

# **2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **SMALL BOATS, BIG IDEAS**



 **Alaska Longline**  
FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION



# Introduction

As we wrapped up the ALFA annual report this winter, the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the Nation. The pandemic has changed almost everything, shaking the health, infrastructure and food systems of our country. The fishing industry has been hit particularly hard by the closure of restaurants and the U.S. tariff wars with Asia. Fish prices have dropped by 50-60 percent and many processors did not open this spring to buy fish. In Alaska, concerns about fishermen and processing workers inadvertently transporting COVID-19 into remote rural communities has added new tensions—and restrictions—to the 2020 fishing season. ALFA has been working hard to keep fishermen informed of federal and state relief programs and the rapidly evolving state operational mandates through a weekly updated COVID-19 page on the ALFA website (<http://www.alfafish.org/alfacovid19>). ALFA is also working to ensure future stimulus packages support America's working waterfronts to help our fishing families recover and emerge stronger than ever.

Thanks to the support of ALFA members, partners, donors and foundation support we able to quickly adapt to the challenges and opportunities that COVID-19 threw at us this year, including the chance to bring nutritious seafood to individuals and families in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Since March 2020, the parent organizations of Alaskans Own - [Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association](#) (ALFA) and [Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust](#) (ASFT) - have provided over 486,068 meals of Alaska seafood, free of charge, to thousands of individuals/families, including children's programs, food pantries, women's shelters and much more. In addition, we, with the help of many partners, have donated over 400,000 lbs of Alaska seafood to rural communities as well as military members and tribal organizations throughout Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Read more about our Seafood Donation Program [here](#). As we all know, it takes a community, and when it comes to pitching in, Sitka is one of the best.

# The Seas Ahead

A letter from Linda Behnken, Executive Director

Ever noticed how, when you look behind a boat, the path is clear, but ahead the possibilities are limitless? No wonder leaving town can be the hardest part of a fishing trip. There are always so many decisions to make and every day new challenges and possibilities.

Life at the helm of ALFA has always felt that way to me—holding clear knowledge of where we have been and what course to steer, but every year brings new challenges, possibilities and endless decisions. How do we best achieve our mission of sustainable fisheries and thriving fishing communities? How do we keep our oceans healthy in the face of climate change, ocean acidification and habitat loss? And how do we hold space in these fisheries for the independent community-based fishermen who are ALFA's core and the backbone of our communities?

For years we answered those questions with a single-minded focus on state and federal policy. We secured protections for overfished sablefish and rockfish stocks, created the largest no trawl zone in the world off Southeast—and then helped secure a bigger one in the Aleutians—and designed a quota share system with groundbreaking protections for small boats and coastal communities. Despite these major victories, the challenges to small scale fisheries kept rolling at us, and ten years ago ALFA committed to broadening its scope to effect change at a deeper level. With the generous support of the Oak Foundation, ALFA launched a Fishery Conservation Network (page 10) in 2009 that engages fishermen in innovative programs to promote stewardship and the economic viability of small-scale fisheries (e.g., bycatch and bathymetric mapping, fuel efficiency and sperm whale avoidance). We joined forces with like-minded organizations from around the country to amplify our voice in policy forums and launched the first community-supported fishery program in Alaska to build connections between our fishing members and the people who eat our fish. Finally, we launched a young fishermen's initiative to support entry level opportunities to offset the staggering challenges and high costs facing our young community-based fishermen (page 13). Our impact has



been broad and broadly recognized, as evidenced by the award ALFA won in 2019 from the Alaska Conservation Foundation (page 8)

Today the biggest challenge we face is climate change, with Alaska warming twice as fast as the global average and annually smashing records for high air and sea surface temperatures, increasing ocean acidification, and decreasing marine productivity. This threat goes well beyond Alaska, but Alaska's fishermen have the potential to be a significant part of the solution. Our Congressional representatives can no longer ignore the toll climate change is taking on Alaska's environment, communities, and fishing industry, but they need our support to tackle the causes with meaningful legislation. While we work locally to reduce our fleet's carbon footprint, ALFA will also be engaged at the state and local level to promote climate action that buffers impacts to fisheries and reduces carbon emissions. From protecting the carbon-sequestering Tongass National Forest (page 24) to promoting a carbon fee and dividend initiative (page 20), ALFA will be working to address climate change and protect fisheries, fishermen, and fishing communities.

In sum, the ALFA staff and members will continue to respond to the challenges rolling towards us and try to catch the waves of opportunity that carry us toward the goals set by our member fishermen. With your help, we will stay on course to a successful future.

Sincerely,  
Linda Behnken  
Executive Director

# Snapshot: A Year at ALFA

This year ALFA significantly increased our funding stream, expanded outreach to fishermen and the public, and expanded our staff and programs.

With member feedback, ALFA advocated for small-boat fisheries and healthy communities at: 4 international, 10 national, and 17 regional/local forums. ALFA's education and outreach initiatives reached over 43,000 individuals.

## 100+

Volunteers donated their time to help us achieve our goals, run events, and conduct research both at sea and on shore.



More than 200 fishermen participated in ALFA workshops, meetings, social events, and trainings on topics such as bathymetric mapping, business skills, ocean acidification, policy, and other relevant issues.

## \$646,420.65

Grants and contracts leveraged to support ALFA's mission in 2019



ALFA wins the Lowell Thomas, Jr. Award for Outstanding Achievements by a Conservation Organization from Alaska Conservation Foundation.



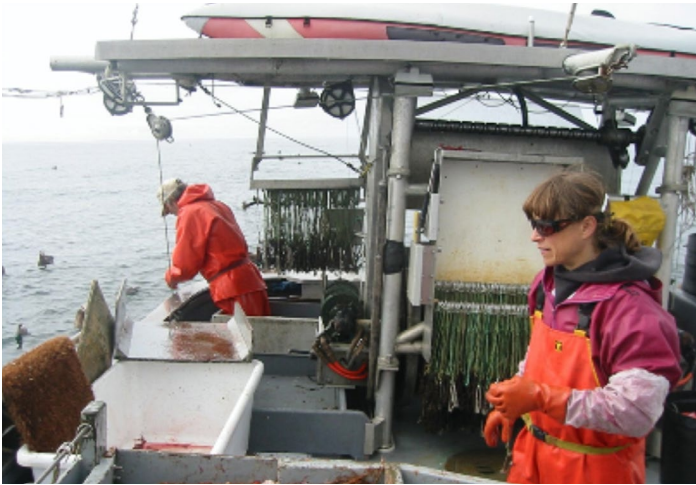
ALFA engaged new and experienced fishermen in the DC policy process, where members advocated for science-based resource management and support for young fishermen.



ALFA's Crew Apprentice Program wrapped up its second year with over 120 applicants and placed 16 crew apprentices on fishing vessels.



PHOTOS FROM THE FLEET



Linda Bhenken fishing on F/V Christi-Rob



Terry Perensovich pulling in halibut



Kelli Leonard on F/V Rocinate  
Photo credit: Nancy Behnken



Alaskans Own spot prawns come from Wendy Alderson and Jason Gjertsen  
Photo credit: Alyssa Russell



Photo credit: Alyssa Russell

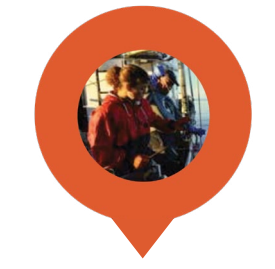


Nick Nekeroof on F/V Magia

ALFA  
Through the Years



**1978** ALFA is launched by fishermen dedicated to protecting fish stocks from foreign fishing and keeping the economic benefits of fishing in Alaska.



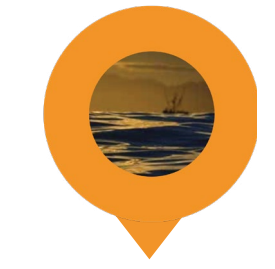
**1978-1985** ALFA successfully advocates for an end to foreign over-fishing of local rockfish and sablefish stocks, and supports an aggressive rebuilding plan.



**1985-1991** When a statewide movement builds to implement a catch share program in the halibut and sablefish fisheries, ALFA advocates for protections to maintain access opportunities for small-boat fishermen.



**1991-1992** Current ALFA Director Linda Behnken is hired and ALFA launches effort to eliminate trawling from Southeast Alaska. Linda is appointed to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Advisory Panel. ALFA Program Director Dan Falvey is appointed to the NPFMC's Advisory Panel.

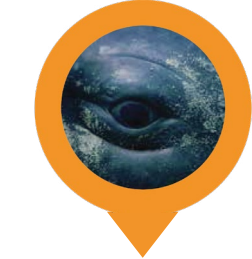


**1991-1997** After several years of advocacy by ALFA, trawling is banned in Southeast Alaska. It's a victory for small boats and for the environment.

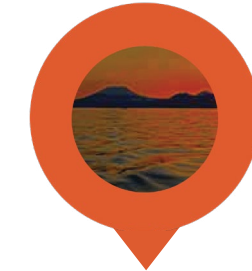




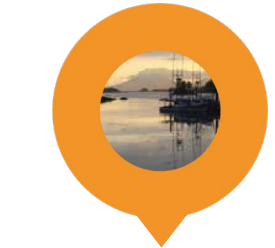
**1993-1996** ALFA helps form the Marine Fish Conservation Network (MFCN) joining other small fishing and conservation groups in a coalition focused on shifting fisheries regulation towards sustainability measures. The MFCN helps secure passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, which fundamentally alters the Magnuson-Stevens Act to prevent overfishing and allow the rebuilding of overfished stocks.



**2003** ALFA fishermen join biologists in forming the Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project (SEASWAP). Whales have learned to eat sablefish off fishing gear, which costs fishermen thousands of dollars and poses a safety risk to both whales and humans. This lays the foundation for ALFA's Fishery Conservation Network, to be founded in 2009.



**2006** ALFA and others successfully advocate for resource and community provisions during the most recent reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which establishes catch limits for many species and creates accountability measures to prevent overfishing.



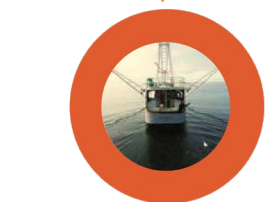
**2009** The Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT) is founded to address the erosion of fishery access from coastal Alaska, and the associated loss of community advocacy for marine conservation. ALFA launches a Fishery Conservation Network and Linda Behnken is named National Fishermen Highliner of the Year. ALFA staff Dan Falvey receives Highliner award two years later.



**2016** Linda Behnken is named 2016 Champion of Change for Sustainable Seafood by the Obama Administration.



**2019** ALFA receives the Lowell Thomas, Jr. Award for Outstanding Achievements by Alaska Conservation Foundation.



**Today** ALFA continues to be a leader in fishery policy and conservation. On the national level, we are working hard with our friends at the Fishing Communities Coalition to pass the Young Fishermen's Development Act. Locally, our Fishery Conservation Network projects and cutting edge bathymetric mapping have helped to grow our membership to include members from various gear groups throughout Alaska.



*Photos from the fleet*

## Outreach & Events

2019 was a big year in terms of ALFA's community outreach for both fisherfolk and non-fisherfolk alike. Once again, ALFA participated at Whale Fest, hosted our popular Alaska Day Open House event, and held educational meetings for members and the public. Read on for highlighted events.

### Sitka Fishermen's Expo

ALFA hosted two Sitka Fishermen's Expos in April 2019 and October 2019 with partners Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust and the Sitka Seafood Festival. Over 100 fishermen attended 5 days of free presentations. Fishermen had the opportunity to attend presentations on business and bookkeeping for fishermen, bathymetric mapping, learn about "hydraulics: tackling common problems that cause lost fishing time," "electrical systems for fishing vessels," and much more.

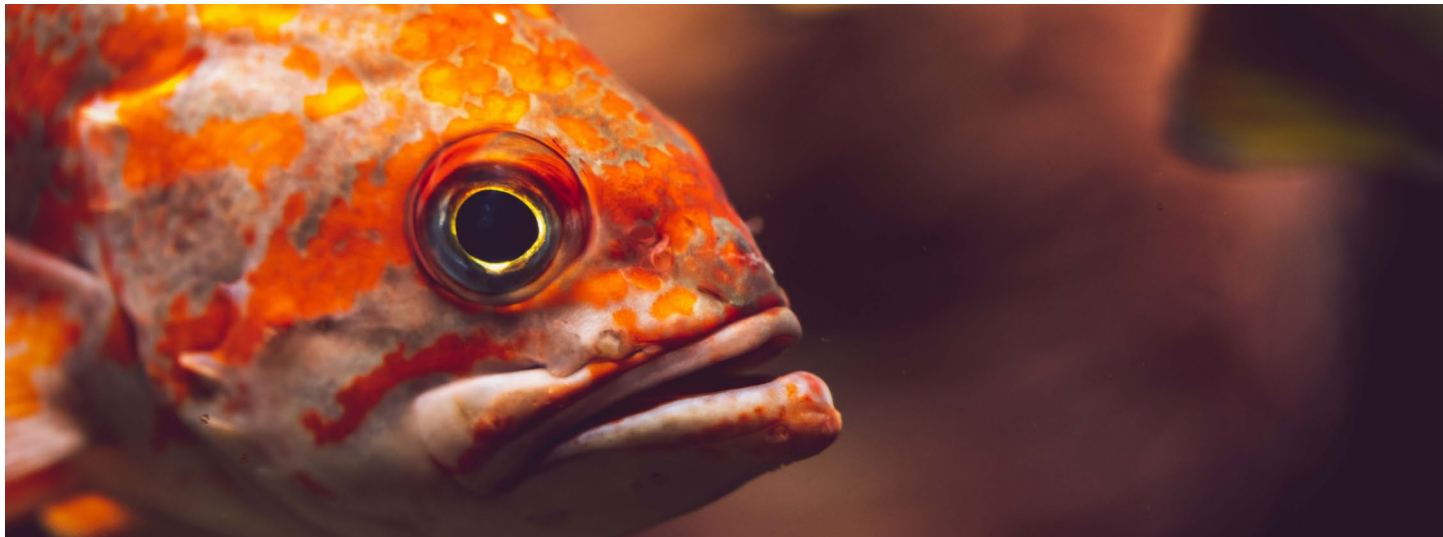
### Nobeltec Timezero

In fall 2019, ALFA and partners hosted a Nobeltec and Furuno training where fishermen learned how to use their Nobeltec software to its full potential. Beginning, intermediate and advanced trainings were held. Nobeltec and Furuno software engineers provided free updates and on-vessel troubleshooting assistance.

**OVER  
100**

Fishermen attended 5 days of free presentations





# Fishery Conservation Network

ALFA’s Fishery Conservation Network (FCN) empowers stewardship innovation through research and collaboration. By encouraging collaboration between fishermen and scientists, the FCN helps solve conservation issues and increase the viability of small-scale fisheries.

## FCN Project: Southeast Alaska Sperm Whale Avoidance Project (SEASWAP)

Small boat fisheries are the social and economic backbone of Alaska’s working waterfronts. In Alaska, these small boat fleets depend on sustained and profitable participation in near-shore fisheries, including the longline halibut and sablefish fisheries. Long-term management and ecosystem changes have resulted in increasing depredation by sperm whales in these fisheries. Depredation is economically costly to fishermen and presents risk of injury to whales.

The NOAA Bycatch Reduction and Engineering Program awarded ALFA funding

to operationalize and automate a sperm whale avoidance network. The network will rely on a whale detection device called a towed array, which uses multiple hydrophones to determine sperm whale presence/absence. The towed array can ‘hear’ whales up to seven miles away and can listen for whales while the vessel is traveling at 5-6 knots.

ALFA worked with the SEASWAP team three years ago to successfully pilot test the device. This grant will allow the team to develop fishermen-friendly whale detection hardware and software and automate sharing this information through a fishermen inReach® satellite texting network.

135
Number of fishermen contributing data in 2019 (compared to 12 collecting data in 2009).

1,150
Longline sets contributing bycatch data

2.3million
Bathymetric data points gathered



When coiled, the towed array fits in a galvanized tub and weighs about 50 pounds. During the 2020 season ALFA boats will tow the array, and share sperm whale location information with members.

The towed array also has potential to help with counting sperm whales in the Gulf of Alaska, or at least helping to secure a baseline index of whale abundance. ALFA has been searching for a tool that documents the steady increase in sperm whale numbers. If the towed array works as intended and ALFA can secure additional funding, we will use the array to gather baseline sperm whale abundance data for the Gulf of Alaska.

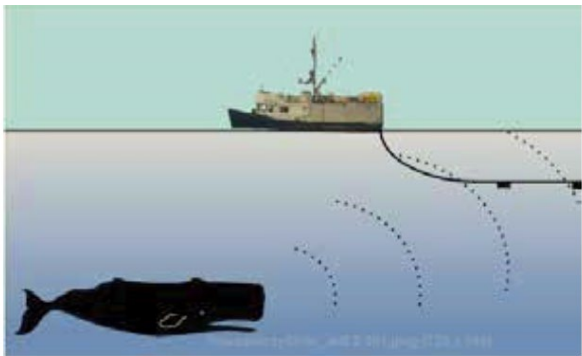


Diagram of a Towed Array hydrophone in use.

*This project received funding under award NA18NMF4720295 from NOAA Fisheries Service, in cooperation with the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA fisheries.*

**FCN Project: Bycatch and Bathymetric Mapping**  
 Rockfish Bycatch Program: Participating fishermen contribute logbook data so that ALFA can identify areas that are “rockfish hot spots”, or locations where fishermen are more likely to encounter bycatch.

**Seafloor/Habitat Mapping Network:** ALFA members contribute bathymetric data that they collect while fishing using Nobeltec® software.

ALFA’s bathymetric mapping project now contains NOAA and Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) multi beam data plus 2.3 million data points contributed by FCN fishermen! Our seafloor maps are the most detailed maps of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska. In fact, NOAA and ADF&G are now borrowing our maps (under a non-disclosure agreement) to improve their survey or stock assessment process, and contributing data back in return as they map new areas.

Now in its eleventh year, the FCN has grown to include 135 fishermen, over 115 different fishing vessels and eight fishermen-led projects.

**FCN Project: Electronic Monitoring**  
 In 2013, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implemented a new system for observer coverage in North Pacific Fisheries. It provides NMFS with authority to randomly deploy observers on vessels participating in fisheries with less than 100% observer coverage. This includes vessels less than 60 feet in length and vessels participating in the halibut fishery which did not previously have at-sea monitoring requirements.

Deployment of observers in this sector is funded through a 1.25% fee on the ex-vessel value of landings. Costs to deploy observers are higher than anticipated, resulting in lower monitoring rates than desired.



ALFA has collaborated with other fixed gear industry organizations, the Council, NMFS, and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) since 2010 to develop and integrate Electronic Monitoring (EM) into the restructured observer program. EM is more operationally compatible with small vessels and will improve the collection of data needed by reducing potential bias and improving cost efficiency.

After several years of research and pre-implementation, in 2016 the Council approved an EM option for small fixed gear vessels in the partial coverage sector of the Observer Program. 2018 marked the fruition of these efforts with EM officially integrated into the North Pacific Observer Program. Data from EM vessels was used for catch accounting and in-season management.

Implementation costs have been (in part) funded by a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to ALFA. ALFA in turn uses this money to offset the high initial costs of purchasing the EM equipment and installation services through a contract with Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. ALFA also uses the money to ensure stakeholders have an effective voice in program design to ensure operational compatibility with the fishing fleet.

With support from NFWF, ALFA has secured more than \$1.3 million in funds to develop the EM program and equip vessels since 2010. ALFA also coordinated stakeholder engagement which totaled more than 1,500 hours at meetings to design the program and more than 1,300 sea days volunteered by vessels to test EM equipment and catch handling methods.



Photo credit: Laurie Mastrella, ALFA fisherman (F/V Teasha) Chatham Strait 2018

Greenhorn: John Neider shows off one of the first king salmon he landed (hook and line) trolling out of Sitka.

**\$70,000**

Amount granted to ALFA's Crew  
Apprentice Program by the National  
Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

**"Town that best promotes fishing futures: Sitka.**

Training young fishermen, marketing local catch, fish  
quality studies, supporting buy-in options for new  
entrants – the Alaska Longline Fishermen's  
Association helps lead Sitka's investment in future  
fishing careers."

*"AK Fishing Picks and Pans, 2017"*  
-Laine Welch, AK Fish Radio

# Young Fishermen's Initiative

Since 2017, ALFA and partner organization Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT) have continued to expand our Young Fishermen's Initiative. The Young Fishermen's Initiative includes several programs, including the Crew Apprentice Program, the Local Fish Fund, and the Sitka Fishermen's EXPO.

Through this suite of programs, we are helping the next generation of commercial fishermen launch and support viable commercial fishing businesses while also providing educational support services to the existing fleet.

## Crew Apprentice Program (CAP)

The CAP addresses a host of challenges to the fishing industry: the decline in young people entering the fisheries, the shortage of experienced crew, and the hesitancy of many young people, especially young women, to sign onto a boat for the first time. ALFA's CAP was catalyzed by skipper Eric Jordan, who started taking young people fishing in what he called an experiential fishing program in 2015 and quickly found he had more applicants than he had fishing time. With Eric's help, ALFA developed curricula for crew apprentices and host skippers. The curricula prepare young people for their first fishing trip and prepares host skippers to

be patient and focused on safety. After two years, the CAP has trained 12 skippers to host apprentices and placed 45 "green" crew on commercial fishing boats. Some apprentices fish for a few trips; others sign on for a full season. Many have returned the following year to build skills on the same or different fishing boats, and one has already invested in her own boat!

The CAP serves to increase connections between fishermen of different ages and experience levels, providing frequent networking and educational opportunities for young fishermen. The CAP also works to increase participation by young fishermen in



## CAP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

**Over 120 Applicants**  
each year

**32 Skippers**  
trained to host deckhands

**22 Skippers**  
hosted apprentices  
and interns

**19 Apprentices  
& 9 Interns**  
gained experience on  
commercial fishing boats

**61 Crewmember Applicants**  
received curriculum and  
on-shore training

**30 Emerging Crewmember Apprentices**  
contributed to fisheries  
management process through  
written or oral testimony

local, state, and national fisheries policy, and has supported travel for a number of CAP graduates to Washington DC to advocate for the Young Fishermen's Development Act and healthy oceans. This engagement helps young fishermen become the next generation of stewards for fishery resources, encouraging best practices both at sea and in the political arena.

### The Young Fishermen's Development Act:

Currently, there is not a single federal program in place dedicated to training, educating, and assisting the next generation of commercial fishermen. ALFA joined forces with the Fishing Communities Coalition, a nationwide fisheries advocacy group to advocate for a national program to support young fishermen.

If passed by Congress, the Young Fishermen's Development Act will help connect and expand on existing regional efforts to support beginning commercial fishermen. The program will provide funding and support for state, tribal, local, or regionally based networks or partnerships providing education and support for fishermen.



Photo credit: Eric Jordan

### Local Fish Fund

Today, young fishermen face staggering entry level costs, high operating costs, and a level of risk that prevents many emerging fishermen from purchasing quota and maintaining a viable business model. ALFA and partner organization Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust founded an additional program to assist fishermen in overcoming these barriers and accessing quota. The Local Fish Fund program also aims to incentivize ocean conservation practices and strengthen fishery leadership in Alaska communities by structuring loan products that will support Alaska residents in purchasing quota and retaining fishery access opportunities.

## LOCAL FISH FUND

**\$1.8 MILLION**  
Total funding LFF has raised to  
support Alaskan Fishermen in  
purchasing quota

LFF has supported emerging  
fishermen in the following  
Alaskan communities:

**SITKA,  
KETCHIKAN,  
CORDOVA,  
HAINES, AND  
HOMER**

For more information  
call 747-3400 or  
email [asft.director@gmail.com](mailto:asft.director@gmail.com)

### Sitka Fishermen's EXPOS:

ALFA and ASFT host Sitka Fishermen's Expos each year that include training and networking sessions for young or beginner fishermen. The workshops cover a wide range of topics including business best practices for fishermen, fisheries policy, safety, marine electronics, policy, bathymetric mapping and more. These workshops are free and open to the public. The next Sitka Fishermen's EXPO will take place in Fall 2020, date TBD.

### A Special Thank You

All of the programs under the Young Fishermen's Initiative have been generously supported by local, state and national groups including the City and Borough of Sitka, the Alaska Community Foundation, The Rasmuson Foundation, The Alaska Conservation Foundation, The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and Catch Together.

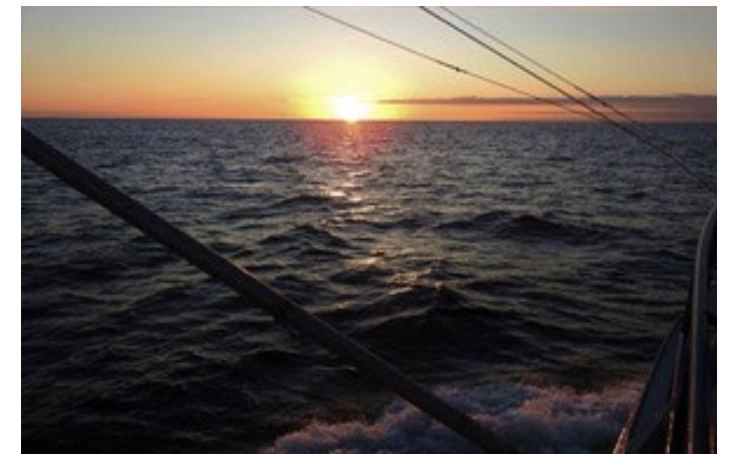


Photo credit: Karen Johnson



Photo credit: ALFA website



# Halibut Management

## Halibut Bycatch

For the past three years, ALFA has been working closely with allies from the Bering Sea and Gulf to reset halibut bycatch caps commensurate with halibut abundance. Over the past decade, halibut abundance has dropped, halibut catch limits for directed commercial and guided sport fishermen have been reduced, but bycatch has at times threatened to completely preempt the directed small boat halibut fisheries of the Bering Sea. The trawl industry has resisted and delayed progress on abundance-based bycatch caps with great success, making the process far more complicated and time consuming. Coalition of concerned halibut fishermen have worked relentlessly to push toward abundance-based management and meaningful bycatch reductions. This will continue to be a major policy focus for ALFA in 2020.

## Halibut Charter Management

Over the past three years ALFA and the Halibut Coalition have worked together to address an increase in unguided halibut sportfishing, particularly in Southeast Alaska Area 2C. Declines in total Southeast Alaska quotas for all fisheries have incentivized sport fishing businesses to offer non-guided boat rentals and “assisted unguided” fishing experiences. The growth of these businesses adversely impacts subsistence, longline and guided charter fisheries.

ALFA, the Halibut Coalition and other stakeholders worked with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in 2017 to collect data and develop measures related to the growth of unguided sportfishing. At the April 2018 meeting, the Council took final action to implement a registration process for Charter

Halibut Permits in order to improve data collection. The Council also made guided charter bag, possession and size limits applicable to any vessel used for both guided and unguided sport fishing.

Two years ago, the halibut charter fleet convinced the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to authorize a Recreational Quota Entity, or RQE, to purchase commercial halibut quota for use in the Areas 2C and 3A charter fisheries. ALFA and the Halibut Coalition advocated against the RQE, recognizing that even compensated reallocation of halibut quota hurts our industry, coastal communities, and the American consumer. Although the Coalition was not successful in stopping the RQE, the Council was convinced to strictly limit the amount of quota the RQE could purchase to the amount that can be leased between the two sectors under the existing Halibut Catch Sharing Plan. The charter sector then went to Congress for authorization to tax either their clients or members of their own industry to raise money to buy commercial quota. ALFA weighed in strong with the Alaska Congressional delegation, insisting that the charter members be taxed, rather than their clients, to fund quota purchases. Thanks to Senator Sullivan and his outstanding fishery staffers, the RQE language that passed the Senate authorizes only self-taxing; i.e., the charter fleet will have to invest in purchasing quota to increase the fishing opportunity available to their clients. While the RQE is not good for the community-based halibut fishery, this mechanism for compensated reallocation will weaken the charter sector’s anticipated demand for uncompensated reallocation when the Catch Sharing Plan is reviewed in 2021.



Photos from the fleet

# Alaskans Own Seafood

Alaskans Own (AO) is Alaska’s first Community Supported Fishery (CSF) program, delivering monthly shares of local wild-caught, high-quality, flash frozen seafood. Our CSF serves Sitka, Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Seattle. We also ship custom orders across the country.

In a February 2019 customer survey taken by 40 randomly-selected Alaskans Own CSF subscribers, over 73% gave their overall experience 5 out of 5 possible stars, which was designated in the survey as “very satisfied.” The survey asks what they liked most about their Alaskans Own CSF experience. The most common answers were “excellent,” “great quality fish,” “the variety of species,” and “supporting local, Alaskan fishermen.”

Alaskans Own not only connects customers with the local fishermen who caught their seafood, it involves them in conservation work because all profits from AO seafood sales support the Fishery Conservation Network.

For many years, ALFA has worked on multiple projects with Ecotrust, Port Orford, Sustainable Seafood, Real Good Fish, Seafood Analytics, and the Oregon Food Innovation Lab to test consumer preferences between fresh, never frozen and flash frozen seafood. In a blind taste test, consumers

chose AO flash frozen coho and Port Orford flash frozen sablefish over “fresh, never frozen” fish of the same species that were procured from high-end Portland markets.

Alaskans Own believes working with flash frozen fish guarantees the highest and most consistent quality of seafood. We also know that frozen seafood is often better for fishermen, consumers, and the planet as a whole.

## 2019 SPECIES OFFERED

Coho & King Trawl caught	Halibut Longline caught	Spot Prawns Pot caught
Rockfish Longline caught	Lingcod Longline caught	Sablefish Longline caught

Less than 1% of the fish caught in Alaska stays in Alaska. We want to change that.



# Frozen Is Fresh

“Many Americans believe that fresh is always better than frozen when it comes to seafood. We have been working to show consumers why choosing frozen can be a better choice for quality and the environment” -Linda Behnken, ALFA Executive Director

## Why frozen?

### Reduce Waste

According to Ecotrust, an organization based in Portland, “Twenty-three percent of seafood at supermarkets never makes it to the dinner plate and goes to waste.” Grocery stores must throw away “fresh” fish after a certain number of days if it has not been sold. “Fresh” fish may have been out of the water for 10 or more days, which greatly impacts quality. Frozen product can be stored for many months without any reduction in quality or freshness. It is also far less vulnerable to spoiling if shipping is delayed for any reason during transport. Frozen product can be barged or trucked, lowering the carbon footprint.

### To Help Fishermen

The seafood market is volatile with prices, fish abundance, and demand constantly shifting. Being able to store and market frozen product over a range of time means that fishermen can choose to fish in good weather, diversify into new species of fish, and sell product outside of the fishing season (when prices or demand might be higher).

### Ensure Quality and Freshness

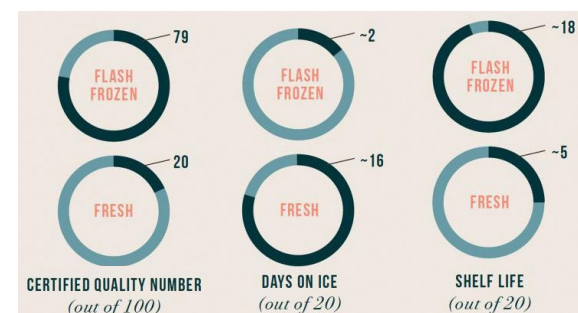
The longer that a fish is out of water the more that its meat degrades. When seafood is properly handled and frozen at a very low temperature, it is essentially “locked” in time, meaning that the freshness and quality are preserved.

