



Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

Whitefish Committee Meeting

Friday, May 10, 2024

8:30-10:00 AM Alaska Time

Virtual

Draft Minutes

Chair Frank O'Hara III called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM Alaska Time and asked Heather Johnson-Smith to call roll.

Members present: Chair Frank O'Hara, Vice Chair Rebecca Skinner (joined 8:40 AM), Daniel Kusakari, Lisa Lee, Keith Singleton, Juliet Yeasting, Julia Ying (Ex Officio), Merle Knapp (joined 9:05 AM)

Brody Pierson for Joel Peterson.

Members absent: Mike Cusack, Ron Rogness

Others present included CFEC Commissioner Glenn Haight, Pat Shanahan, ASMI staff and members of the public.

Approval of Agenda: Yeasting made a motion to approve the agenda with the noted changes of which ASMI staff were presenting. Kusakari seconded the motion.

Approval of Minutes from All Hands on Deck, November 2, 2023: Kusakari made a motion to approve the minutes. Yeasting seconded the motion.

ASMI Antitrust Statement was posted in the chat box.

Chair Remarks: Chair O'Hara shared that he is recently back from SEG and feels these are still challenging times with many things still out of our control, but the work we do with meetings like today make a difference.

Vice Chair Remarks: none

There was no public comment.

Ron Risher, with Grobfish, introduced himself. He is attending today to stay relevant and part of Alaska.

Herring Revitalization with CFEC Commissioner Glenn Haight: Haight introduced himself by giving his background. He gave a brief background on Board of Fish and CFEC. The joint Board of Fish and CFEC Herring Revitalization Committee was created to take a look at this fishery and its market. Yeasting asked if he has a request for how ASMI can help. He answered, it would be great if staff could help assess existing market research and maybe a couple one-off projects like capturing what is the existing bait market and its potential. Chair O'Hara asked what caused the collapse. Haight answered that Japanese market collapsed, and it doesn't look like it will rebound. Of the total amount caught, less than 10% is going to the fall fishery of good & bait, so it's nowhere near what is available; there is plenty of resource but no market. Pierson shared that Bristol Wave has been looking into herring due to squid market conditions.

Species Updates (roundtable committee discussion)

Pollock: A power point from Ron Rogness of GAPP had been included with meeting materials since Rogness was not available to join the meeting. Yeasting shared how the Russian ban has had a significant impact. There has been a huge impact on surimi with prices dropping by half. In block market, Russians are producing more H&G going into China because Europe has backed off. Every market outside US is impacted; US has a protected market. USDA has been supportive with purchases. Positivity and more engagements from show in Barcelona so it's a feeling of a bit more stability than at All Hands. ASMI can help by continuing to emphasize genuine Alaska pollock and support those who stand up for US products. Lee commented on surimi side and how Russia and US productions will be less. Also, SE Asia production is slow, India finished season early and Vietnam is doing well. They feel supply and demand will even out and there should not be oversupply this year. For block, European market is challenging because of low price Russian product. Ying shared that in EU market companies have decided to accept low-price Russian product. There are fake certificates coming into the US so if ASMI could urge the government to control the certificates to protect traceability that would help Alaska.

Cod: Singleton said that domestically, inflation is impacting sales. It's been a good run but now it's more about securing your position. Pierson said the American market has recovered but perhaps it is the ceiling; the pinch is on secondary processors, and internationally we're running into diverging markets. Lee said H&G is expensive; fillet demand is higher domestically.

Atka Mackerel, POP, Redfish & Rockfish, Flatfish: Kusakari said A Season has been efficient with the catch being good, but fish are smaller. Nervous about weak yen exchange rate, but the upside is that tourism is up and therefore restaurants & convenience stores are doing well. POP hasn't been caught yet but hoping to work with ASMI to help diversify. O'Hara said that the industry is working hard to find new markets in US and EU and will keep ASMI updated on where to promote redfish and rockfish. For Flatfish, O'Hara said that we're seeing weaker markets in EU. Fishing is going okay, although not much yellowfin sole, and most of it is rock sole. If ASMI could look for promotion level pricing in Germany, Italy, Netherlands. In US, flatfish is doing well and he's seeing ASMI logo all over east coast.

WASA update by Pat Shanahan: WASA is continuing to work on branding and in the second half of year hope to start on telling the stories and promotional activities. Working on market analysis projects and doing research on UK & US messaging. Appreciates all the ASMI promotions on flatfish, especially the recent Lenten promotions.

International Marketing Program Update by Megan Belair: Presentation on promotions, events and mission trips that have been done in Western EU, China, Southeast Asia, Eastern EU, Latin America, Northern EU, and Southern EU. She also shared upcoming events and trade shows. Pierson asked if the mission trips will include time in Seattle. Yes, they will.

Communications Program & Consumer PR Updates by Greg Smith: Presentation on 9.8 billion media impressions and nearly 200 placements. He shared phase 2 consumer PR campaign results, Cook Wild media event, and upcoming fam trips. He mentioned how ASMI is focusing on working with Alaska fishermen as ambassadors. He shared an update on website development of species-specific pages. Vice Chair Skinner asked about interviews at ComFish and asked if whitefish fishermen were included and offered to help with participation if needed. She also asked if the committee could review the page before it went live. Smith will check the interviewee list and appreciates her offer to help.

Domestic Marketing Program Update by Leah Krafft & Amy Dukes: Dukes presented on the retail program and shared that there have been 30 whitefish promotions in FY24. She highlighted The Fresh Market live stream cooking videos, Chicory, and Fulton Fish Market campaigns. And shared the new Air Fryer recipes and media work. Krafft presented on the foodservice program. She shared the operator promotions that have been done; results from the Lenten promotions are still being gathered. She also shared the distributor promotions and the work with colleges and universities, as well as a couple videos for social media that have been created. Chris Shepherd is an influential chef who loves Alaska seafood and tries to always menu surimi at events. An upcoming event, Hot Luck in Texas, will be using surimi and flounder. She also shared other upcoming events including fam trips.

Technical Program Update by John Burrows. He is working on support materials like nutrition videos, and updates to species sheets and quality materials. He shared information on the different applied investigations and trade education and regulatory projects.

Good of the Order: Knapp asked Susan Marks about the speakers on cruise ships program. They will connect outside of this meeting.

Vice Chair Skinner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Knapp seconded. Meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM.