

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH Fish & Wildlife Commission

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Ex officio: Jim Sykes

Regular Meeting

January 9, 2025

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Physical Location of Meeting: Room 203 DSJ Bldg,
Palmer. Remote Participation: See agenda.

Planning and Land Use Department - Planning Division

<http://www.matsugov.us> • planning@matsugov.us

**Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission Comments
(MSBFWC) on Proposals for the Board of Game (BOG) Central and
Southwest Regional Meeting held in January 2025, in Wasilla**

General Overview of proposals presented

Bear Proposals

There doesn't appear to be any shortage of bears, either brown or black, around the region. Several of the proposals dealing with bears are asking for increased seasons, increased bag limits, or other factors which would potentially increase harvest opportunities. The commission supports the proposals which increase harvest opportunity, or which give Fish and Game increased management ability to help regulate bear populations.

Something many people don't understand is that once man starts dabbling in an ecosystem by managing a few populations of animals, say prey species like moose and caribou, without managing other populations like predatory species such as wolves and bears, an imbalance in animal numbers can develop over time. This imbalance can eventually hurt numbers of all the various populations, both predator and prey.

Proposals 39-44

These proposals focus on the management of moose populations in the subunits of Unit 13. These proposals (39,41,42), developed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department), propose changes in the management objectives for the subunit populations and proposals (43-44) recommend reauthorizing the antlerless moose hunts. Proposal 40, submitted by the Copper Basin Fish & Game Advisory Committee also recommends changes to the management objectives for subunit 13C.

The Department provides a long series of historical data to support their recommendation for reducing the population and harvest objectives for these subunits. The MSBFWC supports these proposals primarily because these changes are based on the best available data and support the need to maintain a more sustainable population.

The proposal submitted by the Copper Basin Fish & Game Advisory Committee also addresses subunit 13C, recommending an increase in the harvest objective. However, no data is provided to support this recommendation and is not supported by the historical data presented by the Department. The MSBFWC opposes this proposal for this reason.

The reauthorization of the antlerless moose seasons as addressed in proposals 43-44 are a necessary step the department is required to follow. As stated in State regulations to conduct antlerless moose seasons, these hunts must be annually reauthorized by the local advisory committees and by the BOG. The MSBFWC should support these proposals for the reasons stated by the Department, e.g. *Unit 13 has an active intensive management program to benefit moose populations for human consumptive use. Managing a moose population for high levels of human*

consumptive use requires harvest of cow moose to utilize additional surplus moose on the landscape and prevent moose populations from exceeding the carrying capacity of the land. To maintain moose populations within their appropriate population and sex ratio objectives while also providing adequate opportunity to meet harvest objectives, antlerless moose hunts are an essential management tool to adjust the population trajectory through additional sustainable harvest opportunities.

Proposal 49

This proposal submitted by the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) recommends the closure of the Nelchina Caribou Herd (NCH) season for six years or until the herd reaches the midpoint of the management objective of 37,500. The management objective for this herd is 35,000 to 40,000 animals. Preliminary 2024 surveys conducted by the Department estimate the herd to be approximately 12,000 animals, well below the management objective. The Department has stated, *“That with the Nelchina caribou herd’s current low abundance, combined with low recruitment in recent years, there may be a long recovery period as the herd builds back up toward objectives. The NCH last experienced a long recovery period in the 1970s and 80s, and a similar recovery period of up to 15 years could be ahead of us. During this recovery it will be important to protect cows from harvest, as they represent the reproductive potential of the herd. This recovery period will allow forage on the range to recover if it has been negatively impacted by caribou use.”* The MSBFWC does not support this proposal as it seems unnecessary for the reason the season is currently closed; the herd is well below the management objective and if the herd does obtain the lower end of the management objective (necessary to manage a healthy herd) it is not justifiable to curtail the harvest until the mid-point of the management objective.

Proposal 63

This proposal submitted by the Department recommends that you must have a registration permit to hunt ptarmigan in Units 13B and 13E. The purpose of this proposal is to improve the collection of harvest data which is necessary to better manage this resource. This area is a very popular bird hunting area and one which experiences high hunting pressure. The current process of obtaining harvest data relies on voluntary reported harvest information which historically results in very limited data. Meaningful data is necessary to manage wildlife populations which are in very accessible areas and experience high hunting pressure. For this reason, the MSBFWC supports this proposal.

