

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 27, 2023

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel, Co-Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Vice Chair
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senator Matt Claman

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 34

"An Act reestablishing the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SB 34 OUT OF COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW: ALASKA BYCATCH REVIEW TASK FORCE

- HEARD

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 11

Urging the United States Environmental Protection Agency to develop a woodstove certification program that addresses the threat to clean and healthy winter air in Fairbanks; and urging the state Department of Environmental Conservation to develop an economically and legally defensible state implementation plan for the Fairbanks North Star Borough nonattainment area.

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 34

SHORT TITLE: CITIZEN ADVISORY COMM ON FEDERAL AREAS

SPONSOR (s) : SENATOR (s) KAUFMAN

01/18/23	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/13/23
01/18/23	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/23	(S)	RES, FIN
03/15/23	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/15/23	(S)	Heard & Held
03/15/23	(S)	MINUTE (RES)
03/24/23	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/24/23	(S)	Heard & Held
03/24/23	(S)	MINUTE (RES)
03/27/23	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

STEPHANIE MADSEN, Member
Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT);
Executive Director
At-sea Processors Association
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Delivered an overview of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.

LINDA KOZAK, Member
Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT);
Chair
Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee
Kodiak, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Provided commentary following the overview of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR CLICK BISHOP called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kawasaki, Claman, Wielechowski, Kawasaki, Dunbar, Co-Chair Giessel, and Co-Chair Bishop.

SB 34-CITIZEN ADVISORY COMM ON FEDERAL AREAS

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 34 "An Act reestablishing the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

[3:31:58 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL moved to report SB 34, work order 33-LS0250\B, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP found no objection and SB 34 was reported from the Senate Resources Standing Committee.

OVERVIEW: ALASKA BYCATCH REVIEW TASK FORCE

[3:32:16 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP announced an overview of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force by Stephanie Madsen and Linda Kozak.

[3:33:07 PM](#)

STEPHANIE MADSEN, Member, Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT), and Executive Director, At-sea Processors Association, Juneau, Alaska, introduced herself.

[3:33:36 PM](#)

LINDA KOZAK, Member, Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT), and Chair, Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee, Kodiak, Alaska, introduced herself.

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At ease

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP reconvened the meeting.

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MS. MADSEN began the presentation with a description of the diverse task force membership. She explained that the task force was comprised of 17 members including two non-voting members: Representative Bryce Edgmon and former Senator Peter Micciche.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 2, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force."

Governor Dunleavy created the 17-member Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) to help better understand unintended bycatch of high-value fishery resources in state and federal waters

Bycatch is defined as:

Fish which are harvested in a fishery, but are not sold or kept

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked about the definition. He wondered what happens to the fish that are not sold or kept.

MS. MADSEN stated that bycatch is defined as fish that are harvested in a fishery but are not sold or kept. She clarified that Area M [state-managed waters along Western Alaska Peninsula and Eastern Aleutian Islands] is not considered a bycatch fishery. She explained that bycatch includes incidentally caught fish that are prohibited or subject to regulatory and/or economic discards. She said that halibut, crab and salmon were the focus and the group also considered prohibited species catch. She noted that the approved use of bycatch in a food bank program was an exception.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP clarified that the definition excludes fish from Area M.

MS. MADSEN affirmed the statement. She stated that Area M is not considered a bycatch fishery and was not discussed in the task force.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 3, "Administrative Order #326 - Purpose of the ABRT."

- Study what impacts bycatch has on fisheries.
- Evaluate and recommend policies informed by a better understanding of the issue of bycatch of high-value Alaska fishery resources.
- Ensure state agencies are leveraging available resources to better understand the issue of bycatch.
- Utilize the best available science to inform policy makers and the public about these issues

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 4, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Process."

- ABRT members agreed to operate on a consensus-based process.

- Focused on the high-value species of salmon, halibut and crab. Regions addressed were the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. ABRT did not address Southeast or Aleutian Islands.
- Four committees were formed and prepared recommendations which were submitted to the full Task Force for review in August, 2022.
- Recommendations were made on three categories; State Engagement, Research and Management. All recommendations were unanimously approved, with the exception of one management proposal.
- Final report (43 pages) was submitted to Governor Dunleavy on November 30, 2022.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked about the consensus-based process. He asked if all decisions were unanimous.

MS. MADSEN replied no, a lack of consensus was noted and the pros and cons of the discussion were presented. The process is held at community and task force levels. Committee recommendations were discussed by the committee and approved by the task force.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if a majority of task force members observing an issue would trigger additional research.