## What is Flash Freezing?

During flash freezing seafood is frozen to at least -10° F in one to two hours. This essentially locks the fish in time allowing for a two year shelf life at premium quality. Locking the fish in this fresh state halts cellular degradation so that when the seafood is thawed, it is as fresh as the day it was frozen.



*A Fish Story: Frozen is Fresh discusses the blast freezing process and the high quality of frozen fish. View our videos at [alaskasown.com](http://alaskasown.com) Image credit: Alyssa Russel*



*The figure above demonstrates the differences between “fresh” and “frozen-fresh” salmon predictions in “days since harvest (on ice, exposed to air)” and “shelf life remaining.” Image credit: EcoTrust*



*Photo credit: John Neider*

# National Policy

## Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization and Other National Legislation

ALFA works with two national coalitions to represent member’s interests on national issues. The Fishing Communities Coalition is a coalition of community based commercial fishing organizations with a commitment to healthy fisheries and strong fishing communities. The Marine Fish Conservation Network includes like-minded sport, charter and commercial fishing groups as well as aquaria representatives and environmental organizations. Both groups have been actively engaged in DC on national legislation but with a particular focus on the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act (1976) is the legislation that defines management of U.S. fisheries in federal waters. The Act is periodically reauthorized, which is a process that can take years. Representative Jared Huffman (CA) chairs the committee tackling MSA re-authorization. Chairman Huffman began his nationwide tour in October to

listen to the opinions and perspectives of those who are most closely tied to the health and abundance of fisheries and marine environment. To date, round table hearings have been held in California, Baltimore and Seattle.

Each session has allowed a panel of local stakeholders, including commercial and recreational fishermen, environmentalists, seafood dealers and culinary experts, an opportunity to voice their concerns and support for current fisheries management, while also sharing their views on how the MSA can meet the challenges ahead. Linda Behnken, ALFA executive director, was an invited panelist at the Seattle hearing. Linda focused on climate change and its impacts on fisheries and fishing communities, and highlighted the need for MSA provisions that both address these impacts and secure the access of independent community-based fishermen to local fisheries. Three other members of Congress, Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), and Rep. Ed Case (D-HI), joined the panel in Seattle.



Chairman Huffman plans to continue his listening sessions in other regions of the country in 2020, and has committed to an Alaska hearing. Stay tuned!

Other National Legislation: several oceans and fisheries related bills started moving toward the end of 2019. Below is a summary of the bills ALFA is tracking on fisheries, oceans and climate change.

### In the House

- In 2019 the House passed HR 729, a package of ten bills that protect coastal communities impacted by climate change, which included Rep. Chellie Pingree’s (D-ME) “Keep America’s Waterfronts Working Act.” The bill addresses many of the shoreside infrastructure needs coastal communities face because of rising sea levels and climate change.

- Rep. Joe Cunningham (D-SC) introduced the bipartisan Climate-Ready Fisheries Act of 2019, HR 4679, a bill that seeks to manage the effects of climate change on fisheries. Reps. Brian Mast (R-FL), Tom Rooney (R-FL) and Jared Huffman (D-CA) cosponsored the bill. The bill directs the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine what actions have been taken already by fisheries managers and provide recommendations on how to better adapt fishery management decisions to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

- Rep. Jared Huffman, who is chairman of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife, introduced his Salmon Focused Investments in Sustainable Habitats (FISH) Act, HR 4723. The bill, cosponsored by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA), aims to “improve resiliency of those rivers that play a significant role in supporting healthy salmon populations.” By establishing “salmon conservation areas” and “salmon

strongholds,” designating specific federal agencies responsible for implementing the bill’s provisions, and providing funding for salmon river and watershed habitat protection and restoration, the bill will: “focus on protecting the essential habitats that have not yet been degraded and will help support the jobs and economic activity that depend on healthy salmon runs.”

- The Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife held an oversight hearing on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) recent report on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

- The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR 763) was introduced in the House in 2019 and in the Senate in 2018. Congressmen Ted Deutch and Francis Rooney, who introduced the bill agree with economists that a carbon tax is the serious solution to climate change. A revenue-neutral carbon tax can spur economic growth and transform the US energy economy.

- Congressman Young introduced the Young Fishermen’s Development Act, amended the language slightly, but never secured committee time to move the bill ahead. The YFDA will provide funding to support education and training for young fishermen.

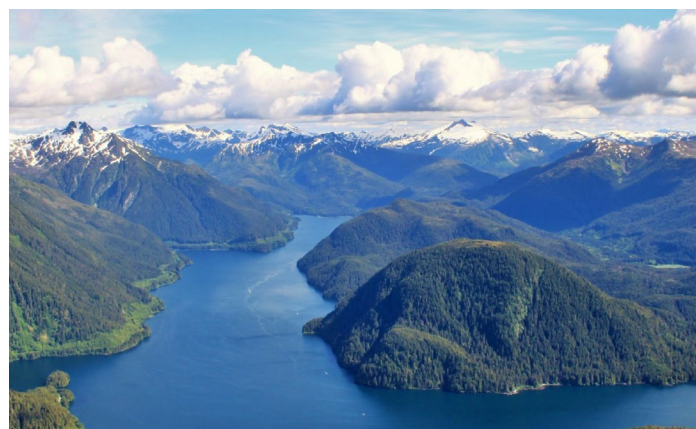


Photo credit: John Neider



Photo credit: John Neider

### In the Senate

- The Senate Commerce Committee held a full committee hearing on and passed a few oceans-related bills. Sen. Dan Sullivan’s (R-AK) S.1982, the “Save Our Seas 2.0 Act,” would seek to remove plastic from oceans, among other things. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS), the chairman of the full committee, carried his bill, S.2346, to streamline fisheries disaster declarations and declaration processes so relief funding can get to affected fisheries stakeholders more quickly. And Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) was able to move his bill, the “Restoring Resilient Reefs Act” (S.2429), which reauthorizes the Coral Reef Conservation Act and creates a national Coral Reef Task Force.