Proposal 64

The reauthorization of the antlerless moose seasons as addressed in proposal 64 is a necessary step the department is required to follow. As stated in State regulations; in order to conduct antlerless moose seasons, these hunts must be annually reauthorized by the local advisory committees and by the BOG. The MSBFWC supports this proposal.

Proposal 75

This proposal submitted by the Department recommends adding the removal of wolves, brown bears, and black bears to Unit 16 Intensive Management Plan by allowing department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground-based lethal removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears using state-owned, privately-owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters.

When the Intensive Management Plan was developed to include the Predation Control Area (Unit 16), regulations did not allow for the department to do the removal.

This is one controversial proposal which asks the BOG to grant Fish and Game authority to do aerial predator control using state employees. The board should grant the department this authority. Using only “civilian” hunters to do this in predator control areas hasn’t really resulted in the reduction in numbers of predators needing to be removed. Giving the department this authority/ability adds another tool to the ecosystem management toolbox scenario.

Adding the ability for the department to conduct control efforts of wolves and bears ensures the department could actively manage predators in the area to aid in achieving the population and harvest objectives set by the BOG. Just because the department can do this doesn’t mean they will do this in anything other than an extreme situation.

As stated in the proposal, the department has no plans to activate bear control at this time. The wolf management objective for this area is 35-50 wolves, the current population is minimally estimated at 120 wolves. Current harvests, as allowed by existing regulations, are proving not to be sufficient to keep the number of wolves within the management objective. In addition, poor pelt quality (lice) and other harvest opportunities outside of Unit 16 have also played a role in affecting the overall harvest. The MSBFWC supports this proposal for the stated reasons.

Proposal 82

This proposal was submitted by the Alaska Wildlife Alliance to establish 50-yard trapping setbacks along specific trails in Unit 14. The MSBFWC supports this proposal for the following reasons. The Matanuska Susitna Borough (MSB) is the fastest growing area in the State of Alaska. The MSB population in 2010 was estimated at 89,731 in 2022 the population has grown to 113,325 an increase of 26.3%. The continued growth of the MSB has resulted in substantial uses of the many multi-use trails. In 2017, the MSB assembly passed regulations restricting trapping on six borough-managed trails and on school grounds, but did not issue regulations for state-managed trails in deference to the regulatory powers of the Board of Game. The purpose of this proposal is to reduce potential conflicts between trapping and loose dogs, along highly developed trails in the Mat-Su Borough.

Summary

The MSBFWC’s general stance on these upcoming game proposals is that if the proposal gives the department a better ability to manage the various animal species, then the commission supports the proposal. If it hurts or restricts active management, don’t pass it.

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. XX-XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH FISH AND WILDLIFE
COMMISSION IN SUPPORT OF THE WASILLA CREEK TRIBUTARY AT BONNIE DRIVE
FISH PASSAGE CULVERTS REPLACEMENT PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Wasilla Creek system is a productive salmon stream providing habitat for all five species of Pacific salmon; and

WHEREAS, Wasilla Creek is in the urbanized portion of the Mat-Su Borough with a number of roads crossing the creek and its tributaries; and

WHEREAS, the Mat-Su Borough and the State of Alaska have expended funding in excess of \$5 Million to replace fish passage culverts along this creek over the past 15 years; and

WHEREAS, the Mat-Su Borough in cooperation with ADF&G and USFWS spent approximately \$400,000 to reroute trails and make repairs to the stream damage caused by off-road vehicles along the upper tributaries of Wasilla Creek in the Matanuska Valley Moose Range; and

WHEREAS, there are three undersized culverts on a Wasilla Creek tributary along Bonnie Drive that are in need of replacement in order to safely pass salmon and other aquatic organisms; and

WHEREAS, grant funding opportunities are available for the replacement of fish passage culverts; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission supports replacement of the three fish passage culverts on the Wasilla Creek tributary along Bonnie Drive.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Andrew Couch, Chair

ATTEST:

Margaret Brown,



MSB Waterbody Setback Ordinance

The MSB requires structures built after 1986 to be 75' from lakes or streams. Hundreds of homes have been built in violation. Banks are unwilling to provide loans for purchasing these homes. The MSB Assembly tasked a Waterbody Setback Advisory Board (WSAB) with providing recommendations on the setback requirement. View recommendations at: <https://matsugov.us/boards/waterbody-setback-advisory-board>

Current problems

- Hundreds of homeowners built too close to water bodies.
- Commercial buildings are exempt from the setback.
- No regulation within the setback (e.g. paving allowed).