MS. MADSEN asked if additional research meant additional work.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI replied yes.

MS. MADSEN replied that the task force achieved consensus with an abundance of meetings and public comment.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slides 5 and 6, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Committees." She explained that the task force had an active website with all committees and members listed.

Science, Technology and Innovation

Tommy Sheridan, Chair

Ragnar Alstrom

Linda Kozak

Stephanie Madsen

Peter Micciche

Western Alaska Salmon

Co-Chairs - George Guy and Stephanie Madsen
Ragner Alstrom
Bryce Edgmon
Karma Ulvi

Gulf of Alaska Halibut and Salmon

Brian Gabriel, Chair
Kevin Delaney
Duncan Fields
Mike Flores
Linda Kozak
Raymond May

Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Crab

Linda Kozak, Chair
Kevin Delaney
Stephanie Madsen
Erik Velsko

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 7, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Meeting Information."

Meetings were held from January 28 - November 15, 2022

Full Task Force 14 Meetings

Science, Technology & Innovation Committee 5 Meetings

Western Alaska Salmon Committee 10 Meetings

Gulf of Alaska Halibut and Salmon Committee 8 Meetings

Bering Sea & Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee 8 Meetings

Total 45 Meetings

One meeting was held in-person and all other meetings conducted online. Public testimony was taken at 43 of the 45 meetings.

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CO-CHAIR GIESSEL informed the public that the meetings were listed on slide 7.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked if the 45 meetings were recorded and transcribed.

MS. MADSEN replied that most meetings were held via Zoom, and each committee was responsible for its minutes. She explained that additional funds were not available to support the task force. She noted that the Department of Fish and Game provided staff to draft minutes of the meetings. She clarified that committee members set up Zoom meetings and communicated with the Department of Fish and Game staff to provide public notice. She stressed the importance of public comment accessibility.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 8, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Presentations." She explained that the presentations were available at committee and task force levels. She added that the presentations were posted online and in the report.

The ABRT received 30 presentations - all available on the ABRT website Agencies/Organizations Presenting (Partial List)

- Alaska Department of Fish & Game
- North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- NOAA Fisheries - Sustainable Fisheries Division
- Alaska Fisheries Science Center (NOAA)
- International Pacific Halibut Commission
- University of Alaska Fairbanks
- Alaska Pacific University/Cornell University
- Alaska Ocean Cluster
- FishNext Research - Dr. Craig Rose
- Alaska Seafood Cooperative
- Sea State, Inc. SeaShare
- Alaska Charter Association
- United Catcher Boats
- Alaska Marine Conservation Council
- Groundfish Forum
- Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center
- At-Sea Processors Association
- Alaska Groundfish Data Bank
- Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 9, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Presentations and Information."

Full Task Force:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.meetinginfo>

- Overview of bycatch in federal and state fisheries.
- Genetic stock identification of salmon bycatch in groundfish fisheries.
- SeaShare: salmon/halibut bycatch utilization for hunger-relief.
- Federal groundfish observer and monitoring program.

Science, Technology & Innovation Committee:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.committees#meetings_abrt

- An Ocean Intelligence System for a Changing World."
- Alaska Blue Economy Center.
- Pollock Conservation Cooperative Research Center.
- Alaska Ocean Cluster.

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 10, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Presentations and Information."

Western Alaska Salmon Committee:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.committees#meetings_wasc

- Western Alaska Chinook and chum salmon stock status.
- Regulatory structure of salmon bycatch measures for the Bering Sea pollock fishery.
- Salmon bycatch reduction Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs).

- Research on salmon excluders in pollock trawl nets.
- Updated chum and Chinook salmon bycatch genetic information; Adult Equivalent (AEQ) estimates and impact rate analysis for Western Alaska Chinook salmon; and North Pacific Fishery Management Council actions.
- Current and future research by ADF&G Salmon and Ocean Ecology Program and Alaska Fishery Science Center.

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked about the salmon bycatch Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs).

MS. MADSEN replied that IPAs are programs required for the pollock fishery. The programs are described in regulation and must be approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service. She added that the task force provides annual reports to the council. She noted that the April meeting will include a salmon agenda item with the incentive plan updates and genetic information gathered in 2022. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council established a salmon bycatch committee that will provide recommendations about component analysis.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP requested additional information about advances in salmon genetic analysis.

