



Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance

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April 7, 2025

House Fisheries Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99811

RE: OPPOSE HB 125 – MEMBERSHIP BOARD OF FISHERIES

Dear Representative Stutes, and House Fisheries Committee Members,

Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance (SEAFA) is a multi-gear/multi-species commercial fishing association representing our 300+ members involved in salmon, crab, shrimp and longline fisheries mainly in Southeast Alaska.

SEAFA opposes HB 125 as written. While SEAFA understands and shares some of the frustration and concerns over the current process for appointing members to the Board of Fish and decisions coming out of the Board of Fish, this legislation as written is not the solution.

First, we are extremely opposed to NOAA having any part of determining who serves on the Board of Fish. The Federal Government should not be a part of our state process, nor should they be required to develop a process for providing names to the Governor to consider for appointment to a statewide board.

Science is provided by Alaska Dept of Fish & Game (ADF&G) at Board of Fish meetings. Allowing more freedom of speech by ADF&G representatives would be helpful. We remember times when Board of Fish members were told in the written staff comments that they didn't have a position because it was allocative. The Board members were trying to figure out how to ask the question so they would receive a simple answer of who the parties involved in the allocation were so they could go thru the mandatory allocative criteria. They never figured it out but it was painful to sit in the audience and watch this play out.

Second, why are the subsistence seats are only allowed to be chosen from a list by Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN)? AFN does not represent all native tribal governments and corporations and particularly does not represent the rural non-native residents that are reliant on

a subsistence lifestyle. We oppose vesting the authority with AFN to nominate subsistence members

Third, we have concern with the lack of definitions for several of the seats. For example, what criteria is necessary to be considered "from the scientific community"? Can the sport seats be filled by all guided sport fishermen or is one of the seats specifically for an individual that is an Alaskan resident that only fishes for themselves and does not charter, own a lodge, boat rental, custom processing for sport fish etc? SEAFSA would also ask about the definition of a commercial seat. We have seen many Boards of Fish members who are considered commercial fishermen, but the commercial fishermen don't consider them a commercial fishing representative. In our opinion, a Board of Fish member representing commercial fishing must have enough experience with commercial fishing boats and gear to be able to understand with little difficulty an explanation of a type of gear that they are not familiar with. A commercial fisherman is someone who has actively participated in the industry and direct knowledge of the industry, not someone whose tie to the commercial fishing industry is a close family member inherited a commercial fishing permit, or they crewed for a week or similar situations.

Fourth, this legislation, as written, does not give any consideration to regional differences and geographic diversity of the board. In recent years, we have seen a significant lack of representation from coastal communities on the board. Having several coastal residents serving on the Board of Fish rather than all Anchorage or Interior representatives would ensure that perspectives from around the state have a voice.

Finally, it is important that the Board of Fish members have good judgement, knowledge, integrity and a diversity of interest and points of view, without a political bias, with the interest of protecting the resources and sustainability while making tough allocation decisions. The Legislature needs to look at the individuals during the hearings but also that the seats being filled with the remaining current members provides for an overall diversity of interest, experience and regional knowledge as well. Passing HB 33 Conflict of Interest legislation would be extremely helpful in getting more qualified individuals to put their names forward.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this legislation and will provide further comments if the legislation changes significantly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathy Hansen", followed by a long horizontal line.

Kathy Hansen
Executive Director