Advisory Board Recommendations

Purpose

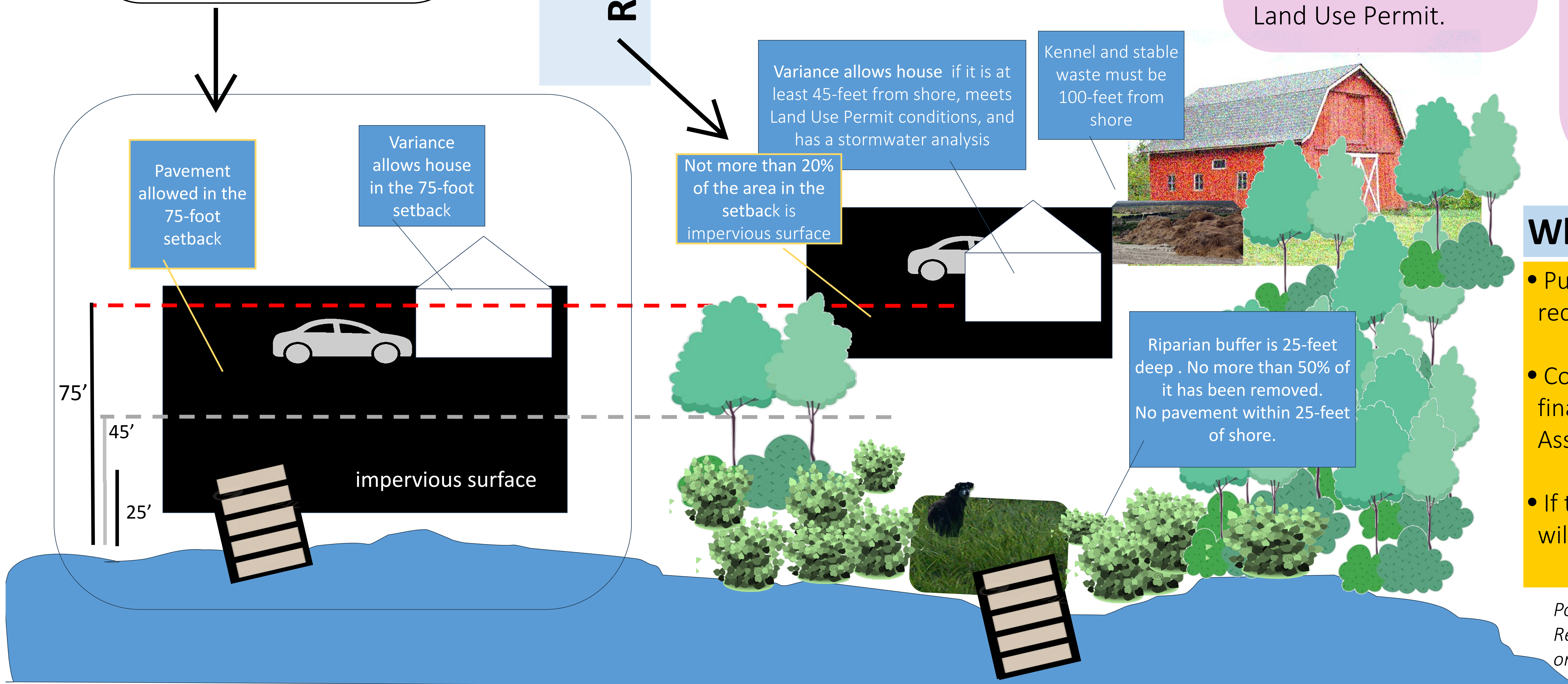
To reduce pollution to water, and to protect human health, aquatic habitat, waterbody function, economies, property values, recreation, views, and quality of life.

No change

- Structures must be 75' from *streams*
- Structures built in the *future* must be 75' from *lakes*

Proposed changes

- *Existing* homes 45' from lakes may come into code compliance through a Land Use Permit.
- *Future* clearing in 75' setback will need a Land Use Permit.
- Land Use Permit will be required for clearing, grading, and filling within the 75' setback.
- The permit will require pollution mitigation, limits on impervious surface, riparian buffer.
- No exemption for commercial buildings.
- No variances within 45'.



What's Next

- Public comment period on WSAB recommendations Nov 13 - Jan 21.
- Comments will inform the Board's final recommendations to the MSB Assembly.
- If the Assembly chooses to act, there will be additional comment periods.

Poster by: Kendra Zamzow, kzamzow@gmail.com
Representing the MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission on the MSB Waterbody Setback Advisory Board

Please submit all Public Comments to msb.planning@matsugov.us

NPFMC will meet February 3-11 at the Egan Center in Anchorage, AK.

