



Shellfish Committee Meeting
Wednesday, November 11, 2020
Beginning 11:00am AKST
Virtual Meeting

Draft Minutes

I. Call to order

Chair Jacobsen calls the meeting to order.

a. Housekeeping

Brief presentation on Zoom platform controls.

b. Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

Jake Jacobsen, Chair

Jim Stone

Edward Poulsen

James Riley

Linda Kozak

Tyson Fick

Committee Members Absent:

Steven Minor

c. Approval of Agenda

Chair Jacobsen asked if there were any objections to approving the agenda as written. There were none. The agenda was approved.

d. Approval of Minutes from Oct 8, 2019

Kozak requested a correction on page four to reflect that she voted with the majority on the kelp issue. The chair asked if there were any objections to approving the minutes with the changes proposed by Kozak. There were none. The minutes were approved, with Kozak's amendment.

e. Chair Remarks

The chair elected to not give remarks to allow more time for discussion.

f. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

II. Old Business

Jacobsen started the discussion with a comment about how the shellfish committee encapsulated a wide variety of species, including non-shellfish products such as kelp. He questioned whether ASMI should have a separate committee for marine vegetables.

Kozak referenced the minutes from the 2019 All Hands meeting in which the committee had suggested that the ASMI Board address the marketing of marine vegetables. She noted that in the most recent legislative session, legislation had been introduced to allow kelp food products to be marketed by ASMI funds, but it had not yet passed. She asked whether the shellfish committee should support the legislation and if it passed, if the committee should suggest that ASMI create a new committee.

Jacobsen and Riley agreed with both supporting the legislation and creating a new committee if it passed.

Jacobsen asked if there were any objections to ASMI supporting the marketing of marine vegetables. There were none.

III. New Business

Jacobsen reported significant market opportunities for crab due to high prices and increased demand. He predicted Russia would continue to import crab into the United States and encouraged ASMI to keep differentiating Alaska crab from foreign products.

Poulsen also encouraged the continued differentiation between Alaska crab and Russian product entering the US market. He suggested making sure the US was prominently labeled. He also said to expect an increase in bairdi fisheries.

Kozak agreed, and stressed the importance of focusing on Alaska and the Alaska brand. She mentioned that in the minutes from the last All Hands meeting, there was a request that ASMI do golden crab branding work. She asked what happened to the species committee recommendations, and questioned whether the ones from the previous year had moved forward. Jacobsen noted that some of the suggestions died in the operational committees.

Sarah Cannard of the ASMI Domestic program reported that efforts had been made by the US retail and communications team to promote golden king crab. She also mentioned that it would be helpful to learn from the committee where golden king crab promotions would be the most effective, and to receive any insights about sourcing in general.

Jacobsen commented that golden king crab was unique for seafood marketing because the supplies were steady and it was available year round.

Kozak noted that with the pandemic and people being advised to avoid large crowds for the holidays, crab could be promoted as a way for people to “treat themselves.” She suggested focusing on promoting crab as a special thing that people could have during the holidays in spite of all of the challenges.

Jacobsen agreed and added that one reason crab had been so successful recently was that it was already cooked. People want restaurant style food that is easy to make at home. He suggested ASMI reinforce the message that crab is an ideal product to enjoy for special occasions with little effort.

Katie Goldberg from Edelman agreed with the committee that the holidays were a tremendous opportunity to promote crab. She reported that this type of promotion was already planned for ASMI’s social channels and that Edelman was also reaching out to media and offering them crab to promote for the holidays as an easy solution for a home cooked meal.

Jacobsen asked if Jim Stone could provide an update on scallops.

Stone reported that scallops had done well during COVID. He said retail sales had filled in the gap left from restaurant closures. He reported that going into the new season, demand had not let up.

Jacobsen asked if materials about how to correctly cook scallops would be helpful.

Stone replied that they would be useful. He thought a professional video on how to sear scallops would be especially helpful.

Kozak suggested ASMI provide holiday recipes for scallops.

Riley requested a continued effort to market Dungeness out of Alaska, especially for the larger sizes. He noted stellar seasons in Western and Southeast Alaska, and encouraged increased marketing to differentiate Alaska Dungeness from crab of other origins.

Jacobsen asked if there were any requests leading into the opilio season.

Riley stated that the biggest challenge for opilio would be related to off grades. He said off grad crab that did not go to primary markets could potentially use some marketing support.

Fick entered the meeting and gave a further report on Dungeness crab, stating that the price was down but there was excellent volume. He felt ASMI would be well served to continue differentiating Alaska Dungeness crab from other origins. Fick speculated that there could be a market opportunity for Dungeness crab due to later and later season starts on the west coast. He observed that if the west coast fishery didn’t open until January, that left the holiday season wide open.

Tomi Marsh, of the ASMI Board of Directors, inquired what the methods were to freeze oysters. She noted that there were many small oyster farmers in southeast that were looking for ways to make their products more consumer friendly in light of the foodservice downturn. She thought geoduck could use some support in the domestic market as well because most of it used to go live to China, the tariffs and COVID had impacted sales.

Kozak commented that the shellfish committee dealt with more than one species and thought it would be helpful to have a list of the species that fall under the purview of the shellfish committee. She requested such a list from ASMI.

Riley asked that ASMI investigate the importance of MSC versus RFM at retail for promoting crab products.

