

YAKUTAT REGIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 1, 2025, 5:00 pm AST

Kwaan Plaza Conference Room & Virtual Zoom

Attending in Person: Casey Mapes, Devon Fernandez, Enoch Schertel, Glenn Israelson, Sam Demmert, James Ross, Debra Lekanoff, and Austin Holcomb, public member

Attending Virtually: Larry Bemis & Kathy Hansen, YRAA Consultant

Meeting called to order at 5:09 pm with quorum. Kathy informed the group that she was recording the meeting solely for the purpose of writing up minutes.

The revised agenda was on the screen and paper copies in the room. **Larry/Devon made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Motion Passed**

NON-FISHERMEN BOARD SEATS: Next the Board discussed the vacant non-fishermen seats and the meeting held on Sept 27 to review names received for consideration. After discussion, **Larry/Deven made a motion to seat Debra Lekanoff in a reg/village/shareholder seat term ending in 2028 and James Ross for a public at large seat term ending 2028. Motion passed.** The board discussed that still left vacant seats for the Processor, Subsistence user and Sport Fish representative and the need to check with some of the other board members who are indicating they aren't interested in continuing to serve. Sheri was out of town, but members thought she was still interested. Casey will check with Adam Johnson, Travis Ross, Nick Holcomb and Curt Holcomb. Larry suggested talking to Bob Fraker and seeing if he would be interested in serving. Debra was going to check with Krista Mayhan and Casey was going to check with the others and notify Kathy about their status.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Casey reviewed the current listed board officers, Larry Bemis president, Casey Mapes Vice-President, Nick Holcomb, Treasurer and Kathy Hansen Secretary (Non-voting member). Debra asked if the bylaws prevented combining the Secretary and Treasurer position – no restriction but after discussion the board decided to keep the two separate. Sam/Glenn made a motion for the following slate of officers: **Larry Bemis, President; Casey Mapes, V-President; Debra Lekanoff, Treasurer and Kathy Hansen as Secretary in a non-voting member capacity. Motion passed.** Later in the meeting Kathy remembered that we had forgotten to elect a representative for the Regional Planning Team (RPT). **Motion was made to elect Sam w/Debra as support for the RPT representative. Motion passed.**

**Debra and a second made a motion to approve the Meeting Notes of the September 27, 2025 meeting. Motion Passed.** Discussion before the motion was passed included an overview of the pre-meeting Sept 27<sup>th</sup> by Casey. Meeting was mostly about the non-

fisherman seats to bring forward nominations at this meeting, where we are going, less interest by the state for hatcheries, Rick Hoffman (ADF&G) was able to be at the meeting but unfortunately not tonight but his opinion is that the state is more open to instream incubation boxes. Looking at morphing from a hatchery to instream incubation and/or restoration, beaver dams, log jams, discussing these types of activities. Situk chinook has reduced the amount of time allowed for commercial and sport opportunities. Chinook would be a worthy project.

**OVERVIEW:** of the Set tax and amount paid started to be presented by Kathy but there was trouble putting the documents on the screen. The first chart showing the amount of SET assessment received by YRAA was displayed. She did clarify that 2020 and 2021 SET tax amounts were the amounts paid that year, but the State overpaid in 2020 and adjusted in 2021 is why the discrepancy in amounts paid those two years. All charts will be attached to the minutes, the remaining charts show the set tax value broken down by setnet and troll, number of setnet permits fished, with earnings followed by the total pounds harvested in the setnet fishery and earnings. During this overview Casey brought up the discussion that started at the Sept 27<sup>th</sup> meeting about taxing sport fish if YRAA was going to be making king salmon. All users would be benefitting not just the commercial fishermen. Could consider a 1% bed tax or investigate a box tax like Sitka implemented. Debra is looking into the Sitka bed tax and has requested information. The assembly is working on trying to incorporate the beds not covered by the current bed tax. The comment was made that there needs to be a comparison made of the two types of tax and there started to be a recommendation that Kathy & Debra work together to outline the two types of tax. Larry said maybe we should determine our plans before approaching the assembly and we need to take a broader view than just Chinook in the Situk. Do more rivers clean up, restoration work so all benefit and provide the broad view of all the areas that might be worked on. Need to show the expansion of what we want to do. Casey recommended that a letter be written to ADF&G about what kind of incubation/eggs they would permit. We need to get in writing from the Dept what they will let us do. Let's put a plan together, and commercial fishermen are complaining about the tax they are paying are not being utilized. Kathy pointed out this really starts to get into the regional planning team process and we had forgotten to elect an RPT representative earlier in the meeting. Debra recommended that the board task herself as treasurer and Kathy as Secretary to do an analysis of the two types of taxes. Deven stated he would never support raising taxes, YRAA has not done anything, we have \$500 thousand in the bank, until YRAA has done something productive with results having difficulty supporting the association and will not support going after more taxes. James stated, first need a firm plan, financial plan, outcomes, and firm timelines for project goals. Look at options and formulate a feasible plan. Casey, when we started we went to the

