

The attached letter regarding the Alaska Board of Fisheries was sent individually to each Alaska legislator, Governor Bill Walker, and ADFG Commissioner Sam Cotten.



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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Honorable Bill Walker, Governor
State of Alaska
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Walker,

If you've ever attended an Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) board meeting there is a phrase that you will often hear board members say: "New information, please." United Fishermen of Alaska would like to provide you with new information regarding appointments and confirmation to the BOF.

For weeks now, sport fishing organizations around the state have been coming out against your appointment of Duncan Fields, asking legislators to not confirm him. Much of the information provided by one organization is largely false and being regurgitated by other sport fishing associations and sport fishers, many which are from out of state.

This is not the first time this regional sport organization has tried to bring down the state BOF appointees by creating slanderous propaganda and spinning the truth about BOF makeup. Robert Ruffner's appointment in 2015 was met with harsh criticism by sport groups leading to him not getting confirmed. After his failed confirmation, many legislators admitted they were misled by the sport fishing association and said they hoped it wouldn't happen again. History is repeating itself with the appointment of Fields.

United Fishermen of Alaska has been a target of this sport fishing organization stating that we stack the board with commercial fishermen. This is not true. Here is some new and factual information:

1. The Board of Fisheries does not have designated seats by region or by user group.

Claims made that the empty seat is an "Anchorage" seat is incorrect. There are many towns across Alaska, including Alaska's own capital city, which does not currently hold a seat.

2. The board is not stacked with commercial fishermen. There are currently two CFEC commercial permit holders on the Board of Fisheries. One of these permit holders has not fished his permits since 2016 and now runs a charter and sport fishing operation.

3. There are no designated user groups seats for sport, commercial or subsistence.

Board members should not be chosen because they will support one industry over the other.

They should be chosen because they bring expertise in fisheries to the table and have proven track record in diplomacy.

4. Currently, all but one member of the Board of Fisheries participate in sport fisheries throughout the state. Only one actively participates in commercial fisheries.

To ensure everyone is well informed as to the actual state statute regarding BOF appointments, section (a) is provided below.

Sec. 16.05.221 . Boards of fisheries and game.

(a) For purposes of the conservation and development of the fishery resources of the state, there is created the Board of Fisheries composed of seven members appointed by the governor, subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the legislature in joint session. The governor shall appoint each member on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge, and ability in the field of action of the board, and with a view to providing diversity of interest and points of view in the membership. **The appointed members shall be residents of the state and shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation or geographical location of residence.** The commissioner is not a member of the Board of Fisheries, but shall be ex officio secretary.

A good board member should not be chosen because they represent a certain region or user group. A good board member is someone who is willing to learn and listen and make unbiased decisions based on scientific data and information provided during meetings by Fish and Game Staff, members of the public and ADF&G Advisory Committees.

If one were to look at past voting records, it's easy to quickly determine the current board of seven has six members who vote fairly to support all user groups, with only one who consistently votes sport fishing interests and against commercial fishing.

The sport industry wants more board members that they can control. UFA wants qualified members that come to the table without pre-conceived notions and biases.

By looking at Duncan Fields resume, it is apparent he is from a commercial fishing background, it is also apparent he is highly qualified. UFA endorsed him not only because he brings with him a great knowledge of commercial fishing, but because we also know Duncan to be intelligent, honest, and most importantly — fair.

UFA wants open-minded and approachable board members who are willing to listen to all user groups. We do not want biased members, even if the bias is in our favor.

We believe Duncan would be a great asset to the BOF process as both a commercial fisherman and sport fisherman. We also believe we need to work together as Alaskans. A good BOF member is one who protects Alaska's fish resources for future generations, not just the immediate need of an interest group We all rely on our fishery resources and want what's best not just for ourselves and our own group, but for all Alaskans.

Respectfully yours,



Jerry McCune
President



Frances H. Leach
Executive Director