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MS. MADSEN replied that she would address the query later in her presentation.

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 11, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Presentations and Information."

Gulf of Alaska Halibut and Salmon Committee:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.committees#meetings_goahs

- Chinook salmon stock status and trends.
- Chinook salmon bycatch management and genetic information.

- Halibut bycatch in groundfish fisheries.
- Summary of the 2021 halibut fishery data and stock assessment results.
- Halibut deck sorting on non-pelagic trawl vessels.
- Overview of GOA shoreside trawl fleet and history of trawl fishery rationalization efforts.
- Discard mortality in the directed halibut fishery.
- Industry recommendations for research and management

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 12, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Presentations and Information."

Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.committees#meetings_bsai

- Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab stock status and management update.
- Cooperative research to reduce non-pelagic trawling efforts on crab and habitat.
- Impacts of modified non-pelagic trawl sweep gear on crab bycatch.
- Tanner crab bycatch and groundfish catch in the Central Gulf of Alaska.
- Overview of Bering Sea/Aleutians stock status and management.
- Seascape-scale modeling of benthic habitat disturbance from fishing activities.
- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab bycatch management measures.

- Industry recommendations for research and management.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 14, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force State Engagement Recommendations."

- Establish a process for providing bycatch-related information and resources to Alaskans in a format that is understandable and easily accessible.
- Continue to offer the public an opportunity to provide input on North Pacific Council issues before each meeting. Consideration should be given to additional methods to seek input from stakeholders, tribal entities and communities on bycatch issues.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI queried the scope of Alaskan bycatch, specifically king salmon, chum salmon and halibut. He asked how many fish or pounds of fish comprised the state's bycatch.

MS. MADSEN replied that she would follow up with accurate numbers. She informed the committee that the state's bycatch was small in comparison to other fisheries in the United States. She mentioned that the pollock fishery caught approximately 250 thousand Western Alaskan chum salmon in 2022. She added that 50 thousand chum were technically classified as Western Alaskan chum while 40 thousand were allocated to the coastwide Western Alaska and 10 thousand to the Kotzebue fishery. She remarked that the Chinook salmon bycatch was lower with 2000 caught last year in her sector. She stated that exact figures were found in the IPA reports.

MS. MADSEN continued that the Amendment 80 sector provides the council a halibut bycatch report. She explained that many fisheries are required to report all fish caught by every vessel. She mentioned that the cooperative report outlines every vessel in the sector and all fish species captured.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if bycatch in Alaska presents a problem for the state.

MS. MADSEN replied that bycatch is both inevitable and unwanted. She believed that bycatch is considered a problem when disasters occur such as two multi-species salmon collapses. She remarked

on the decline seen in two crab species as well. She added that halibut stock fluctuates too. She stressed the need to lessen or avoid bycatch. She theorized that the intensity of the problem was in the eye of the beholder.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI queried the degree that bycatch contributes to the fisheries' collapse.

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MS. MADSEN expressed some discomfort because she was tasked with presenting the task force report. She recalled that Dr. Katie Howard presented relevant issues to the House Fisheries Committee. She commented that the federal government sees climate change as the driver of the fishery declines and the contribution of bycatch remains unclear. She supposed that bycatch may contribute to the fishery declines.

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CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked what happens to the bycatch.

MS. MADSEN responded that the pollock fishery requires every salmon be counted by census and discarded via regulatory recommendations. She clarified that the regulations stipulate that food-grade fish are placed in the SeaShare food-bank program. Since the bycatch is prohibited, they must be discarded, but most vessels attempt to retain food-grade fish for the food bank. She added that appropriate facilities are required to redistribute the fish for hunger relief. Halibut is a regulatory discard and fish caught offshore are not eligible for the SeaShare program. Onshore bycatch is eligible for the food bank program.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP requested more information about the expansion efforts for the SeaShare program.

MS. MADSEN replied that the SeaShare program is improving. She stated that the program challenges involved appropriate hubs and containers for distribution. She recalled mention of donations made to Yukon villages, but she did not have details. She added that the North Pacific Fishery Management Council will receive a SeaShare program update in April.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked about task force discussions or recommendations for utilizing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) enforcement officers as observers on fishing vessels.

MS. MADSEN replied that two federal employees function as observers on fishing vessels.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if all fishing boats had observers.

