



*Wild, Natural & Sustainable*

**Whitefish Committee Meeting**

November 4, 2021

10:00 AM PST

**Draft Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

**Chairman Risher called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM PST**

**a. Roll Call & Introduction of guests**

**Committee Members Present:**

Chairman Ron Risher

Vice Chair Frank O'Hara

Takashi Matsumoto

Julie Yeasting

Joel Peterson

Merle Knapp

Mike Cusack

Trevor Murikami

Julia Ying

Lydia Moore

Rasmus Sorensen

**ASMI Staff Present:**

Amy Dukes, ASMI Assistant Domestic Coordinator

Nicole Alba, International Marketing & Grants Coordinator

John Burrows, ASMI Technical Director

Hannah Lindoff, ASMI Sr. Directory of Global Marketing & Strategy

Jeremy Woodrow, ASMI Executive Directory

Megan Rider, ASMI Domestic Marketing Director

Jann Dickerson, ASMI Contractor

Mark Jones, ASMI Contractor

Tricia Sanguinetti, ASMI Contractor

**b. Approval of Agenda**

Chairman Risher requested a motion to approve the agenda for Nov, 4 2021.  
**Knapp moved to approve. Yeasting seconded the motions. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

**c. Approval of Minutes from February 2, 2021**

Chairman Risher requested a motion to approve the agenda for Nov, 4 2021.  
**O'Hara moved to approve. Yeasting seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

**d. Chair Remarks**

Chairman Risher reminded the committee that the goal of today's meeting was to discuss the questions provided by ASMI Executive Director Jeremy Woodrow, which will be provided to the ASMI Operational Committees during the 2021 All Hands meeting.

**e. Vice chair remarks**

No comment, other than to note absence at next weeks All Hands committee meeting.

**f. Public Comment - No comment**

**II. New Business**

**a. Review and Discuss All Hands Species Questions from ASMI Executive Director**

**b. Chairman Risher proposed question one – what are the top three opportunities you see for your species in international markets?**

- i. Matsumoto discussed Alaska pollock market opportunity in Europe. Mentioned Japanese companies processing pollock and opportunity to ship to Europe. Noted increased surimi crab sales in Japan. Opportunity in Japanese market exemplified by major processors in Japan planning expansion in upcoming years.
- i. Cusack mentioned pollock growth sales outside of Japan and flat fish in Europe, given the tariff advantage. Cusack acknowledged growing opportunity for whitefish in the international market, despite supply and demand logistical issues.
- ii. Chairman Risher mentioned opening doors in Indonesia and Southeast Asia for flatfish, cod, POP. Reprocessing for use within those markets was improving as well. Also noted European/Eastern European market opportunities.

- iii. Vice Chairman O'Hara brought up demand in Europe for reprocessing and expanding the Alaska whitefish market. Mentioned reprocessing directly in Europe and diversifying out of Japan. Chairman O'Hara also mentioned retail opportunities, great time to promote well known species in Japan and identify as Alaska-origin.
- iv. Peterson discussed challenges with supply overshadowing international opportunities, but acknowledged that demand was high for H&G products in international market. Largest opportunity on the value added side with international market, but difficult to explore new markets while struggling to produce for current market demand.
- v. Knapp mentioned GAPP had a few programs and would like ASMI's assistance distributing toolkits. Noted that it was time to move forward with the value proposition in the international market. Pointed out that ASMI's goal was to increase the value of Alaska seafood and now was the opportunity to do so internationally, mentions pollock specifically.
- vi. Chairman Risher agreed with Knapp, noted the opportunity now with shortages. Mentioned marketing pollock to example why Alaska was a better option than other non-Alaska species.

Chairman Risher asked the committee if they had anything else to add to question one. After no further comment, Chairman Risher closed discussion on question one.

**c. Chairman Risher brings question two to the committee – what opportunities do you see for your species in the US domestic market?**

- i. Chairman Risher began with discussing changes and logistical issues with reprocessing facilities, and noted these challenges could lead to more demand for reprocessing in the US, even for double frozen product. International costs raising the price for whitefish, could lead to domestic opportunity.
- ii. Vice Chairman O'Hara mentioned decrease in large whitefish fillet sales during Covid-19 pandemic, but that the demand was returning and would provide an opportunity to promote whitefish fillets to the domestic market.
- iii. Chairman Risher asks about domestic demand or opportunities for other flatfish, rockfish or POP. Vice Chairman O'Hara responded that they have not seen demand yet, but are looking to diversify the redfish market.
- iv. Chairman Risher mentioned an increased demand for frozen rockfish and POP fillets – hopefully more to come.
- v. Chairman Risher asks Murikami for his thoughts on the domestic market. Murikami discussed challenge trying to meet existing customer needs,

but otherwise recommended marketing to e-commerce. Recognized the large opportunity in the e-commerce sector.

