

Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force



Legislative Members

Senator Ben Stevens, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice-Chair
Senator Kim Elton
Senator Bert Stedman
Representative Bill Williams
Representative Carl Morgan
Representative Dan Ogg, Alternate
Representative Paul Seaton, Alternate

Public Members

Sam Cotten
Duncan Fields
Don Giles
John Lowrance
Robin Samuelsen
Stephanie Madsen
Chris Moss

Salmon Task Force recommends legislation

(Juneau) The Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force met Sunday and Monday and recommended 13 measures for introduction by members of the Legislature.

Among the measures is a bill to reduce the number of board members of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) and to revise the salmon marketing tax, the processor assessment and the seafood marketing tax.

Other measures would require labeling to identify genetically modified fish or fish products, and create regional seafood marketing associations.

In contrast to last year's broad, all-encompassing approach, Salmon Task Force Chairman Sen. Ben Stevens (R-Anchorage) said legislation recommended this year focuses more narrowly on specific issues.

In particular he pointed to a bill proposed by the task force finance subcommittee that would designate 12 seafood development regions and allow for the establishment of regional development associations that could vote to self-assess a seafood development tax to promote and market regional seafood products.

"It is a component of the state marketing program not being met by ASMI because ASMI is limited to generic marketing for Alaska seafood," Sen. Ben Stevens said. "This is a new, effective marketing tool for the expansion of Alaska's seafood niche marketing."

"We're trying to be more specific to get the best bang for the buck fully realizing the Legislature has other priority legislation to consider," said task force member Robin Samuelsen, a fisherman from Bristol Bay. "The task force has done a good job of identifying the various problems and finding common ground to rectify them. It's a give and take process, and I'd like to especially thank the public for providing their input and guidance."

Sen. Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) applauded proposed legislation to lower the fisheries business tax rate for direct marketing fishing vessels.

"This economic incentive levels the playing field a little bit," Stedman said. "It improves the competitive advantage for value-added processing on vessels 65 feet and less."

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The task force created a subcommittee to examine fishing cooperative policy issues and to recommend a plan for transitioning the task force into a new format when it dissolves at the end of this legislative session. The subcommittee will report back to the full task force Sunday, March 28, 2004.

The task force approved 10 bills and three resolutions forwarded by subcommittees charged with examining Marketing/Quality, Governance, Finance, Hatcheries and Production.

The recommended legislation is the result of numerous meetings held over the summer and fall with industry representatives, harvesters, processors and government agencies.

The Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force was created in 2002 to address multiple challenges of the depressed commercial salmon fishing industry. Its annual report is due January 31.

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