MS. MADSEN replied that every offshore vessel had federal observers, but inshore vessels varied by the fishery. She stated that the fisheries planned to move to electronic monitoring, which is more applicable to catcher vessels. All catcher processors have two federal observers onboard. She mentioned the use of cameras onboard to observe salmon discard. She added that the National Observer Program collects the salmon genetics, with every tenth Chinook salmon genetically tested. Every thirtieth chum salmon is genetically tested. All testing occurs at the Auke Bay lab in Juneau.

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SENATOR KAWASAKI asked about the percentage of bycatch that becomes part of the SeaShare program.

MS. MADSEN replied that she did not have the figures at hand, but the SeaShare report would include the poundage of salmon collected. She reminded the committee that the fish must be deemed food-grade for use in the SeaShare program. She added that halibut are eligible for the program from shoreside processors; there is no halibut donation program at sea.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked if ineligible fish are discarded.

MS. MADSEN replied yes, the fish are classified as regulatory discards. She highlighted that recommendations and a request for full utilization of food-grade bycatch were upcoming in the presentation.

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SENATOR DUNBAR asked how many halibut or salmon are unintentionally caught in a typical catcher processor.

MS. MADSEN stated that she was not prepared to speak about halibut, but her trawler caught 250 metric tons of pollock and one Chinook salmon.

SENATOR DUNBAR clarified that a full net of pollock would yield only one Chinook salmon.

MS. MADSEN responded that Chinook and chum salmon are different in their practices and habits. She stated that some pollock catches yield zero salmon. She added that the fish finder on her vessel does not distinguish between pollock and salmon.

SENATOR DUNBAR recalled that purse seine fishing can yield an abundance of unintentionally caught jellyfish. He understood that Ms. Madsen would capture large trawls of pollock with relatively few salmon.

MS. MADSEN stated that Senator Dunbar's assessment is generally correct. She clarified that chum salmon travel in groups and may be caught in greater numbers depending on their migration and the location of the pollock. She stressed the importance of genetic determinations for more accurate predictions. The genetic work will ultimately lead to less unintended bycatch. She noted that areas of greater bycatch are identified via a third party to appropriately shut down high-risk areas. The incentive is to remain on high pollock grounds. The penalty involves a move, which is costly for a catcher processor fleet.

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SENATOR CLAMAN asked if the bycatch volume subjects the fleet to the penalty of moving.

MS. MADSEN replied that a formula base rate (the number of pollock divided by the number of salmon) is calculated to determine bycatch avoidance areas. The vessel performance is also considered and if the vessel is determined to be a "poor performer," they are excluded from the area for at least a week.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the task force identified the levels of acceptable and excessive bycatch.

MS. MADSEN replied that the task force did not provide recommendations about acceptable levels of bycatch.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI assumed that metrics would be helpful.

MS. MADSEN clarified the question. She interpreted that Senator Wielechowski wondered about a certain level of acceptable bycatch. She responded that bycatch are not acceptable species and must be avoided. The declining rate of a species determines the impacts of bycatch. She anticipated that reports from the federal and state governments would show that the Chinook salmon failure is occurring in the juveniles near the shore. For chum

salmon, the failure is suspected to result from warm water and change in the availability of their food source.

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SENATOR KAUFMAN queried the criteria that classify a vessel as a poor performer.

MS. MADSEN replied that a poor performer is simply a vessel in the wrong place at the wrong time. She referred to an outlier provision in the salmon avoidance plan. A vessel that is an outlier for more than two seasons will receive additional penalties.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked about gear and excluders.

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MS. MADSEN replied that salmon excluder work data was presented to the committees and task force. She stated that the salmon excluder work was ongoing and required in the pollock fishery. She stated that salmon are stronger swimmers than pollock. She mentioned various methods to discourage salmon bycatch including lights used to distract the salmon. She clarified that the excluder work was another tool available to avoid capturing Chinook salmon.

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CO-CHAIR BISHOP attempted to add perspective about the pollock and salmon ratio Ms. Madsen mentioned. He interpreted the ratio to be quite small when comparing the one salmon caught to 250 metric tons of pollock.

[4:08:07 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI agreed that the numbers of bycatch sound reasonable, but the legislature often hears about the problems with bycatch. He wondered why a task force is necessary for one king salmon out of so many fish.

MS. MADSEN replied that the declines seen in chum, coho and crab led to the creation of the task force. She suspected that last year's election played a part in the popularity of the bycatch concept. She stated that the task force served an important role in educating the public.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the task force concluded that bycatch is not contributing to declines in fish and crab counts.

