

Whittier Advisory Committee
March 12th, 2026
Over Zoom

- I. Call to Order: 7:01pm by AC Chair David Pinguoch
- II. Roll Call

Members Present:

Name	Present	Excused/Unexcused
David Pinguoch	P	
Brett Wilbanks	P	
James Norris	P	
Brett Roth	P (came in later)	
Jody Mason		Excused
Gordon Scott	P	
Brad von Wichman	P (left early)	
Bruce Bowman	P	
Jon van Hying		Absent

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 5

List of User Groups Present:

- III. Fish and Game Staff Present: Martin Schuster, Charlotte Westing, Leila Williams
- IV. Guests Present: Matt Kopec, Joe Loboy
- V. Approval of Agenda:
 - a. Amendment to put house bill 93 first due to Martin having another meeting to attend
 - b. Then return to rest of agenda as originally planned
- VI. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- VII. Reports
 - a. Chair's report

b. ADF&G

c. Others

VIII. Public Comment

IX. Old Business

X. New Business

a. Elections for 3 expiring seats and 2 alternates:

- i. Jody Mason
- ii. Gordon Scott
- iii. Jon van Hying
- iv. Alternate: Vacant
- v. Alternate: Vacant

1. Results: Jody Mason and Gordon Scott were unanimously re-elected. Jon van Hying will not run again. Matt Kopec was voted in unanimously to vacant seat. No remaining candidates remained for either alternate seats.

b. Vote on Proposal 81: Antlerless Moose Reauthorization for Unit 6C

- i. Will be submitted to the Board of Game Southcentral Region meeting in Kodiak as a record copy
- ii. David Pinquoch: Explained ACs are required to address antlerless moose hunts; authorization doesn't mandate the hunt but allows biologists the option
- iii. Charlotte Westing: Clarified the hunt has never been used since established in 2000; administered by U.S. Forest Service; provides management flexibility if harvestable surplus changes. Reported moose population is very robust with lots of calves; predators don't last long in West Delta; no concerns about population health.
- iv. Brett Wilbanks moved to support Proposal 81 with Bruce Bowman seconding.
- v. Proposal 81 passed unanimously. Provides department with maximum management flexibility as a tool.

c. Discussion on House Bill 203:

- i. "An Act relating to the use of certain trawl or dredge fishing gear in state water; and providing for an effective date."
- ii. Please see the added pages to the end of this agenda
- iii. Discussion:

1. Martin Schuster: Presented comprehensive overview of bill language, which would prohibit trawl gear making substantial bottom contact in state waters and commission a department study due in 2027. Explained three types of trawl fisheries in Alaska: federal waters (beyond 3 miles), parallel fisheries (federal seasons in state waters), and state-managed fisheries (GHLs). Noted Prince William Sound has three state-managed trawl fisheries affected: pollock, scallops, and shrimp. Reported pollock

fishery has bycatch (rockfish, king salmon) but is closely managed; 10-15% of rockfish GHJ comes from pollock trawl, rest from longline fishing. Described ongoing efforts including gear inventory compilation, excluder device studies, and electronic monitoring development. Emphasized comprehensive study would require significant resources and funding from department.

2. David Pinquoch: Asked about definition of “substantial bottom contact.” Martin confirmed its ambiguous and would be up to department to define.
 3. Brett Wilbanks: Suggested pelagic gear should verify non-bottom contact before being allowed in state waters.
 4. Martin Schuster: Explained pelagic gear is designed not to contact bottom but acknowledged western research shows some bottom contact occurs.
 5. Brett Wilbanks: Proposed letter could suggest burden of proof be on fishery operators to show gear isn’t damaging, rather than state proving damage.
 6. Bruce Bowman: Supposed treating state waters as sanctuary/respice area; noted this could incentivize development of monitoring technology
 7. Martin Schuster: Pointed out shrimp trawl fisheries do contact bottom; noted Board of Fish will deliberate similar proposals next week including salmon excluder and bottom contact sensor mandates.
 8. Brett Roth: Asked about rockfish bycatch types and what it indicates about net position.
 9. Gordon Scott: Expressed concern about feasibility of mandated study timeline and scope within HB203
 10. Martin Schuster: Stated that the department would have to comply with whatever the legislators end up passing in this bill, regardless of feasibility or cost
 11. Bruce Bowman: Argued importance of issue justifies cost despite budget concerns
 12. David Pinquoch: Supported bill despite it not being well-crafted; stated status quo is not an option. Suggested researching why Southeast stopped dragging for shrimp
 13. Brett Willbanks clarified that they still use beam trawl method, not otter door method
 14. Committee voted unanimously to direct Brett Wilbanks to craft a letter regarding House Bill 203
 15. Letter will be returned to AC for final vote at future meeting
 16. Letter should address habitat protection concerns, suggest burden of proof on operators, and reference successful beam trawl alternatives
- d. Discussion on House Bill 93:

