



BRISTOL BAY

Regional Seafood Development Association

BBRSDA Board Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2025 – 9:00am AKT

Teleconferenced

1. Call to Order/Establishment of Quorum

President Sabo called the meeting to order at 9:04am AKT. Present were board members Schonberg, Morgan, Johnson, Niver, Andrew, and Elwell; guest Norm Van Vactor; members Janis Harsila and Joel Ludwig; and staff members Bursch, Dunn, Machain and McNeil. **A QUORUM WAS ESTABLISHED.**

2. Member Comments

There were no member comments.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

a. March 5, 2025

Niver moved and Morgan seconded to approve the minutes from March 5, 2025. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

Johnson brought up the fish can shared at the previous meeting by Tim Cook and asked about testing the origin. Sabo has talked with ASMI and they are looking into it. The intent was for the Outreach or Sustainability committee to take this up and make a recommendation to the board.

4. Approval of Agenda

Johnson moved to approve the agenda with the addition of a presentation by guest speaker Maddie Lightsey. Seconded by Morgan. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

5. Guest Speaker: Maddie Lightsey - Alaska Boats & Permits

Guest Maddie Lightsey from Alaska Boats & Permits joined the call and presented a slideshow about the commercial fishing industry in Alaska. Maddie discussed the industry's contribution to the national economy, the number of people employed, and the value of permits. She also highlighted

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the impact of the 2022-2023 decline in profitability, including job losses and a decrease in US state and local tax revenues.

Maddie discussed the challenges faced by the seafood industry, including a glut of product, decreased demand due to geopolitical issues and economic factors, and the impact of processor consolidation. She highlighted the need for legislative action, funding for infrastructure, and a focus on quality over quantity. Maddie also emphasized the importance of individual fishermen getting involved in advocacy efforts to protect their investments.

6. Executive Director Report

Dunn provided an oral summary highlighting strong market demand for sockeye salmon, crediting ASMI director Jeremy's insights from SENA on "wild, farmed, and sockeye" distinctions. With no carryover inventory, processors face pressure to meet rising consumer interest. Dunn and Sabo attended a productive meeting in Miami with Arron Kallenberg to unite stakeholders around shared priorities. High interest in sockeye was also noted in Barcelona, where major suppliers were present, though Copper River Seafoods was absent. Dunn noted ASMI's current focus on pink salmon, despite retailer interest in sockeye. Additionally, NOAA has yet to release the SK grant announcement, though preproposals are due in early July. Dunn emphasized the need for industry-wide strategy coordination to improve advocacy efficiency in Washington, D.C.

7. Program Updates & Committee Business

a. Marketing Program

Dunn gave a verbal update highlighting that Costco requested a uniform, co-branded sockeye label, which has launched on the West Coast. Plans are underway to revamp the Fish Finder tool, making it more robust with zip code-based map views and store pins; this will serve as a key call to action. McNeil is coordinating fleet outreach to ensure accurate info, and social media ads are being adjusted to drive traffic to the Fish Finder. A Canadian promo launches in two weeks featuring a new cling and custom retail materials. Interest in BBSS is strong, with retail partners requesting custom stickers, clings, and videos. Additionally, a Costco BBSS recipe video will go live this month, and buyer trips are planned for the summer at the Bay.

b. Sustainability Program

i. BBSRI Port Moller Proposal

The Sustainability Committee recommended funding of the Port Moller Test Fishery At Sea Genetics Lab for \$107,500 for the 2025 season. The program will be very similar to 2024.

Niver moved and Morgan seconded to approve funding BBSRI for the 2025 Port Moller Test Fishery and At-sea Genetics lab for \$107,500. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

ii. Drone Enumeration Project Update

Norm Van Vactor joined the meeting to give an update on his summer plans. The group discussed the potential of using open-source AI technology to aid in research. Van Vactor has a contact from an AI company who is willing to collaborate on a project this summer. The board agreed that both sonar and drone AI technologies should be used to improve fish counting. There is a need to count all species of fish and have confidence in the numbers.

iii. Update on RFP for Sonar Project

Staff and board members have conducted outreach to the BB science and sonar communities to explore improved fish enumeration methods. Morgan and Bursch shared that while there is room for improvement, progress will require outside initiative, as ADF&G lacks funding and capacity but is open to collaboration through groups like BBSRI or UW. Processors, including Trident, Canfisco, and potentially Silver Bay, are supportive and may help fund the effort. Discussions emphasized the need to define an RFP by September, outlining scope, rivers, and budget. A working committee was proposed and unanimously approved to develop the RFP and explore both sonar and drone-based approaches, possibly as separate tracks. The goal is to have a clear path forward before the 2026 budget is finalized. Bursch noted that a narrower scope would aid in securing grant funding.

