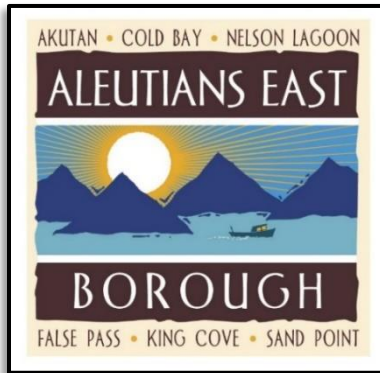
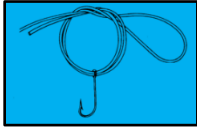


In the Loop



Talia Jean-Louis Joins AEB as Borough Assistant Administrator



Talia-Jean Louis is the Borough's newly hired Assistant Borough Administrator.

Talia Jean-Louis is the Borough's newly hired Assistant Administrator following the departure of Mary Tesche, who moved to Reno, Nevada in September. Jean-Louis joined the Borough on September 9th.

"The first thing that attracted me to the job is that it looked challenging, and that was definitely exciting for me," she said. "I love a job that challenges you to think outside the box and to be forward-thinking," she said. "I like finding solutions to difficult problems."

Jean-Louis said working for government is also appealing. Before landing the job at the Borough, she worked as an executive assistant for Alaska's Department of Environmental Conservation for three years. Projects she was involved with included getting basic resources out to communities during the pandemic, including personal protective equipment. She also sent bed bug kits out to villages several years ago when the infestation was a problem in rural Alaska. In addition, she worked for the Office of the Governor as an executive assistant for two years.

“I became very familiar with government, the executive, legislative and judicial branches,” she said. “It was familiar to me and working for government it’s something I enjoy,” she said.

This week marks six weeks with the Borough. Jean-Louis has been familiarizing herself with Borough projects as well as the budget.

“I’ve learned so much. I knew it was going to be a challenging job, and it has not failed to deliver,” she said.

Turning challenges into opportunities is something Jean-Louis enjoys. She was born in Haiti and immigrated to the United States at the age of 11 with her family.

“I was but a small chicken nugget, starting out in life,” she chuckled.

Jean-Louis grew up in Florida, and as an adult, moved to Alaska after her twin sister convinced her to come here.

“It was supposed to be for three months, and here it is 11 years later,” she said.

Alaska is now home to her, and her two daughters, Khloe, age seven, Aubrey, age five, and her cat, Mr. Niblet.

“I love Alaska,” she said. “There’s so much opportunity here.”

As for working at the Borough, Jean-Louis is enjoying every minute of it.

“I’m super excited to be here,” she said.

Projects in the Field:

Data Modernization in the Western Gulf of Alaska

*By Charlotte Levy, Aleutians East Borough Natural Resources Assistant Director
Previously published by EM4Fish*

Small Fleet, Big Data

The Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) fleet is a relatively small group of local fishermen that are forward-thinking and open to change. They are collectively organized as the *Peninsula Fishermen’s Coalition*, and live primarily in the communities of King Cove, Sand Point and False Pass within the Aleutians East Borough. These are coastal communities without road systems; the

cost of traveling to them is at least a thousand dollars, a two-hour flight, and a few years off your life during the turbulent final descent.



The boat harbor at King Cove. Photo courtesy: City of King Cove

WGOA fishermen have diverse portfolios that allow them to fish year-round, rotating between fisheries. Vessels are typically small (less than 60ft in length) and are designed to be versatile, capable of switching between trawl and fixed-gear for groundfish, and seine gear for summer salmon. Fishing not only supports local fishermen, but entire communities, with a

significant portion of City and Borough revenue generated from landings taxes – funds that ultimately go back into community services such as schools and infrastructure. All this to say, fishing is the lifeblood of this region. So, when an issue arises that has the potential to completely shut down a fishery, folks pick themselves up by their Grundens straps and figure it out.