[Printable format \(https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/February_2025_Council_Meeting_Update_Only.pdf\)](https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/February_2025_Council_Meeting_Update_Only.pdf) of this information, and [Schedule \(https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/SCHEDULE_0225.pdf\)](https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/SCHEDULE_0225.pdf)

The Council will be holding a special Council meeting in February, exclusively focused on two issues: a second review of the [chum salmon bycatch analysis \(https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=1224cfc2-d9db-4e2a-ab63-61c416debd13.pdf&fileName=C2%20Bering%20Sea%20Chum%20Salmon%20Bycatch%20Management%20Analysis.pdf\)](https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=1224cfc2-d9db-4e2a-ab63-61c416debd13.pdf&fileName=C2%20Bering%20Sea%20Chum%20Salmon%20Bycatch%20Management%20Analysis.pdf) and appendices (<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=860d8be1-2424-4413-98b2-85c3316bebf9.pdf&fileName=C2%20Appendices%20to%20Chum%20Salmon%20Analysis.pdf>) (the Council last reviewed this analysis in April 2024), and 2025 harvest specifications for Cook Inlet salmon. The meeting will be held in-person at the Egan Center. Because this is a special-issue meeting, the Council will not take up agency B reports as normal, nor will they take up staff tasking. Those agenda items will resume at the April Council meeting.

— More information specific to the agenda

The Council's action on the chum salmon bycatch analysis at this meeting is to review the Draft EIS, prior to taking final action at a future meeting. In February, the Council's actions are limited to: 1) maintaining or modifying the alternatives and options for analysis; 2) identifying a preliminary preferred alternative, if desired; and 3) requesting additional information. The revised chum bycatch analysis is currently posted to the [February eAgenda \(https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3071\)](https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3071) (Analysis (<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=1224cfc2-d9db-4e2a-ab63-61c416debd13.pdf&fileName=C2%20Bering%20Sea%20Chum%20Salmon%20Bycatch%20Management%20Analysis.pdf>) and Appendices (<https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=860d8be1-2424-4413-98b2-85c3316bebf9.pdf&fileName=C2%20Appendices%20to%20Chum%20Salmon%20Analysis.pdf>)) to allow an extended time for public review and comment prior to the February meeting. For Cook Inlet salmon, the Council will review the Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report and recommend harvest specifications (OFL/ABC/TAC) for five Cook Inlet salmon species. The SAFE report will be posted on January 10, 2025. NMFS anticipates providing separate, written tribal engagement and consultation updates on the Cook Inlet salmon and chum bycatch agenda items.

- **SSC (Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee) will meet February 3-5, 2025** (Monday-Wednesday) to review the methodology for new sections in the chum salmon bycatch analysis and determine if the analysis is sufficient to inform Council decision-making at final action, and to review and recommend overfishing limits and acceptable biological catch limits (OFL and ABC) for Cook Inlet salmon species. ***Please note, the SSC does not accept public testimony on policy or management decisions, only on scientific recommendations, in accordance with their purpose.***
- **Advisory Panel (AP) will meet February 4-8, 2025** (Tuesday-Saturday), and will only take up the chum bycatch analysis. While the AP will begin hearing public testimony once the staff presentation concludes on Tuesday, the AP will keep open the opportunity for testimony through Thursday morning, and AP deliberations will not begin before Thursday afternoon.
- **Council will meet from February 6-11, 2025** (Thursday-Tuesday). On Thursday the Council will address Cook Inlet salmon harvest specifications, and staff presentations on the chum salmon bycatch analysis will begin on Friday. Depending on the volume of public testimony at the AP and Council, the Council may begin to take public testimony before receiving the AP report. ***Please plan to sign up for testimony by 5pm on Friday 2/7 if you want to be on the list for testifying to the Council.***

The written public comment period for February will open on December 20, 2024, and close at noon on Friday, January 31, 2025. Signups for oral public testimony during the meeting will open once the meetings begin. Please note that dates for the AP and Council meetings have been extended from earlier announcements, in order to accommodate additional testifiers if needed. If the time available still appears insufficient, Chairs will adjust time limits for oral testimony to ensure that all testifiers can be heard. You can listen to the meetings via our [YouTube channel \(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCokqSfpL9TzRDX-5A6idcgw/videos\)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCokqSfpL9TzRDX-5A6idcgw/videos), or on zoom.