- i. “An Act changing the residency requirements for hunting, trapping, and sport fishing privileges; and providing for an effective date.”
- ii. Please see the added pages to the end of this agenda
- iii. Discussion:
 - 1. David Pinquoch: Expressed current different – hunting license requires 12 consecutive months presence; PFD allows two 6-month periods to count towards 12 months. Shared examples of people getting caught unintentionally breaking residency rules.
 - 2. Charlotte Westing: Stated bill seeks to tighten loopholes for resident hunters with annual licenses.
 - 3. Bruce Bowman: Requested this topic be added; emphasized need for proof of residency beyond just signing affidavit
 - 4. Brett Wilbanks: Found statute allows absences with various exemptions including 180 days after establishing 6 consecutive months residency
 - 5. Brett Roth: Raised concern about legitimate residents like maritime workers or pilots whose jobs require extended absences
 - 6. Bruce Bowman: Clarified job-related absences outside state are excused absences under PFD rules
 - 7. Brett Wilbanks: Found statute section allowing individuals to petition department showing 30 cumulative days presence over 5 years plus other residency factors
 - 8. Bruce Bowman: Argued bill addresses people abusing system who don’t actually live in Alaska and claim residency elsewhere
 - 9. Gordon Scott: Supported anything that clarifies residency requirements
 - 10. David Pinquoch: Supported consistency even if slightly more lax, to prevent people from unintentionally breaking law
 - 11. Gordon Scott moved for Bruce Bowman to compose letter for review and vote, with Brett Wilbanks seconding and motion passing unanimously
 - 12. Bruce Bowman will draft letter supporting House Bill 93
- e. Discussion on Federal Wildlife Regulation WP26-15:
 - i. Federal public lands on Hawkins Island and Hinchinbrook Island in unit 6D are closed to deer hunting except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.
 - ii. Discussion:
 - 1. Leila Williams: Explained AC can comment on federal regulations with additional weight as state-recognized body
 - 2. Charlotte Westing: Explained Regional Advisory Council passed proposal with split vote; now being considered by Federal Subsistence Board in April. Native Village of Eyak claims outside hunters impair subsistence users’ ability to get deer. Clarified federally qualified hunters from anywhere in Alaska could still hunt, but not state residents from Valdez or Whittier. Stated department’s position is no biological justification;

deer taken by non-local users is insignificant. Suggested difficulty getting deer is due to harsh 2021 winter, not user conflicts. Both department and federal reviewer opposed proposal, but Regional Advisory Council passed it.

