

Submitted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries

March 21, 2026

This regulatory language is in addition to 2024-305-FB: Alaska Board of Fisheries Policy on Traditional Knowledge

Chapter 96 is amended by adding a new section to read:

5 AAC 96.6XX. Policy on traditional knowledge. (a) The Alaska Board of Fisheries recognizes local knowledge and traditional knowledge as an important aspect of best available science. As such, access to these knowledge systems should be an important part of informing Board decisions through their close proximity and intimate, often long-standing, relationships with fish resources, the environment, and the ecological systems that are critical to fishery sustainability. These relationships may exceed direct references to the natural world to include values associated with an entire world view, such as reciprocity, respect, and relationality. The Board endeavors to incorporate traditional knowledge by seeking and inviting traditional knowledge holders recognized and nominated by their community, tribe, or by an organization whose interests encompass the conservation, protection, restoration, or enhancement of fishery resources, to share their experiences, values, alternative and/or independent observations and data collections directly with the Board.

(b) For the purpose of this section, “Traditional Knowledge” means knowledge, or a way of knowing, that is unique to a given culture or society, and, often through language, encompasses a worldview that defines specific relationships between humans and nonhuman attributes of the world. As knowledge that derives from both personal and the cumulative experiences of one’s forbearers, it is grounded in generational knowledge but also subject to change and refinement. Traditional Knowledge is characterized by a long time scale, is usually local in scale, and often provides a counterpoint to more broad-based, scientifically produced knowledge. This sharing of information may not be limited to in-person testimony but may include consideration of alternative forms of audio or visual media at the discretion of the chair. The Board will provide the opportunity to sign-up prior to Board meetings to provide traditional knowledge relevant to the proposals and subject matter under consideration at that meeting. The time allowance is ten minutes. The Board defines Traditional Knowledge differently than Local Knowledge. The Board’s decision-making has long incorporated local knowledge holders and experts primarily through the department’s local advisory committees, oral and written public comments, and the Board’s committee processes.

(c) For the purpose of this section, “Local Knowledge” means knowledge, or a way of knowing, developed from the observations and experiences of people living, working, harvesting, and

processing fish or game in specific places, and local knowledge holders may or may not be Indigenous Peoples. Local Knowledge can evolve over time, but it is inherently the product of knowledge based on personal or shared experience. Local knowledge holders can be local people residing in communities with area and community specific insights to share. One important distinction of local knowledge from traditional knowledge is that one does not necessarily need years of experience to hold local knowledge about an ecosystem, fishery, or species of fish. The term 'local knowledge holder' is used in reference to any, and all, people that hold information relevant to a particular fishery for example, residents, fishermen,, while a 'local knowledge expert' is more specific and acknowledges that an individual may hold above-average knowledge about a topic that is deep in breadth and scope. A 'local knowledge expert' may also be recognized by their peers as such.