MS. MADSEN replied no, the task force concluded that the state should continue to focus on bycatch with the available tools to ensure that numbers do not increase. She added that bycatch is found in fixed gear and pot fisheries. She remarked that pot cod fishers in the Bering Sea captured more king crab than the trawlers.

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MS. MADSEN continued with slide 15, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force State Engagement Recommendation." She remarked that the total chum salmon catch in 2022 was approximately 250 thousand, with 50 thousand from Western Alaska.

- Support legislative action to continue the Education Tax Credit Program and expand it to include gear modifications or technology improvements that would help reduce bycatch.
- State should work with other entities, including the State Department, to request information on Chinook and chum salmon taken in Russian waters, as well as the genetic origin of these salmon.

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SENATOR CLAMAN asked what the average chum weighs. He wished to compare the metric tons of pollock to the number of fish.

MS. MADSEN replied that she did not have the data available, but noted that the information is collected by the Federal Observer Program. She remarked that bycatch fish were currently smaller than mature fish; weight and age were accounted for and available.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked about a general range of chum salmon bycatch weight.

MS. MADSEN replied that she did not know.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP attempted to provide perspective about the number of fish for committee members.

[4:13:23 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 16, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force State Engagement Recommendations."

Continued Focus on Bycatch

- Using the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force as a template, the state should establish a permanent bycatch advisory entity.
- Work with Alaska Board of Fisheries, stakeholders and a bycatch advisory entity to develop a State of Alaska Bycatch Policy. This policy could be used by the Alaska Board of Fisheries for stage-managed fisheries and the State of Alaska representative to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council when developing the State of Alaska position regarding bycatch in federally managed waters.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI considered the notion that bycatch is not a problem. He referenced an Anchorage Daily News article about Black Sea sablefish and black cod ending the year at 7.9 million pounds in 2020, which was 519 percent over the trawl bycatch limits. He asked if the figures were accurate.

MS. MADSEN stated that she was available to discuss the task force report. She offered to return to the committee with additional information. She clarified that she did not state that bycatch is not a problem.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asserted that the committee would stay focused on the task force report.

MS. MADSEN acknowledged the importance of the issue to Alaskans. She wished to answer all committee member questions but felt an obligation to her fellow task force members.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the task force provided recommendations regarding gear usage or techniques to reduce bycatch.

MS. MADSEN replied yes.

[4:15:56 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 17, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendation."

- Develop State bycatch research priorities, utilizing input from communities, Alaska Native tribes, industry, and the public, to share with funding entities that would help identify and acquire research funds.

- Implement strategies to encourage and facilitate industry/agency cooperative research to reduce bycatch and associated mortality.
- Create methods for collaboration with Alaska Native tribes, organizations and other research entities to better track proposed or funded bycatch research, along with developing opportunities for cooperative projects and combined reporting of findings.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP queried the methods of collaboration with Alaska Native tribes. He suggested potential roles Alaska Natives might play in the process.

MS. MADSEN replied that three tribal members participated in the task force. She agreed that further work and implementation were required. She opined that communication and outreach would go a long way.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP understood that the task force provided recommendations about collaboration.

SENATOR KAWASAKI queried how the research stated in the presentation differed from past studies. He wondered how the current research adapted to today's situation. He cited a report from 1979 mentioning the Chinook bycatch that was recycled in the 2010 NOAA report.

MS. MADSEN replied that future slides should answer more questions. She stated that the research cited about Chinook salmon was accurate.

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 18, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: All Species and Gear." She stated that the task force recommends additional research to reduce bycatch. She stressed the need for updated discard mortality rates. She stated that discard mortality rates for crab and halibut are outdated. She added the recommendation for gear modification and improved technology. She remarked on the need to better understand the shifting distribution patterns. She clarified that fish are found in different spots now because of climate change and food distribution.

[4:22:12 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR asked about updating discard mortality rates. He wondered if the current rates were too low or too high.

MS. MADSEN responded that the task force members varied in their opinions, so further research is needed to know for certain. She added that discard mortality is applied to a vessel's bycatch rate. The public was interested in the current science related to the discard rates.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked about the gear modification recommendation and whether it suggested modified sweeps.

MS. MADSEN replied that the overall recommendation was for gear modifications and improved technology for all species and all gear.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the recommendation was general or specific regarding gear modifications.