- vi. Cusack asked Mark Jones, retail contractor for ASMI, to share his thoughts from a retail perspective, specifically on whitefish. Jones gave a brief update on current promotions and partners as it relates to whitefish. Discussed cod and possibly surimi promotions for Lent. Jones emphasized promoting the Alaska story and acknowledged consumer growing interest in whitefish market.
- vii. Ying mentioned opportunity for whitefish by-product use in pet food industry, noting increase in household pets during the pandemic.
- viii. Chairman Risher discussed by-product of whitefish and acknowledged opportunity in dogfood and e-commerce.

Chairman Risher asks if there was anything else to add to the Domestic opportunity. After no further comment, Chairman Risher closed discussion on question two.

**d. Chairman Risher shared question three with the committee – Please identify any areas where ASMI may be able to provide technical support for your species, i.e., quality, products, packaging, health, safety, nutritional.**

- i. Cusack suggested nutritional comparisons between Alaska frozen whitefish and aquaculture whitefish species. O’Hara discussed having the technical committee prove the freshness of Alaska fish using new technology. O’Hara inquired about the difference between different freezing methods and if technical could provide information. Chairman Risher agreed that moisture content and cellular comparisons could be beneficial for marketing purposes.
- ii. Yeasting discussed preparing information on carbon footprint of the Alaska Seafood industry to get ahead of the growing eco-conscious environment and consumer interest.
- iii. Knapp suggested messaging and marketing the different methods of freezing to the public. Mentioned common public misconceptions about the freshness of frozen seafood. Knapp noted that the new market of millennials might not have seen older messaging on frozen versus fresh, could be beneficial to current marketing activities.
- iv. Chairman Risher notes potential benefits of investigating consumer views on freezing methods.

Chairman Risher acknowledged the committee moving the discuss on to question four.

**e. Chairman Risher bring question four to the committee - For your species, what issues or topics (if any) can ASMI help with messaging and/or outreach?**

- i. Chairman Risher asked if the committee had more input about how ASMI can help with messaging other than what was mentioned during question three's discussion. After no comment, Chairman Risher noted reprocessing opportunities for international market in Southeast Asia, Europe, and South America. Risher asks how we could market these products coming from Alaska and how we can promote Alaska seafood as better than Russian product.
- ii. Knapp mentioned consumer interest in global climate impacts, by-catch issues, carbon footprint, and noted the need to have suitable responses to these questions. Knapp discussed abundance issues, noting that people do not understand the ebb and flow of seafood abundance. Knapp asked how that can be discussed in order to help people understand the sustainability of seafood. Knapp noted he believed the industry/ASMI will be under pressure in the future to address these growing consumer concerns.

**f. Chairman Risher moved to discuss question five along with continued discussion on question four – What challenges/threats do you anticipate for your species in the next year or near future?**

- i. Ying discussed the labor issue and believed it will continue. Noted benefits of creating a policy for hiring internationally if labor shortages continue. Ying noted the international shipment issue will probably not be solved at the beginning of next year and asked how ASMI can help. Chairman Risher acknowledged labor issues and asks how or if ASMI could market for industry recruitment given labor issues.

10:54am Sorensen joined meeting

- ii. Chairman Risher asked Sorensen to comment on the International market. Sorensen discussed retail opportunity in domestic and international markets. Noted we have had more retail consumers since the pandemic and now was an important time to keep the new consumers. He strongly suggested promoting the story of Alaska seafood at the Retail level. Rasmus restated the benefits of keeping momentum at the retail market. Mentioned being impressed with OMRs quick ability to pivot to online promotional activities. Noted that this also needed to be a priority as online grocery shopping/e-commerce would continue to grow.

**g. Chairman Risher asks if anyone else has comments or additions before we move forward. Discusses keeping conversations geared towards marketing and add value to our products.**

- i. ASMI Sr. Director of Global Marketing & Strategy, Hannah Lindoff, inquired about potential for herring and herring roe in the international

market. Chairman Risher discussed difficulties with herring carcasses, but acknowledged potential opportunities and benefits of promoting herring roe and carcasses for consumers.

- ii. Chairman Risher asked to clarify if herring falls under the whitefish committee. Lindoff and ASMI Executive Director, Woodrow, confirmed that herring traditionally fell within the Whitefish Committee's purview.
- iii. Cusack encouraged including pollock roe with herring roe when or if expanding roe use in international marketing.
- iv. Knapp asked Sorensen about international roe market, specifically Germany. Sorensen did not have much insight to offer. Knapp noted potential in herring business if the committee is willing to take it on.

**h. Chairman Risher closed discussion on questions.**

**III. Good of the Order**

- a. Chairman Risher discussed the All Hands schedule. Also noted that committee elections would take place during the meeting.
- b. Knapp requested committee directory including terms.
- c. Yeasting clarified that current chair and vice chair terms could be rolled over if there were no new candidates. Knapp and Chairman Risher confirmed that leadership did not have a term limit.
- d. Knapp acknowledged the passing of industry leader Chuck Bundrant. Chairman Risher echoed Knapp's sentiments.

**IV. Adjourn**

Chairman Risher requested a motion to adjourn.

**Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting. Cusack seconded motion. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:05am.