permit holders for a vote, believes that when we have a plan we need to go back to all the salmon permit holders and have them vote if they approve of the new direction being taken. Enoch agreed with Deven and said every time we put a plan together it fell apart, got the water samples and then it fell apart, water sampled another area and not the water necessary for the project being looked at and would have scaled down to far if we could get the lease. Debra stated she is new to the board, why did things fall apart, was it board or other factors. Need a history, what has been done, where has the money been spent. Casey created the board, started paying the tax, started to do water studies, looked at chums and pinks based on advice from other hatcheries because of the cost to raise vs Chinook or coho. Found enough water at Redfield, had a verbal agreement from the Kwaan that if we found enough water they would give us a long-term lease, by the time the water studies were done, new Kwaan CEO they told us to go away and so we were dead on the water. All these years later the State money is no longer there. We need to do something different, or we need to shut the tax off and close the association.

Kathy commented that to move the direction you are talking about, there is a lot of work which will take time, researching what has been done, what could work, where, what is needed for permitting, and data to apply for permits and includes possibly more water studies. A lot of steps, it will take a lot of action. To stop the SET tax, it would take the board action to authorize a vote of all permit holders (through the Dept of Commerce) and it would be the permit holders that vote to stop the tax.

Debra stated YRAA missed the boat, we are in a unique position in the community to coordinate all the salmon projects, you need to have community meetings, get the word out of history, timeline. Casey, no one wants to hear from us until we have something so the first thing is to get with the Dept to reach an agreement on what the state would agree to that is signed and then go back to the permit holders for their agreement. Need to see from the Dept what they would allow. Sportfish tax would be a second step, they eventually need to contribute if Chinook are produced.

YRAA has been a failure to date and a waste of money. People are tired of paying money for nothing. Casey said much of the money has been spent on water studies. Kathy said she doesn't have the amount spent on hand but could easily put together the information.

Request for how the money was spent by year. Continued Discussion about restoration, beaver dams, it was stated that to legally get rid of beaver dams or restoration to clean out the muck down to gravel it takes permits. Ophir Creek is dead now, when younger the stream was full of fish, want more Chinook salmon in the region. Government has paid ducks unlimited, spending millions on restoration and return is limited. Casey the original goal was to increase the economic benefit of commercial fishermen to provide a living

wage. Any steps that increase the economic value of fishermen is better. Want more Chinook salmon, that's a big benefit. Sam to get this moving forward we need to come up with a plan, this is how we get from here to there, develop the plan, taxes are down the road, come up with priorities and a solid business plan. James Ross put history together, action plan moving forward, timeline of plan accomplishments and implementation schedule and proof the money was used for the benefit. We need to prove ourselves and then you will get support. The timeline is important to show you are meeting accomplishments of moving forward. Incubation is not a new thing and has worked in other areas. Larry says for him, he can look back as the most rewarding time was when we got the approval from the Commissioner for a hatchery. Without a permit to do incubation. We are in dire strait situation, sitting on time bomb with Chinook, just a step away from the whole Yakutat area being shut down. Not to spend the money, but to prevent the fisheries from being shut down due to lack of king salmon.

Kathy was asked to finish her overview report. She stated as they had been talking, she had been flipping different documents on the screen and taking notes. First off, the last two fishermen's elections we did a quick survey as part of the election process, 62 fishermen responded, the survey asked them to prioritize among three categories Hatcheries/Incubation (no species specified), Restoration/Rehabilitation, Repeal YRAA tax and then there were some no responses received. Of the 62 who answered, 26 favored Hatchery/Incubation; 22 preferred restoration and 2 wanted the YRAA tax repealed. So, while you jumped ahead, this survey shows there was very little support for repealing the tax but fishermen do want to see the money utilized to benefit them. The process moving forward is going to be slower than you want, before I outline what I think the process should be I will mention for those of you who have been involved since the beginning it is apparent that I can't do as much as I was doing, part of that is because what you need at this time is someone in Yakutat so I have been looking at some options, one is that you hire someone different and I step out completely or two I continue to be involved as a consultant organizing the board meetings, fishermen's elections, the bookkeeping/payroll when an additional person is hired, filing the administrative reports, forms and taxes and oversee the employee/consultant hired in Yakutat. If we go this route, would need to have tighter oversight and collaboration than the last two times we had someone working in Yakutat. We need to put together a history, what money has been received, spent and for what, look at all the salmon work being done in Yakutat, by the forest service, ADF&G, Kwaan and Tribe work being done, more community outreach & meetings, research done on incubation programs, what worked and what didn't & why so you build a program that has the best chance for success and you need to spend some time talking to the Dept, not the local biologist but those involved with the RPT process/hatchery section of ADF&G, and

someone to work on the ground in Yakutat. Find the person to work in Yakutat, Debra might be willing to. Pull the information together and meet again in a month or so, reevaluate based on that information continue to move forward and then meet again. Will also take board participation.