MS. MADSEN replied that the recommendation was general, recognizing that new technological improvements should be investigated.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if the suggestions will be implemented this fishing season.

MS. MADSEN responded that pollock fishing gear was specifically defined in regulation. She mentioned salmon excluders requiring an experimental fishing permit.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked which fishing method yields the greatest bycatch.

MS. MADSEN replied that both salmon species are found in pollock fishery bycatch. She stated that the Amendment 80 trawlers account for the majority of the halibut bycatch. She mentioned different impacts based on the sector. She mentioned the catcher processor sector located offshore for the pollock fishery. She added that mothership and inshore sectors also exist. She recalled presentations indicating that chum salmon are near the catcher vessel harvesting zones. She revisited the value of genetics as it allows knowledge about Western Alaska salmon.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP opined that the genetic data would provide a solution.

MS. MADSEN shared Senator Bishop's opinion.

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SENATOR CLAMAN observed that the evidence indicates that bycatch might not be such a problem. He acknowledged community opinions indicating otherwise. He asked if the task force concluded that additional research is needed to make a firm determination.

MS. MADSEN clarified that the task force concluded that its work must continue. The issue required dissecting the best available science, gearwork and technology. The conversation vacillates between viewing bycatch as a cause of the decline or merely a contributor. She noted that some scientists deny that bycatch is a problem. She observed a difference of opinion among the science community about whether bycatch led to the fishery declines.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked Ms. Madsen if she sensed consensus about the cause of the declines in Alaskan salmon, halibut and crab.

MS. MADSEN replied that various presentations describe the Chinook salmon and crab declines.

[4:28:18 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 19, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Western Alaska Salmon."

Improve our ability to determine the stock of origin of chum and Chinook salmon taken as bycatch.

Reduce bycatch through improved understanding of distribution and migration patterns of Alaska chum and Chinook salmon stocks.

[4:28:34 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 20, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Western Alaska Salmon."

Research that helps us understand the relative importance of particular mechanisms for driving abundance of Western Alaska Chinook and chum

- Marine migration patterns relative to groundfish fisheries.
- Improved stock-specific information.
- Improved understanding of fishery impacts.

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 21, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Western Alaska Salmon."

Research on additional non-adult abundance estimates

- Critical survival periods for Western Alaska salmon.
- Understand how ocean/climate conditions impact future runs.
- Role of diet, health, and disease on survival and spawning success.

[4:29:19 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 22, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Gulf of Alaska Salmon."

Note: Much of the salmon research recommendations apply to both the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

Gulf of Alaska specific salmon research recommendation:

- Conduct annual genetic and spatial assessment of Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Chinook salmon

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MS. MADSEN moved to slide 23, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Gulf of Alaska Halibut."

Top Priority

Investigate better ways to estimate total halibut removals and discard mortality

- Impacts of repeated capture/discarding of females, sublegal and legal males.
- Impacts of fishing gear on habitat.
- Increase tagging to better understand movement between management areas.
- Investigate halibut diet and growth rate; changes in length at age.

- Studies on commercial fishery size limit and trade-offs.
- Determine relative fecundity of halibut based on size and age.

[4:30:17 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 24, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Crab."

Recommendations apply to crab in all regions of the state

Address observed and unobserved mortality caused by gear interactions

- Impacts of repeated capture/discarding.
- Address data gaps regarding uncertainties in the directed crab fisheries and unobserved state pot cod fishery.
- Research habitat disturbance utilizing tools such as the fishing effects model. Address observed and unobserved mortality caused by gear interactions

[4:31:06 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 25, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research Recommendations: Crab."

Continued research on critical crab habitat to better inform on open and closed commercial fishing areas

- Tagging studies and other research to determine seasonal movement and distribution.
- Improve understanding of preferred habitat at various life stages.
- Examine Vessel Monitoring System use in developing essential fish habitat models.

[4:31:59 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 26, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations."

Management recommendations were developed at the committee level after many meetings, dozens of informational presentations and public comment. The ABRT had additional discussion, made some revisions and came to consensus on all but one issue.

The ABRT considered and adopted 17 management recommendations by unanimous consent for fixed (longline and pot) and trawl gear for the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

[4:32:13 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 27, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations."

The following recommendation applies to all species, gear groups and regions

Bycatch Utilization

The State of Alaska should support taking incremental measures through the regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization with a particular focus on species that are otherwise marketable, but are caught with non-targeted gear or discards in a directed fishery that are required by regulation.

