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## Path Forward for the Board of Fish

The Alaska Board of Fisheries met by teleconference on September 16<sup>th</sup> to discuss meeting options while conditions requiring social distance related to COVID-19 still exist. The Board determined that the October 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> Work Session will be held by teleconference only, live streamed with no public testimony. Written comment for the Work Session can be submitted until September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Board also postponed the December Prince William Sound meeting and the January Yakutat & Southeast Alaska meeting. During the Work Session the Board will discuss rescheduling those meetings possibly for March, April or May, and determine any critical agenda items that cannot be postponed. The Board will also consider [Agenda Change Requests](#) in October and elect officers. Member Carlson-Van Dort chaired the teleconference meeting.

Board members agreed that in-person meetings are essential for their unique process involving the Board, staff and the public. Additionally, Board member John Wood requested legal opinions be presented at the Work Session regarding members not yet confirmed by the Alaska Legislature, and an update on participation by members that declare a conflict of interest, an unresolved issue.

### Legislative Confirmation

Committees of the Alaska Legislature have been meeting to review the credentials of the Governor's latest Board of Fish appointees, that are subject to legislative confirmation. The Senate Resources Committee met August 28<sup>th</sup> and the Joint House Fisheries and Resources Committee met September 3<sup>rd</sup>. The recent appointees under review are Abe Williams, McKenzie Mitchell, John Wood and John Jensen. John Jensen is a reappointment and is the longest serving member of the current board. John Wood was a late appointment last year, and was never confirmed by the Legislature, but served all of the 2019/2020 meeting cycle on the Board. Wood was previously reviewed by the House Fisheries Committee on March 12<sup>th</sup>. The other members of the seven-member board are Märít Carlson-Van Dort, Israel Payton and Gerad Godfrey.

An overwhelming amount of public comment was received by the committees, most in opposition to Governor Dunleavy's appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fish. Williams' day job is with the Pebble Partnership. Williams is a lifelong Alaskan, a

longtime Bristol Bay commercial salmon fisherman who also has stock options in Pebble. Board member Carlson-Van Dort from Chignik, a previous Dunleavy appointee, formerly worked for Pebble.

McKenzie Mitchell of Kodiak, now of Fairbanks, is an 11-year resident of Alaska with experience in hunting and fishing lodges. Mitchell based her Master's thesis on recreational quota entities, a federal program for sport halibut. Mitchell admits to having very little experience at Board meetings.

John Wood has a long history working with Senator Dunleavy, now Governor. Woods currently works for the State under a contract beyond his Board of Fisheries service. In that current contract with the State, Wood reports directly to the Governor, according to Wood in response to legislator questions. Fisheries Committee Chair Representative Louise Stutes stated that the news that Board member Wood reports directly to the Governor was "very alarming." Wood lives in Willow.

John Jensen of Petersburg was first appointed to the Board in 2003. Jensen also holds a seat on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

### **Proposal books for the 2020/2021 cycle**

This week both the [Board of Fish](#) and the [Board of Game](#) released their respective proposal books for this cycle. There are several proposals for the Fisheries Board Statewide Shellfish meeting in March that pertain to crab and other shellfish in the Aleutians East Region. The Board of Game will meet in Wasilla in January to consider Game proposals for Southwest Alaska including [Game Management Units 9 & 10](#) in the Aleutians East region. Proposals concerning caribou and emperor geese dominate the Southwest region Board of Game proposals.

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## **Seafood Trade Relief Program**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently introduced the Seafood Trade Relief Program (STRP) including \$530 million for U.S. fishermen impacted by 'retaliatory tariffs.' Fishermen can apply for relief through the program until December 14, 2020.

The STRP seafood payment rate will be on a per pound basis and will reflect the estimated severity of the impact of trade disruptions to U.S. seafood caught and sold commercially.

Seafood covered through STRP and their payment rates are:

<u>Seafood</u>	<u>Rate (\$/lb.)</u>
Atka mackerel	0.10
Crab (Dungeness)	0.47

Crab (King)	0.47
Crab (Snow)	0.47
Crab (Southern Tanner)	0.47
Flounder	0.15
Geoduck	0.76
Goosefish	0.10
Herring	0.04
Lobster	0.50
Pacific Cod	0.14
Pacific Ocean Perch	0.10
Pollock	0.01
Sablefish	0.10
Salmon	0.16
Sole	0.15
Squid	0.20
Tuna	0.13
Turbot	0.15

There is a webinar scheduled for **Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 11am AKST** to help applicants with the process. Registration is required for the free online webinar. More information on the STRP can be found at: <http://www.farmers.gov/Seafood>.

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