



Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute

Whitefish Committee Meeting DRAFT Minutes

**Tuesday, December 3, 2024
2:30 PM – 5:00 PM Alaska Time**

I. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 2:45 PM by Chair Frank O'Hara
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II. Roll Call

Members Present:

- Frank O'Hara (Chair)
- Rebecca Skinner (Vice Chair)
- Brendan Sherrer
- Daniel Kusakari
- Brody Pierson
- Lisa Lee
- Merle Knapp
- Vanessa Aslanian
- Julia Ying (ex officio)
- Ronald Rogness (virtual)
- Mike Cusack (virtual)

Quorum is met.

Also Present:

- ASMI staff and other members of the industry and public.

III. Approval of Draft Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda:

- **1st:** Merle Knapp
- **2nd:** Rebecca Skinner
- **Motion passed**

IV. Approval of Minutes (November 6, 2024)

Motion to approve the minutes:

- **1st:** Daniel Kusakari
- **2nd:** Rebecca Skinner
- **Motion passed**

V. Anti-trust statement

- Read by Brody Pierson

VI. Chair Remarks

- O'Hara welcomed new members Vanessa Aslanian (Silver Bay) and Brendan Sherrer (Trident).
- O'Hara acknowledged challenges in the Alaska Seafood industry but highlighted recent successes like the increased sablefish sales and the push for sockeye sales the year prior. These examples are proof that ASMI listens, and these meetings are important.
- O'Hara was encouraged by both Alaska senators and Representative Begich speaking and sharing the goal of the seafood industry.

VII. Public Comment

- None

VIII. Old Business

- None

IX. New Business

- **Species updates by Committee members, roundtable**
 - **Pollock:** Cusack reported pollock to be in a strong position; declines in cod may benefit pollock. GAPP will be doing an assessment of Carbon Footprint in 2025.
 - **Surimi:** Knapp noted surimi could use more support and suggested school programs.
 - **Cod:** Pierson reported strong H/G cod market but declining Bering Sea projections for next year. Price increases expected. Lee mentioned strong consumption but decreasing availability. They moved a lot of product last year as a result of executive order 14068.
 - **Flatfish:** O'Hara noted a 31% decline in flatfish demand according to Circana research. The European market is declining while Japan is stable.
 - **Atka Mackerel & POP:** Steady demand; Kusakari sees continued demand next year, with increased quotas.
 - **Herring:** Pierson recommended moving herring to the Salmon Committee due to limited expertise on Whitefish committee. RFM certification process ongoing. Harvester McKenna O'Toole requested funding for herring RFM certification, to be discussed at the board meeting.
 - **Other:** Tilapia Update: Risher reported a dramatic drop in tilapia imports, with pangasius now being the cheapest whitefish. Pollock and flatfish have competitive opportunities.
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X. Discussion and answers to Board's Species Questions for the Whitefish Committee

- Skinner suggested revising the first question regarding the word "Immediate".
 - Ying shared a tariff analysis report: Premium whitefish affected more than lower-priced species.
 - Shanahan shared WASA's research on Omega 3 content in flatfish and interest in collaborating with ASMI promotions.
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XI. Good of the Order

- None.
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XII. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn at 4:27 PM:
 - **1st:** Merle Knapp
 - **2nd:** Brody Pierson
 - **Motion passed**

Whitefish Committee Questions:

What do your species need from ASMI to be immediately successful in the marketplace?

What opportunities do you see for your species in international markets?

- Opportunities for more surimi promotions in Japan highlighting Alaska origin.
- More simple recipe ideas for international consumers to show new ways to prepare whitefish outside of traditional diets.
- Reduction in Atlantic cod quota creates an opportunity for promoting Pacific cod, Alaska pollock and flatfish to replace the lost volume.
- Capitalize on the momentum for Atka Mackerel promotions in Japan due to increased quota.
- Prioritize Yellowfin Sole, Rock Sole, Alaska Plaice promotions in European Markets. (Italy, Germany, Netherlands, France, UK etc.)
- Shifting markets away from China into South America and Southeast Asia. Ensure necessary infrastructure and training in those alternative markets.
- Potential for a temporary tariff exemption on Alaska origin raw material during transition to new reprocessing markets.
- Promote origin of Pacific cod used for salted cod (*Gadus Macrocephalus*) as a replacement for Atlantic Cod in Latin America.

What opportunities do you see for your species in the US domestic market?

- Prioritize Yellowfin Sole and Alaska Plaice promotions in domestic markets due to decreased sales volume.
- Expand marketing materials about fish families in the whitefish sector. Leverage opportunity to collect more whitefish harvester videos at events like CommFish and PME.
- Partner with UFA to identify fisherman ambassadors and develop a program in a variety of sectors:
 - Domestic Retailers
 - Alaska Marine Highway System (Ferries)
 - Cruise Ships
- Develop partnership with Alaska Marine Highway System and Washington Ferry System which includes serving Alaska Seafood, new promotional materials, and fisherman ambassadors.
- Continue efforts to increase amount of Alaska Seafood served on the Alaska cruise ships.
- Continue distributing physical resources for the home cook at retail seafood counters and conducting in-store demos.
- Increase POS materials and Alaska branding on processed in the USA refreshed Pacific cod at retail specifically on the East Coast.
- Increase value-added re-processing in the United States.
- More Flounder promotions in foodservice and retail.

- ASMI supports RFM certification of the Alaska herring fishery.

Discuss the challenges/threats you foresee for your species in the next year or near future.

- Potential tariffs with new Presidential administration.
- Continued competition with Russian Pollock.
- Increase in farmed cod production out of Norway.
- Increase in Pangasius and other low-cost whitefish imports to domestic market.

For your species, what issues or topics (if any) can ASMI help with messaging and/or outreach?

- Keep promoting nutritional benefits of Alaska whitefish with renewed focus on Make America Healthy Again.
- Highlighting the non-use of phosphates and additives. Cautionary note: However, some Alaska species may still be treated with phosphates.
- Highlight new study by WASA showing high omega 3 count in Flatfish.
- Continue to address stigmas around surimi and the use of the name “imitation”.
- Note that certain species of flatfish are used in sushi.
- More collaboration with WASA on promotions and research.

Are there any marketing or technical resources that ASMI could provide to best help harvesters?

- Nutrition comparisons between farmed and wild species resources, and pacific and Atlantic species.
- Regional market analysis of Alaska seafood consumption in K-12 schools and which products are making it into schools.