted to unanimously oppose this proposal.
<i>Sport Fisheries</i>			
<i>Bag and Annual Limits</i>			
176	Allow anglers fishing from the same vessel to pool bag and possession limits, as follows		

Oppose	2	8	Motion to oppose by Thane Miller, seconded by Bruce Bowman. Thane stated that this is supposed to be fishing, not harvesting, so you should stop fishing once your individual limit has been met. Jens Saxum raised concerns that it will be the same number of fish brought back in the bag limit but less unnecessarily thrown back. Brett stated that this would allow for more successful charter trips.
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			Bruce makes a differentiation between harvesting and sports fishing. Thane makes a distinction between the idea of an individual limit and a boat or group limit. Motion to oppose this proposal passes 8 to 2.
177	Allow anglers fishing from the same vessel to pool bag and possession limits, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Brett Wilbanks, seconded by Thane Miller. Motion passes by unanimous consent. Same comments as for proposal 176.
178	Modify the definition of bag limit, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Patrick Day, seconded by Thane Miller. Dan Eames noted that some people have disabilities and need someone to assist them with holding the pole and reeling in the fish, but Pat noted that people with disabilities can fish by using a proxy. Some other discussions suggested the proposal lacks sufficient detail and could be abused. Motion to oppose this proposal passes by unanimous consent.
179	Establish a statewide annual limit for king salmon of 10 fish, as follows		
Oppose	0	9	Motion to oppose by Rowan Miller, seconded by Justice Cousins. Rowan suggests that the proposal is too broad and ambiguous. Motion to oppose this proposal passes with 9 votes to oppose and one abstention by Bruce Bowman.
<i>Possession Requirements</i>			
180	Establish a statewide annual limit for king salmon of five fish, as follows		

Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose by Bruce Bowman, seconded by Rowan Miller. Motion to oppose by unanimous consent. Same comments as proposal 179.
<i>Sport Fishing Gear</i>			
181	Align regulatory and statutory language for sport fishing gear, as follows		
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Support	4	2	Motion to support was made by Rowan Miller, seconded by Bruce Bowman. Bruce noted it clarifies that fishing requires direct human involvement. Motion to support this proposal passes with four votes to support, two votes to oppose, and four people abstained. Those that abstained did not know enough about artificial means to fish to make any voting decisions.
182	Establish bow fishing as lawful sport fishing gear for species without a bag or possession limit, as follows		
Support	10	0	Motion to support this proposal made by Jens Saxum, seconded by Justice Cousins. Motion passes by unanimous consent. The Committee saw no reason not to use a bow to target invasive species that have no bag limits: whitefish, suckers, northern pike.
183	Amend regulations requiring conditions of fish available to inspection while in possession, as follows		
Oppose	0	10	Motion to oppose made by Thane Miller, seconded by Pat Day. Bruce noted the proposal is probably meant for species like Ling Cod which have length requirements, the way the proposal is written would include all fin fish and therefore it's too unclear and he can't support it. Justice expressed concerns about processing fish immediately after catch. General discussion was about the pros and cons of waiting to process your fish until you get to the dock for inspection, however there was sympathy for law enforcement's ability to identify number of caught fish. Motion to oppose this proposal passes by unanimous consent.

Definitions			
184	Align the sport fish definition of rockfish with the statewide definition, as follows		
Support	10	0	Motion to support was made by Rowan Miller, seconded by Pat Day. Considered a housekeeping proposal by the department. Motion to support this proposal passes by unanimous consent.
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186	Reduce commercial salmon fishing opportunity with drift gillnet gear in the Central District of the Cook Inlet Area		
No Action			The committee didn't take this matter up.

VIII. Select representative for Board of Fisheries Statewide Finfish meeting (March 16-20, 2026)

The committee selected Nicholas Crump to represent the committee at the board of statewide board of fish meeting in Anchorage in March, 2026.

IX. Set next meeting date for Board of Game southcentral proposals

The next committee meeting to discuss board of game proposals was scheduled for February 12th at 5:00 pm.

X. Other

XI. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Thane Miller. Seconded by Dan Eames.

Adjournment:

Minutes Recorded By: **Nick Crump**

Minutes Approved By: _____

Date: _____