[4:33:06 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 28, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations: Bering Sea."

Bering Sea Fixed Gear

Four Management Recommendations

Bering Sea Trawl Gear

Four Management Recommendations

[4:34:33 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked about the acronym IFQ.

MS. MADSEN replied that IFQ refers to Individual Fishing Quotas.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP stated that IFQs are assigned to a limited number of fishermen.

MS. MADSEN responded that an IFQ fishery exists for crab, halibut, and black cod. She clarified that the pollock fishery is not classified as IFQ.

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SENATOR DUNBAR commented that moving to an IFQ system will fundamentally change the system. He acknowledged that the change may be contentious and political because the quotas are limited. He found it interesting to see the IFQ issue presented as a task force recommendation. He wondered how realistic the recommendation was.

MS. MADSEN replied that IFQs may be considered for the fishery due to the limited number of participants in the program. She added that the Gulf of Alaska Rationalization Program has more participants, but also has experience with IFQs. She spoke about the concern related to barriers to entry. She mentioned potential solutions that depend on the fishery's complexity. She noted that the crab fishery was less complex and driven by congressional request. She stated that the halibut IFQ was the first program and lessons were learned from the process. She expressed optimism about future IFQ programs.

SENATOR DUNBAR attempted to understand the industry structure, specifically the pollock fishery. He understood that the ships were large and worth \$100 million. He asked who rationalizes the fishery.

MS. MADSEN replied that the pollock fishery is rationalized via the American Fisheries Act as a congressionally authorized program. She stated that the pollock fishery in the Gulf of Alaska is a smaller fishery currently considered for rationalization. She informed the committee that the North Pacific Management Council is advisory to the Secretary of Commerce.

4:39:35 PM

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 30, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations: Bering Sea."

Bering Sea Trawl Gear

- Work to achieve real time genetic reporting that provides the composition of Western Alaska salmon in

the bycatch. This can then be used in management of the pollock fishery to avoid areas and times when Western Alaska salmon are on the grounds in the Bering Sea.

- The State should work to establish a scientific based chum salmon cap to reduce bycatch of Western Alaska salmon in the pollock fishery in the Bering Sea.

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 31, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations: Bering Sea."

Bering Sea Trawl Gear

- Review effectiveness of fixed open and closed areas for trawling and continue to examine methods to develop flexible spatial management.
- A review is recommended for the Bering Sea trawl prohibited species caps (PSC) in relation to crab, to be supported by the State of Alaska. This review would examine the impacts to the resource and trawl sector if trawl crab PSC were to be applied across the entire Bering Sea, instead of only the current sub-areas.

[4:41:29 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 32, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations - Gulf of Alaska."

Gulf of Alaska Fixed Gear (longline and pot)

Two Management Recommendations

- Following gear modification research, consider regulations for the directed crab fishery and pot cod fishery to reduce incidental take and discard mortality.
- Address the lack of monitoring in the directed Tanner crab and state waters pot cod fisheries.

[4:41:50 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 33, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations - Gulf of Alaska." She highlighted

the Gulf of Alaska trawl gear and six management recommendations.

[4:41:58 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 34, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations - Gulf of Alaska."

Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear

- Recommend the State of Alaska initiate review of the open and closed areas in the Gulf of Alaska for pelagic and non-pelagic trawl gear and consider closing new/additional areas to reduce the bycatch of halibut, salmon and Tanner crab.
- To better quantify removal of prohibited species, it is recommended that trawl catcher vessels in the Gulf of Alaska be required to have 100% observer coverage when engaged in non-pelagic trawling. It is further recommended that the State of Alaska work to obtain funding, either through specific appropriations and/or grants for the additional coverage.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP added that Senator Lisa Murkowski and her delegation supported the electronic monitoring option for observer coverage.

MS. MADSEN concurred; the congressional delegation supports the use of electronic monitoring.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked for agency specificity.

MS. MADSEN replied that the agency responsible for the implementation of electronic monitoring changes is the National Marine Fisheries Service. She highlighted communication issues identified in the task force; the use of acronyms and other general terms is difficult for the public to understand.

[4:43:55 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 35, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations - Gulf of Alaska."

Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear

- It is recommended that a regulatory requirement be approved for the Gulf of Alaska pelagic trawl fleet,

including any tenders of pelagic trawl caught fish, to have 100% electronic monitoring. It is further recommended that the State of Alaska work with National Marine Fisheries Service, our federal delegation, and others to work to acquire funding to install electronic monitoring equipment on all GOA catchers and tenders.