Printable format (https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/February_2025_Council_Meeting_Update_Only.pdf) of this information and [Schedule \(https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/SCHEDULE_0225.pdf\)](https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/meetings/SCHEDULE_0225.pdf)

We have two options for hotel room blocks [Captain Cook Room Block \(https://be.synxis.com/?Hotel=26969&Chain=10237&config=fANCCC&theme=fANCCC&arrive=2025-02-02&depart=2025-02-11&adult=1&child=0&group=NPFMC25\)](https://be.synxis.com/?Hotel=26969&Chain=10237&config=fANCCC&theme=fANCCC&arrive=2025-02-02&depart=2025-02-11&adult=1&child=0&group=NPFMC25); Code NPFMC25; Booking deadline 1/5/2025 and [Hilton Hotel Room Block \(https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?ctyhocn=ANCAHHF&groupCode=NPFMRMS&arrivaldate=2025-02-02&departuredate=2025-02-12&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT\)](https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?ctyhocn=ANCAHHF&groupCode=NPFMRMS&arrivaldate=2025-02-02&departuredate=2025-02-12&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT); Code NPFMRMS; Booking deadline 1/12/2025. The Alaska Airlines airfare discount code is **ECMO055**.

DRAFT Agenda SCHEDULE – Anchorage, AK

Feb 2025

NOTE: Agenda items may not be taken in the order in which they appear, and timing is subject to change as necessary. All meetings are open to the public, with the exception of Executive Sessions (*shown in italics*).

<i>All meetings scheduled 8am – 5pm, but depending on volume of public testimony, meetings may go late</i>	SSC February 3-5 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	Advisory Panel (AP) February 4-8 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK	Council February 6-11 Egan Center, Anchorage, AK
Monday Feb 3	8:00 am Election of officers Announcements C2 Scientific/ methodological review of new sections of chum salmon bycatch analysis 1:00pm C2 Chum scientific review (cont)		
Tuesday Feb 4	8:00 am C2 Chum scientific review (cont) C1 Cook Inlet salmon harvest specifications 1:00 pm C1 Cook Inlet (cont)	8:00 am Election of officers AP training Announcements C2 Chum salmon bycatch 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)	
Weds Feb 5	8:00 am C1 Cook Inlet (cont) 1:00 pm <i>Report writing</i>	8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont) 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)	
Thursday Feb 6		8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont)* 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)	8:00 am Announcements C1 Cook Inlet salmon harvest specifications 1:00 pm SSC report on C1 C1 Cook Inlet (cont)
Friday Feb 7		8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont) 1:00 pm <i>Continue as necessary</i>	8:00 am C2 Chum salmon bycatch 1:00 pm SSC report on C2 C2 Chum salmon (cont)
Saturday Feb 8		8:00 am <i>Continue as necessary</i> 1:00 pm <i>Continue as necessary</i>	8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont) 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)
Sunday Feb 9			8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont) 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)
Monday Feb 10			8:00 am C2 Chum salmon (cont) 1:00 pm C2 Chum salmon (cont)
Tuesday Feb 11			8:00 am <i>Continue as necessary</i> 1:00 pm <i>Continue as necessary</i>

* NOTE, the AP will keep public testimony open through Thursday morning, however the AP will begin to take public testimony as soon as the staff presentation ends (likely Wednesday).

DRAFT AGENDA
273rd Plenary Session, North Pacific Fishery Management Council
February 3-11, 2025, Egan Center, Anchorage, AK

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council will meet in early February, at the Egan Center, Anchorage, AK. Other meetings to be held in close conjunction are:

<u>Committee/Panel</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Scientific and Statistical Committee	February 3-5, 2025, 8 am – 5 pm*, Egan Center
Advisory Panel	February 4-8, 2025, 8 am – 5 pm*, Egan Center
Council	February 6-11, 2025, 8 am – 5 pm*, Egan Center

Red = SSC items

- A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**
 - A1 Approve agenda
 - A2 Announcements
- B. Reports – NONE AT THIS MEETING**
- C. Action Items**
 - C1 Cook Inlet Salmon – review assessments, recommend OFL/ABC/TAC**
 - C2 Chum salmon bycatch – Initial review**

<i>Council staff lead</i>	Approx TIMING
<i>David Witherell</i>	
	36
<i>Diana Stram</i>	6
<i>Kate Haapala</i>	30
TOTAL HOURS (including SSC report in full)	38

* All meetings scheduled 8am – 5pm, but depending on volume of public testimony, meetings may go late