3. Bruce Bowman: Stated he's federally qualified user but opposes proposal
4. David Pinquoch: Asked about subsistence user harvest trends relative to biomass
5. Charlotte Westing: Explained deer pellet transects and success rates show parallel trends; non-resident use growing steadily. Described issue as user conflict driven by behavior of few commercial operators, not biological problem. Noted most significant deer harvest comes from Unit 6 residents, especially in big winters.
6. Bruce Bowman: Asked about personal use designation options – Charlotte explained state doesn't have that framework for wildlife like it does for fisheries
7. Charlotte Westing: Explained state constitution says resources belong to everyone regardless of where they live; only Tier 2 status creates local priority. Noted proposal only applies to federal land, not below mean high water or private land. Stated tensions stem from couple commercial operators; ideal solution would be gentleman's agreement on areas. Warned if closure goes into effect without biological basis, there would be no metric to ever reopen it.
8. Bruce Bowman: Agreed it's a "one-way street" with no coming back
9. Leila Williams: Noted Board of Game proposal 76 to reduce non-resident bag limit to 1 deer will show state's direction
10. Charlotte Westing: Explained Proposal 76 wouldn't be biologically impactful; most non-residents kill zero or one deer. Average harvest is 1.5 deer for Unit 6 residents. 1 deer for non-local Alaskans, 0.5 deer for non-residents
11. Matt Kopec: Suggested issue may be new transporter with heavy marketing creating perception of impact
12. Charlotte Westing: Confirmed past transporter use was higher but less impactful due to less marketing; people upset by idea of impact even if not directly affected
13. David Pinquoch: Noted from 35 years of transport experience, these conflicts comes and go; recommended half of non-resident hunters still get two tags despite price increase to \$300
14. Bruce moved to opposed WP26-15 with Gordon Scott seconding for discussion purposes. The motion passed unanimously to oppose the regulation.
15. Bruce volunteered to testify at Federal Subsistence Board meeting April 20-24 in Anchorage

- a. April 20-24, 2026 at 9am, Egan Center, Anchorage
 - b. Zoom Conference ID: 865 934 846
 - c. Call-in Number: (833) 436-1163
 - d. Microsoft Teams Link: [Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)
16. Official AC comment will be prepared opposing the closure

XI. Set next meeting date

- a. David Pinguoch: Asked Leila about status of House Bills 93 and 203
- b. Leila Williams: House Bill 93 passed House, referred to Senate, currently in Judiciary since February 2. House Bill 203 brought up April 22 last year, got two new co-sponsors March 4-5 this year, sitting in House Fisheries Committee. No Senate bill number attached to HB93 yet.
- c. David Pinguoch: Suggested not scheduling meeting until letters ready and need determined; can have short meeting to approve if needed. Noted this late in session, bills likely won't be addressed much.
- d. Leila Williams: Requested that Matt Kopec email her to get on contact list for future meetings and to receive proposal books.

XII. Other

XIII. Adjourn

XIV. Adjournment:

Minutes Recorded By: Board Support, with help from Zoom AI Transcripts
Minutes Approved By: David Pinguoch
Date: 03/22/2026

HOUSE BILL NO. 203

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES MCCABE, Foster, Tomaszewski

Introduced: 4/22/25

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

A BILL**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to the use of certain trawl or dredge fishing gear in state water; and
2 providing for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** AS 16.10 is amended by adding a new section to read:

5 **Sec. 16.10.135. Use of trawl or dredge fishing gear.** A person may not use,
6 employ, or operate any trawl or dredge fishing gear that makes substantial bottom
7 contact with the seafloor while in use, as determined by the department, in the water of
8 the state.

9 * **Sec. 2.** The uncoded law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
10 read:

11 STUDY AND REPORT ON THE EFFECTS OF BOTTOM TRAWLING AND ON
12 THE CONDITION OF THE SEAFLOOR. The Department of Fish and Game shall conduct a
13 comprehensive study of the health of seafloor ecosystems and fish habitat in state water. The

14 department shall submit a report on the results of the department's study under this section to

1 the senate secretary and the chief clerk of the house of representatives on or before January 1,
2 2027, and notify the legislature that the report is available. The report must include

3 (1) information as to how the state's fishery resource and seafloor marine
4 ecosystems have been, and may continue to be, affected by the use of trawl or dredge fishing
5 gear that makes substantial bottom contact with the seafloor while in use;

6 (2) to the extent available, the quantities of fishery resources taken as bycatch
7 by fishers using trawl or dredge fishing gear that makes substantial bottom contact with the
8 seafloor while in use, including the number of fish of each species, taken over the last 10
9 years; and

10 (3) recommendations as to whether the use of trawl or dredge fishing gear that
11 makes substantial bottom contact with the seafloor while in use should be prohibited or
12 otherwise limited for

13 (A) the maximum benefit of the state's people; and

14 (B) the sustained yield of the state's fishery resource.

15 * **Sec. 3.** Section 1 of this Act takes effect January 1, 2028.

16 * **Sec. 4.** Except as provided in sec. 3 of this Act, this Act takes effect immediately under
17 AS 01.10.070(c).