Data modernization in the WGOA fleet started small enough, with fishermen simply trying to solve an age-old issue that had been plaguing them for years: salmon bycatch. Concern over salmon bycatch is not particularly unique to the WGOA, but the method by which salmon bycatch is accounted for is unique in the WGOA, and has been a point of contention for years. Ultimately, it was the fishermen who decided to take action and find a way forward.

One Fish, Two Fish

The issue of salmon bycatch is sensitive throughout Alaska; not only are salmon of high economic value, they are iconic and even sacred to some. It makes sense that regulators and managers have gone to great lengths to keep salmon bycatch at manageable levels, and reduce bycatch as much as possible.

Every year, stock assessment authors and managers publish Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits for pollock, alongside hard cap limits of Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) for Chinook salmon bycatch. When the salmon hard cap is met, the pollock fishery is closed and fishermen forgo harvesting any remaining pollock quota. Ergo, the accurate and timely enumeration of salmon caught is critical.

In the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), vessels participate in the Partial Coverage observer program. Less than 30% of trips are monitored by a vessel observer, who then follows the offloaded catch into the plant to conduct salmon census. The count of salmon is then extrapolated to the entire fleet, thus producing a rate and total number of salmon caught against the cap. This method works well-enough when a vessel delivers directly to a shoreside processor. But in the WGOA, the pollock fishery spans a massive geographic footprint, with fishing grounds located over a day's worth of travel from port. In a non-rationalized fishery (i.e., derby-style instead of allocated) like GOA

pollock, there isn't enough time to steam back and forth to the plant to offload, not to mention it's generally inefficient and uneconomical. Instead, processors deploy tender vessels that retrieve catch from catcher vessels (CV) and transport it back to the shoreside plant. This model has proven to be highly successful, allowing fish to retain value by processing it as quickly as possible, and allowing CVs to remain at the grounds to continue fishing.



58' multipurpose vessels tied up in the Sand Point Harbor. Photo courtesy: City of Sand Point.

Here is where things get sticky: *tender vessels cannot carry observers*. In 2013, the observer program was restructured to remove potential biases that could negatively impact the statistical reliability of catch data. Unfortunately, the niche use of tenders was not considered, and the restructuring did not fully incorporate the needs of the tender component. Under the current regulated program, when a CV that is delivering to a tender is selected for observer coverage, the observer must complete all of their tasks from the CV and cannot follow the catch into the plant to enumerate salmon (like they would if they were observing a CV delivering directly to a shoreside

plant).

Unfortunately, it is impractical for an onboard observer to accurately sort and count salmon, and complete all of their other duties, before the catch goes into the hold. So in lieu of a true salmon census, NMFS estimates Chinook salmon PSC by using "at-sea" samples collected by vessel observers, meant to be representative of the entire haul. The count of PSC salmon is then extrapolated to the delivery, and ultimately the entire fleet.

No one said it better than John Shepherd: "Counting fish is like counting trees, except they are invisible and keep moving." So, it's not hard to understand why representative sampling and extrapolation are used in fisheries assessment – it's often unavoidable. The issue is that abundance of a given species and sample size affect the level of precision, so estimates for a relatively rare species such as Chinook salmon are biased and imprecise – and yet, are still used to manage the fishery. An at-sea sample with a few concentrated salmon may extrapolate to hundreds of salmon, regardless if hundreds of salmon were actually caught. Combined with small salmon caps, the WGOA fishermen are running two races: a race for fish and a race against salmon bycatch.

[Continue reading](#)

Aleutians East Borough Natural Resources Department Seafood Raffle

RAFFLE ITEMS:

- crab
- salmon
- cod
- canned salmon
- **AND MORE**

Tickets are \$10 each

This raffle is to fund local fishermen to attend the Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit virtually December 7 – 9, 2021

Contact any of the Borough offices for tickets
Drawing will be held on Wednesday, November 10th during the
Assembly Meeting

More info can be found at www.aebfish.org/raffle

If you'd like to subscribe, please email ltanis@aeboro.org .



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