

Meeting Minutes

Susitna Valley Advisory Committee
April 14 2026
Talkeetna Library, Talkeetna, AK (5:00 pm)

- I. Call to Order: 5:00 pm
- II. Roll Call (Need 4 members for a quorum)
Bryan Kirby, Steve Harrison, Robert Gerlach, Eli Hoffman, Tim Buechle, Mark Burcar, Todd Kingery, Dave Fish
Members Present:
Bryan Kirby, Robert Gerlach, Eli Hoffman, Tim Buechle, Mark Burcar, Todd Kingery
Members Absent (Excused):
Steve Harrison
Members Absent (Unexcused):
Dave Fish
- III. Fish and Game Staff Present:
 - a. Via Zoom Lucas Stumpf, Mike Wood
- IV. Guests Present:
 - a. None
- V. Approval of Agenda
Robert motioned / Mark 2nd
- VI. Public Comment
None
- VII. New Business
 - a. Board of Fisheries-Generated Proposals 189 and 192
 - i. 189 6-0 support
 - 1. See attached document
 - ii. 192 0-5-1 opposed
 - 1. See attached document
 - b. Other Fish & Game Business as Needed
 - i. None
- VIII. Other
- IX. Adjourn 5:45 pm
 - a. Tim Motion / Mark 2nd

Susitna AC Voted 6-0 in Support

Proposal 189

Dear Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Susitna Fish and Game Advisory Committee, I am writing to express our support for Board-Generated Proposal 189; however we have several concerns regarding the proposal's language and how it may affect the Board's process.

The Susitna Advisory Committee recognizes that the intent behind Proposal 189 is positive, particularly in its effort to acknowledge and incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the Board of Fisheries process. However, the committee has significant concerns regarding the clarity and breadth of the proposed definition and its potential impacts on the Board's existing processes.

As currently written, the definition of "Traditional Knowledge" is very broad and somewhat vague. While it attempts to capture the cultural and generational aspects of knowledge systems, the lack of clear parameters creates the potential for inconsistent interpretation and application. The committee is concerned that this level of vagueness could lead to unintended outcomes, including challenges in determining what qualifies as Traditional Knowledge within the context of Board deliberations.

Additionally, the proposal allows for up to ten minutes per individual to present Traditional Knowledge, potentially through multiple formats. Given the already extensive public testimony process and the number of participants typically involved in Board meetings, this change could significantly extend meeting times and impact the Board's ability to efficiently work through proposals. There is concern that this may inadvertently create a burden on the process rather than enhance it.

The committee also questions whether this proposal is necessary given the current structure already in place. The Board has long incorporated local and experiential knowledge through advisory committees, public testimony, and committee processes. Considering the wide geographic distribution and diversity of advisory committees across the state, these existing mechanisms already provide meaningful opportunities for local input.

While the committee supports the intent of recognizing diverse knowledge systems, we believe Proposal 189, as written, requires further refinement to ensure clarity, consistency, and practicality within the Board's decision making framework.

Susitna AC Voted 0-5-1 in Opposition

Susitna AC

Dear Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Susitna Fish and Game Advisory Committee, I am writing to express our opposition to Board-Generated Proposal 192 and the request for a special meeting to consider this proposal.

Proposal 192 closely mirrors the substance and intent of ACR 8, which was approved for consideration at the most recent Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting and subsequently introduced as Proposal 313. After full consideration and public process, Proposal 313 failed on a 3–3 vote, with one board member recused.

Given that this issue was very recently debated and did not pass, we believe bringing forward a substantially similar proposal through a special meeting circumvents the established regulatory process and the outcome of that vote. The Board's standard cycle exists to ensure transparency, consistency, and meaningful public participation. Reintroducing the same issue outside of that process undermines those principles.

We are also concerned with the structure of the proposed special meeting, specifically the lack of opportunity for oral public testimony. Limiting public input to written comments significantly reduces meaningful engagement and prevents stakeholders from fully participating in the process. Oral testimony has long been a critical component of Board deliberations, allowing for clarification, responsiveness, and a more complete understanding of the impacts of proposed actions. Excluding this opportunity further diminishes transparency and public trust.

The Susitna Advisory Committee does not believe that the criteria established for the development of board-generated proposals have been met in this instance. As outlined in the Board's adopted guidance (2013-270-FB), these criteria include consideration of whether the issue is in the public's best interest, whether there is a demonstrated urgency, whether existing regulatory processes are insufficient, and whether there is adequate opportunity for public comment.

Based on these standards, we find no clear evidence of urgency, nor do we believe that existing processes have been insufficient to address this matter particularly given that a substantially similar issue was recently considered and ultimately failed. Additionally, the use of a special meeting format, with its limitations on public participation, raises further concerns about whether there has been adequate opportunity for meaningful public input.

Additionally, one of the unaddressed issues within Proposal 192 that warrants consideration is its specific reference to "shore fishery lease sites." Not all participants in the set gillnet commercial fishery operate under shore fishery lease structures, and this distinction is significant. As written, the proposal does not fully encompass or accurately represent the broader fishery it seeks to regulate, which raises concerns about both its scope and its potential application.

Susitna AC Voted 0-5-1 in Opposition

We are further concerned that Proposal 192 does not clearly address how it would apply during periods of low king salmon abundance. Under current management practices, when projected king salmon escapement falls below established thresholds, commercial beach fishing is not allowed. As written, the proposal does not clarify whether fishing would be permitted under similarly low projections. The absence of this clarity raises additional concerns regarding both the intent of the proposal and its potential impacts.

Additionally, convening a special meeting for a proposal that has already been considered and failed places an unnecessary burden on stakeholders, many of whom must dedicate significant time and resources to participate in these proceedings.

The Susitna Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Board to uphold the integrity of its established process and respect the recent decision on this matter. We respectfully request that Proposal 192 not be advanced through a special meeting.

Recorded by: Brian Kirby
Approved by: Steve Harrison
Date: 04/29/2026