Johnson moved and Elwell seconded to allow President Sabo to appoint a working committee to look at preparing a scope for

an RFP to count fish better. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

c. Quality

Bursch provided a verbal update on ongoing programs, noting that two RSW apprentice relationships have been contracted with MRS and Wild North Seafood/Ben Allen, and RSW Operator classes are underway. The group discussed the upcoming use of SBS slurry ice, which Schonberg called the industry's biggest change since RSW, with interest in its impact on price and feasibility. Slurry ice is priced at \$150/ton, compared to \$280/ton for flake ice. Bursch noted that ice barges will not be used this year. Sabo emphasized the ongoing need to prioritize quality over quantity, expressing concern that some processors still overlook this. Schonberg raised the challenge of matching farmed fish in appearance and suggested focusing marketing efforts on the superior health benefits of wild sockeye. Andrew noted that Alaska Airlines will begin offering direct flights to Europe, which could support future efforts. No action items were proposed.

d. Outreach / Organization

Director Elwell requested a list of organizations that go to DC for slamn week and other events. He would like the Outreach Committee to be involved in those activities.

Bursch gave a brief program update noting there was one member who took the AMSEA Safety course and the 2024 Annual Report was recently completed and pushed out to members on digital platforms. Staff will be in Naknek in June with the goal of meeting with as many member fishermen as possible.

i. KDLG Proposal

KDLG submitted a \$30K proposal to produce one Bristol Bay Fisheries Report per week during the 6-week summer season. The funding would cover reporter wages, partial rent, and help offset increased transmitter power costs. The Outreach Committee recommended the proposal as written, though staff confirmed KDLG could not increase report frequency within the \$30K budget. It was also clarified that daily fish numbers and

other updates are provided separately from the Fisheries Report. If not approved, an alternative suggested was funding KDLG through underwriting support.

Johnson moved to support KDLG with the proposed funding of \$30K. Seconded by Elwell. **MOTION FAILED 3-4.**

Concerns were raised about the high cost per report and fleet value, though some board members emphasized the report's marketing benefit and communications role.

Morgan proposed an amendment to the original motion to give \$15K for the fisheries report and allocate another \$15K for advertising with follow-up needed to determine what that could secure.. Seconded by Andrew. **MOTION CARRIED 5-1.**

Dunn and Bursch will reconnect with KDLG and will explore a messaging platform to benefit the fleet.

ii. Board of Fish Survey

The Outreach Committee recommended BBRSDA develop and distribute a survey to drift permit holders to gather input on key issues anticipated at the 2026 Board of Fish (BOF) meetings. Suggested topics include permit stacking, removal of the 32-foot limit, and general district fishing after escapement goals are met.

There was general agreement on including both yes/no questions and open-ended follow-ups for context. The proposal book is expected in mid-August, which may help inform final survey content. The survey will be finalized and presented for approval at the next board meeting.

iii. Get Out the Vote Update

Since launching the contact information update effort in November, 156 individuals have either updated their details or shared them for the first time. Consistent outreach has supported this effort, and a new postcard has been mailed to members, which includes another request to update contact

info, a reminder about the new election timing, and a link to the Annual Report.

e. Finance

i. Bank balances

Wells Fargo - Operating	\$	186,398
Wells Fargo - Credit Card	\$	(3,721)
Vanguard - Reserve	\$	2,777,862
Vanguard - Operating	\$	1,954,968
TOTAL	\$	4,915,508

ii. Approval of Q1 2025 Financials

Machain gave a high-level overview of Q1 2025 financials. These come recommended by the finance committee.

Morgan moved and Elwell seconded to approve the Q1 2025 Financials. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

8. Miscellaneous Business

a. Tariffs Update

No updates at this time.

b. Executive Order Update

No updates at this time.

9. Future Meetings, Events, and Agenda Items

June 10-11 – Naknek Member Meet-ups

July 8-11 – Whole Foods + ASMI in BB

July 14-17 – Wegman’s in BB

10. Good of the Order

Dunn mentioned there were talks of hearing a pre-season price in late May or early June from certain processors.

11. Adjourn

Morgan moved and Niver seconded to adjourn at 11:59am AKT. **MOTION CARRIED WITH UNANIMOUS CONSENT.**

Total meeting time: 2 hours, 55 minutes

Board members in attendance: Andrew, Elwell, Johnson, Morgan, Niver, Sabo, Schonberg