HOUSE BILL NO. 93

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES HIMSCHOOT, Hannan

Introduced: 2/10/25

Referred: House Special Committee on Fisheries, Resources

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act changing the residency requirements for hunting, trapping, and sport fishing
2 privileges; and providing for an effective date."

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 * **Section 1.** AS 16.05.400 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

5 (d) A person issued a permanent identification card under (b) of this section
6 may sport fish, hunt, or trap under the identification card only if the person continues
7 to meet the residency requirements of AS 16.05.415.

8 * **Sec. 2.** AS 16.05.415(a) is amended to read:

9 (a) In AS 16.05.330 - 16.05.430, a person, except as provided in (c) - (f) of
10 this section, is a resident if the person

11 (1) is physically present in the state with the intent to remain in the
12 state indefinitely and to make a home in the state;

13 (2) has maintained the person's domicile in the state for the 12
14 consecutive months immediately preceding the application for a license;

1 (3) **has been physically present in the state at all times during**
the

2 **12 consecutive months under (2) of this subsection or, if absent, was absent**
only

3 **as allowed in AS 43.23.008;**

4 (4) is not claiming residency in another state, territory, or country;
and

5 (5) [(4)] is not obtaining benefits under a claim of residency in
another

6 state, territory, or country.

7 * **Sec. 3.** AS 16.05.415(e) is amended to read:

8 (e) A person who is an alien is a resident for the purposes of AS
16.05.330 -

9 16.05.430 if the person

10 (1) is physically present in the state with the intent to remain
in the

11 state indefinitely and to make a home in the state;

12 (2) has maintained the person's domicile in the state for
the 12

13 consecutive months immediately preceding the application for a license;

14 (3) **has been physically present in the state at all times during**
the

15 **12 consecutive months under (2) of this subsection or, if absent, was absent**
only

16 **as allowed in AS 43.23.008;**

17 (4) is not claiming residency in another state, territory, or country;
and

18 (5) [(4)] is not obtaining benefits under a claim of residency in
another

19 state, territory, or country.

20 * **Sec. 4.** AS 16.05.415 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

21 (j) The commissioner shall adopt regulations under AS 44.62
(Administrative

22 Procedure Act) for determining the eligibility of an individual for licensure
as a
23 resident under this section. The commissioner may require an individual to
provide
24 proof of eligibility, and the commissioner may use other information available
from
25 other state departments or agencies to determine the eligibility of an
individual. The
26 commissioner shall consider all relevant circumstances in determining the
eligibility
27 of an individual.
28 * **Sec. 5.** This Act takes effect January 1, 2027.

Native Village of Eyak
 110 Nicholoff Way
 P.O. Box 1388
 Cordova, Alaska 99574-1388
 P (907) 424-7738 * F (907) 424-7739
 www.eyak-nsn.gov



10,000 years in our Traditional Homeland, Prince William Sound, the Copper River Delta, and the Gulf of Alaska

Proponent:

The Native Village of Eyak
 110 Nicholoff Way, Cordova, AK 99574-1388

Issue: The subsistence needs of federally qualified users from the Cordova community are unmet for Sitka Blacktail Deer.

Existing Federal Regulations:

Unit 6 – Deer
 All rural residents
 5 deer; however, antlerless deer may be taken only
 from Oct 1 – Jan 31 Only 1 of the 5 deer harvest limit
 may be taken between Jan 1 – 31
 Aug. 1st – Jan. 31

Proposed Federal Regulations:

Unit 6 – Deer
 All rural residents
 5 deer; however, antlerless deer may be taken only
 from Oct 1 – Jan 31 Only 1 of the 5 deer harvest limit
 may be taken between Jan 1 – 31
 Aug. 1st – Jan. 31

Federal public lands on Hawkins Island and Hinchinbrook Island in unit 6D are closed to deer hunting except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Justification: The unmet subsistence needs of federally qualified subsistence users result from increased harvest pressure on the eastern side of Prince William Sound from non-qualified users expanding their area of hunting in search of deer, combined with a consistent downward trend in documented deer density on Hawkins Island and Hinchinbrook Island in unit 6D.