Discussion went back to the question of what the trollers get out of kings. You don't really get anything other than the fishery isn't closed. Getting rid of some of the beaver dams as restoration could probably help bring back more coho. Put a bounty on beavers to help reduce the population. We need to go to the Board of Game about beavers.

Go back to the agenda. Draft plans, financial, look at all the salmon recovery plans,

Financials: \$411K in the bank. I am requesting two banking resolutions. First is to change the signers on the account – Current signers are Larry, Casey, Sheri Nelson, Herb Holcomb & Kathy Hansen. The agreement with Kathy is that she will not sign a check and to date has not signed any checks, not sure that she would want to change that but being a signer on the account lets me get information from the bank. **James/Devon Motion to approve the banking resolution 2025-10-1-2 with the check signers to be Kathy, Debra, Casey & Larry and take Sheri and Herb off the account. Motion passed unanimously.**

There is \$411K sitting in a bank account so I would like to recommend to take up to \$250,000 in Cash Deposits (CD's) for various time periods (90-, 120- & 180-day time periods). Current CD rates for those time frames are 3.53% if over \$25K at First National Bank of Alaska. Who should be put on an account for CDs? Put the same four on the account as the checking account. **Casey made the motion and it was seconded to approve banking resolution 2025-10-1-2b to move up to \$250,000 to CD's using the same 4 account signers. Motion passed unanimously.** The checking account takes a second signature. We have spent some money, but the fishermen's money is still sitting in the account, and this would accrue interest.

Kathy went over briefly the Reimbursement #18 covering 2020 -2025 for the expenses. While this looks like a large amount, this is only for direct reimbursements (no labor) spent over the 5 years. The two large yearly costs are fishermen elections and Directors and Officers liability insurance. This year's cost for D&O insurance was \$1641.00. Fishermen's elections when both setnet and troll seats make those years more expensive. Debra would like to streamline the process, so we aren't doing reimbursements. Possibly an Alaska Airline account, that way could accrue miles if any trip needs to take place.

Austin spoke as a public member during comment period, agrees with Enoch about raising any taxes, would like to see something happen but if not and YRAA is disbanded for the money to go back to the permit holders.

Non-fisherman seat if they are not interested, we should try to fill those seats. Herb & Curt & Nick are no longer interested. Casey will follow up with Travis if he is interested in continuing and will follow up with Adam Johnson. Larry signed off at 7:40 pm, happy with the progress, and thanked those who showed up. During Covid that everything went wrong did go wrong and hard to get going again.

Setting next meeting date – Nov 6<sup>th</sup> was suggested. Earlier in November before Thanksgiving. Evening hours are better for most. Would like to have the time needed to get information from Dept. Wednesdays don't work well for some. Look at the information financial and history even if you don't have the incubation or restoration information available.

You are not going to get a definitive yes or no answer from the Dept, we need to do the research, figure out the permitting process for the route you are going. An outstanding issue is to finish revamping the website. So, all documents are available to the board and public. Several board members commented that they would like to leave this better than it is now. Since, the hatchery didn't work. This is the only table where natural resources are discussed.

Move to adjourn at 7:49 pm.

YRAA Board of Directors approved the minutes at their annual meeting May 16, 2026

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kathryn LA", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Secretary 5/18/26

**AGENDA (REVISED)**  
**Kwaan Plaza Conference Room or**  
**VIRTUAL Meetings (via zoom)**  
**Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association**

**OCTOBER 1, 2025 5:00pm AST**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

SEAT NEW BOARD MEMBERS (Roll Call VOTE By current members only)

Recommendations from Sept 27<sup>th</sup> meeting are:

Regional/Village Shareholder Representative (Term 2028): Debra Lekanoff

Public at large (Term 2028): James Ross

Sport Fish Representative (Term 2026 or extend to 2029): Kraig Holdren

Processor Representative (Term 2027): ??

Subsistence Seat (Term 2026 or extend to 2029): ??

MOTION TO AMEND & APPROVE AGENDA, approve meeting notes 9/27/25

ELECT OFFICERS (Pres, V-Pres, & Treasurer, RPT representative – Revisit Sec seat later in meeting)

OVERVIEW – Kathy

SURVEY RESULTS - Kathy

FINANCIALS (including some possible banking resolutions) - Kathy

MOVING FORWARD – Kathy

Options for staff, direction for program, financial contributions from sport sector,

PUBLIC COMMENT

ITEMS TO REVISIT – Kathy - Election for Secretary & Bank Resolutions

ELECTIONS – FISHERMAN SEATS (2 set net seats) (City/Chamber seat)

NEXT MEETING – Beginning November? Continuation of staff, & program direction

**BE SURE TO CHECK AND CORRECT OR FILL OUT CONTACT INFORMATION**