Jacobsen commented that the Seafood Watch website did not list RFM as one of their recognized sustainable certifications. He felt it was important to get Alaska RFM on the website because it was a key distinction in the marketplace.

Jacobsen went on to mention that at the 2019 Boston Seafood show there had been a lot of kickback to MSC because of their certification of one of the Russian crab fisheries.

Riley added that there was opilio crab coming from Russia and Canada that was MSC certified and there were some retailers that had called out their specification as MSC only. He recommended identifying retailers that were requiring MSC and seeing if there was an opportunity to bridge into calling out RFM as an alternative and acceptable certification.

Jacobsen asked what effort could be made to promote RFM on the Seafood Watch website.

Jeff Regnart entered the meeting. He explained that RFM had the option to get benchmarked which was the requirement to be recognized as a sustainable certification scheme. He said that decision was ultimately up to the CSC board.

Kozak brought up action items from the previous year. She noted that live crab shipments are now legal and asked if the shellfish committee wanted to have a separate meeting to address the handout about shipping live crab they had received. She said she had several detailed recommendations for revising the handout.

Species Committee Questions from the Executive Director

The committee discussed the questions from the ASMI executive director and came up with the following responses.

1. What opportunities or trends do you see for your species in international markets?

- There are growing markets for live crab – golden crab and Dungeness are great candidates for live shipping. We lost a huge opportunity for live Golden King Crab sales in China due to the tariff war. The market dried up and the processor operating the live shipping from Adak went out of business. Tariffs and COVID have severely impacted all potential for live sales. Live shipments of crab is an opportunity for International markets in the future.
- We note a switch from food service to retail as COVID closed or diminished restaurants.
- We need to increase recognition of Alaska RFM – particularly on online platforms like Seafoodwatch.org. Online sales are a growing market segment.
- There are opportunities for home subscription boxes and e-commerce. Online sales are a significant opportunity. Direct to consumer market for the food industry in general has grown; the direct to consumer market for all shellfish is a trend and opportunity.
- Can ASMI provide help in accessing online seafood sales platforms in China and elsewhere
- ASMI should be poised to renew markets in China when tariffs are lifted, particularly for Dungeness, Geoduck and other mollusks as well as echinoderms.
- Due to the huge US domestic demand, there isn't need for ASMI to invest in and develop new international markets at this time.

2. What opportunities or trends do you see for your species in US domestic markets?

- We need to increase recognition of Alaska RFM – particularly on online platforms like Seafoodwatch.org. Online sales are a growing market segment. Can ASMI provide help in accessing online seafood sales platforms in China and elsewhere.
- Online sales are a growing market segment. There are opportunities for home subscription boxes and e-commerce. Online sales are a significant opportunity. Direct to consumer market for the food industry in general has grown; the direct to consumer market for all shellfish is a trend and opportunity. Better technology to help with logistics is needed. Live US markets depend on the foodservice/restaurant industry.
- There is a growing domestic live market – a long term opportunity once restaurants are back on line. The committee appreciates ASMI's help in passing legislation to allow oversea shipments of live crab.

3. How can ASMI provide technical support to improve health/safety or product types for export to destinations where these issues are a barrier to entry?

- Technical support is needed to help in preparing and shipping live Dungeness. PSP and domoic acid issues currently require Dungeness to be eviscerated. It would be very helpful if live crab could be tested for PSP and DA and mitigate risk to allow live shipments.
- Health benefits of shellfish.
- Tanner crab from SE with bitter crab disease are being discarded by harvesters and being put back into population. Some sort of guidelines for disposing of diseased crab are necessary.
- Guidance in preparing and freezing oysters and other mollusks may help those fisheries recover from COVID-caused market problems.

4. What information/issues/opportunities would you like to convey to the communications program in terms of in-state or industry issues?

- 30% increase in opilo TAC. Rising year class. Cheerlead managers handling of species. Smaller sizes now but larger later.
- Dungeness crab are larger than average from Alaska. Help us with continuing to communicate re climate change and we can help in the conversation. These are very well managed fisheries and managers adapt to climate change and eco-system shifts.

5. What challenges/threats – pandemic related or otherwise – do you anticipate for your species in the next year or beyond?

- Crab surveys were cancelled in 2020. We need surveys and stock assessments - pandemic or not.
- The snow crab biomass is increasing, which is good news. Projections are for smaller crab as the year class matures. Promotions should highlight this significant increase in biomass as a fisheries management success. Tout the health of the crab stocks. Smaller sizes will be a trend in the future.
- Continuing to navigate communicating climate change and ocean acidification in an effective and un-alarming way. Golden king crab are highly resistant to acidification.

- The health benefits of wild Alaskan shellfish - particularly any immune system boosting properties - should be highlighted.

Additional Request from the Shellfish Committee

The Committee would like to know what species are we responsible for. We currently understand that our (shellfish) committee is responsible for marine vegetables, yet no one on the committee has expertise in that area. Perhaps a separate committee could be created for harvested and farmed marine algae?

The committee is currently small, having recently lost 3 members. We could especially use someone with expertise in mollusks and echinoderms.

VI. Good of the Order

Kozak reiterated the need for a list of what species the shellfish committee covered and also voice support for adding another Southeast person to the committee.

a. Election of Vice Chair

James Riley volunteered to serve as the next Vice Chair. Jacobsen asked if there was any opposition. There was none.

V. Adjourn