- It is recommended the State of Alaska propose that the NPFMC consider development of an abundance-based management program for halibut bycatch in the GOA as a way to address bycatch during fluctuations of halibut biomass.

[4:44:30 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 36, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Management Recommendations - Gulf of Alaska."

Gulf of Alaska Trawl Gear

It is recommended that the State of Alaska investigate the value of requiring full retention of Tanner crab in all GOA trawl fisheries for a period of time to adequately assess removals.

As a means of reducing and managing bycatch and associated mortality of high value species within the Gulf of Alaska, it is recommended that rationalization-type management tools be considered.

[4:44:55 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR asked Ms. Madsen if her organization was primarily in the Bering Sea Fishery. He wondered if the Gulf of Alaska Fishery had representation on the task force.

MS. MADSEN responded that she was the sole trawl representative, and she represented her colleagues in the Gulf of Alaska.

[4:45:40 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide 37, "Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Research and Management Relationships." She stated that the recommendation came from former Senator Micciche who suggested linking management and research in a visual format. The charts displayed the relationship between research and management actions.

[4:46:06 PM](#)

MS. MADSEN moved to slide, 38, "Next Steps."

Bycatch Advisory Council

The Bycatch Advisory Council was formed on March 10, 2023 under the ADF&G Commissioner's authority and will advise the department on ways to implement recommendations contained in the final report of the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.

MS. MADSEN continued with slide 39, "Bycatch Advisory Council."

Membership

The members of the Bycatch Advisory Council are comprised of six individuals who served on the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force.

- Kevin Delaney
- Brian Gabriel
- John Jensen
- Linda Kozak
- Stephanie Madsen
- Karma Ulvi

These individuals represent the interests of coastal communities, and the commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries. They will continue to focus on the issues of salmon, crab and halibut bycatch.

[4:47:08 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI wondered about the next steps. He appreciated the task force recommendations and wondered about further discussion and implementation plans.

MS. MADSEN replied that some implementation is underway related to chum salmon and genetic work. She stated that the congressional senators established the Salmon Research Task Force slated for a series of meetings. She highlighted efforts with the North Pacific Research Board and the state and federal priorities for research. She stated that management

recommendations were underway at a slower pace. She informed the committee that salmon was the April topic and crab would be discussed in June by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. She was unsure about the role the Board of Fisheries would play. She stressed that the Bycatch Advisory Council must continue to take recommendations, specifically those related to state engagement and communication. She reminded committee members that all of the presentations mentioned could be found on the website.

[4:49:17 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR noted that the harvest of salmon in Area M was classified as incidental take versus bycatch.

MS. MADSEN replied that she was unfamiliar with the Area M fishery.

SENATOR DUNBAR asked how to prevent the council from being siloed from the issue.

MS. MADSEN responded that the Board of Fisheries manages the Area M fishery. The council lacks authority over the Area M fishery. She stated that BOF met recently on Alaska Peninsula issues. She declined to comment on the outcome of the meeting.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked Ms. Kozak to offer her closing comments.

[4:50:57 PM](#)

MS. KOZAK thanked Ms. Madsen for the presentation. She stated that the rationalization tools for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fishery and the Bering Sea pot cod fishery were not considered IFQ fisheries, but a cooperative fishery instead. She noted the task force dissection of bycatch issues exclusively. She stated that social engineering issues were abundant, yet they were not discussed in the task force. She added that the bycatch task force does highlight an issue with bycatch. She stressed the importance of reducing bycatch in Alaska. She noted that the Bycatch Advisory Council will take the recommendations from the task force and work with the administration and policymakers to implement research-driven solutions. She remarked that the task force did not attempt to set policy. The Bycatch Advisory Council will continue the work and hold public meetings soon.

[4:53:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP revisited the topic of genetic testing. He found the lengthy process fascinating. He suggested genetic testing practices available on the fishing vessels to lessen bycatch.

MS. MADSEN agreed with Co-Chair Bishop. She believed that the ability to identify areas of Western Alaska salmon would lessen bycatch. She offered credit to the Auke Bay lab for the quick turnaround for genetic testing. She spoke about the complexity involved in genetic testing. She committed to promoting the option and she agreed that it provides an important solution.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP thanked the presenters for serving on the task force and council.

[4:56:14 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Bishop adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:56 p.m.