

PROPOSAL 189 – 5 AAC 96.6XX New Section and 5 AAC 01.249

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? A traditional knowledge policy would be established in regulation, which would provide guidance on how the Board of Fisheries (board) will incorporate traditional knowledge into their process along with establishing definitions to the terms “traditional knowledge” and “local knowledge.” Additionally, the term “traditional knowledge” would be restored to the *Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan* (5 AAC 01.249(1)) that was initially adopted by the board at their Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim (AYK) meeting in November 2025.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? Chapter 96 in the Alaska Administrative Code (AAC) refers to the procedures for developing fish and game regulations. There is currently no reference to or definition of Local knowledge (LK) and Traditional Knowledge (TK) in this chapter.

Currently, 5 AAC 01.249(1) includes only preseason projections, mainstem river sonar passage estimates, test fisheries indices, subsistence and commercial fishing reports, and fish passage estimates from escapement monitoring projects as best available data for assessing fall chum run size. Traditional knowledge is not currently included in the list of types of best available data the department shall use for assessing fall chum run size.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? Adding a policy to incorporate TK into the board’s procedures would recognize that this knowledge type is warranted for consideration by the board as best available data and make it available to others through the public process.

BACKGROUND: During their November 2025 AYK meeting, the board adopted Proposal 15 which added the term “traditional knowledge” to 5 AAC 01.249(1). However, at that time, there was no codified definition of traditional knowledge; it existed only in board policy and, as a result, the board did not have the authority to add the terminology to the regulation. Further, the lack of a clear definition may create ambiguity about its meaning for both the board and the public. In order to use this term in regulation, the board generated this proposal to provide a clear codified definition in regulation and to codify the procedure for incorporating TK into the board process.

Chapter 96 currently defines the process the boards use to solicit, review, and act on regulatory proposals. On March 21, 2026, at their Statewide Finfish meeting, the board created a board-generated proposal to define TK and LK, add language about the incorporation of TK into board decisions, and recognize TK as a type of best available data.

In March 2024, the board adopted board policy 2024-305-FB to recognize the value and importance of traditional knowledge in their proceedings and decision-making and invite knowledge holders to “to share their experiences, values, alternative and/or independent observations and data collections directly with the Board.” Since that time, traditional knowledge holders have provided this information through reports scheduled after staff reports and before public testimony. As advised by the board, knowledge holders must sign-up ahead of the meeting to provide their reports; during the initial trial period of the policy, reports have been generally

limited to 10 minutes; and they should not speak to specific proposals, but rather provide information that supports the board's understanding of the area in which they are deliberating. Putting this policy language into regulation defines the terms and strengthens the procedural aspects of the inclusion of TK.

TK reports are different from public testimony. Public testimony is an important component of board procedures and gives members of the public an opportunity to provide information, either written or verbal, relevant to specific proposals and issues noticed for that meeting (5 AAC 96.610). In contrast, TK reports are meant to provide board members with information that is deeper in breadth and scope than the issues encapsulated in a set of regulatory proposals and that encompass a worldview that defines specific relationships between humans and nonhuman attributes of the world through such cultural norms as reciprocity, respect, and relationality.

Finally, by codifying a definition of traditional knowledge and local knowledge, the board would have the authority to add the term to 5 AAC 01.249(1).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department is **NEUTRAL** on this proposal.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in a fishery. Approval of this proposal will not result in an additional cost for the department.