- Sens. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK) introduced their Ocean, Coastal and Estuarine Acidification Necessitates (OCEAN) Research Act, S 2699. The legislation would reauthorize the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act funding for NOAA and the National Science Foundation; the Act also seeks to strengthen investment in research and monitoring of coastal and estuarine acidification by engaging coastal

communities and the seafood industry.

- Senator Sullivan successfully moved the Young Fishermen’s Development Act through the Commerce Committee and recently secured the Committee report, which explains the background of the bill and includes the Congressional Budget Office score. This is the final step before the bill can be considered on the Senate Floor.



Photo credit: Colin Arisman





*Photo credit: Colin Arisman*

## SeaBank

From the mountaintops to the ocean, Southeast Alaska can be considered a single, vast, highly productive watershed. Everything is tightly interconnected: the land, water, vegetation, wildlife, resources, economies, and culture.

In 2018, ALFA collaborated with ASFT to launch SeaBank, which quantifies the economic value of this vast watershed. For the communities of Alaska's Panhandle, this great natural ecosystem functions as a richly endowed bank, providing natural capital that is essential to the regional economy. SeaBank is a diverse nexus of individuals, scientists, organizations and businesses that wish to share the untold story of Southeast Alaska's ecological wealth and promote the region's natural products that support the livelihoods of our communities.

Unlike ordinary business enterprises, the Southeast ecosystem bank requires no human input, no equipment, and no built infrastructure of any kind, yet it produces over a billion dollars worth of fish and other sea foods every year. The ecosystem bank is also infinitely sustainable, as long as its resources are harvested responsibly and we assure that the environment remains healthy and productive.

The goal of SeaBank is to make people aware of Southeast Alaska's natural bank, to measure the huge annual capital that it provides, to highlight its value to shareholders, and to help safeguard its future. Each year SeaBank publishes an annual report on the value of the Southeast resource. You can find the reports on the SeaBank website:

<http://seabank.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SeaBankv3.pdf>



SEABANK

# Alaska Policy Advocacy

ALFA's policy focus in 2019 remained strong on promoting healthy fish stocks and the fisheries important to our members and the coastal communities in which they live. While progress on some issues has been painfully slow (e.g., Abundance-Based Management of halibut bycatch) we were able to secure a rockfish full retention requirement in 2019 that will take the guess work out of estimating retention limits, and the Council is (finally) committed to identifying meaningful cost saving measures for the flawed partial coverage observer program.

In June 2019, ALFA also worked with fishermen from around the state to initiate discussion of an IFQ entry level pool in response to concerns raised by the 20-year review of the IFQ program. As the cost of entry to the IFQ program has risen, quota has migrated away from rural Alaska, leaving many communities struggling to remain viable. ALFA helped launch the Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust some years ago to address this growing challenge, but pressure to revamp the IFQ program continues to build. The entry level pool, which would set aside 1-2% of the quota for "entry level" fishermen (deckhands and owner operators with little or no quota) might be the stair step rural fishermen need to get back into the halibut fishery.

Late in 2019, Governor Dunleavy's administration identified reducing halibut bycatch as a priority of this administration. Although little progress was made in 2019, ALFA will be pushing hard to secure meaningful reductions in 2020. Once a clear path to meaningful bycatch reductions is identified, ALFA will work with coalition partners to rally letters, testimony and phone calls.

Please watch for action alerts!





# Protecting Fish Habitat

## From Mines to the Roadless Rule

In 2019, ALFA’s work to protect fish habitat included letters and testimony highlighting the risks to salmon habitat from transboundary mines, Pebble mine, and the proposed roll back of the roadless rule from the Tongass National Forest. ALFA joined Salmon Without Borders and Salmon State in Washington DC for an International Year of the Salmon event to highlight the importance of salmon to Alaska and to call for international cooperation to protect salmon watersheds. ALFA’s director Linda Behnken participated in a House Resources Committee hearing on fish habitat, and used this opportunity to highlight the economic value of the Tongass as a SeaBank of natural capital. This presentation was augmented by public testimony and extensive comments on the U.S. Forest Services’ proposal to exempt the Tongass National Forest from Roadless Rule protections.

Roll back of the Roadless Rule was initiated

at the request of Alaska’s governor. After a summer scoping period and largely ignoring public comment, the Forest Service released a Proposed Rulemaking that would repeal Roadless Rule protections from over 9.2 million acres of public land in southeast Alaska and authorize clearcutting and timber road construction in some the region’s most important salmon producing watersheds in the southern and central portions of the Tongass National Forest. This despite the fact that hundreds of Alaskans have spent decades involved in public planning processes to develop management strategies for the Tongass, with the most recent effort resulting in support for the roadless rule from a broad-based stakeholder group.

What becomes increasingly obvious is that the Forest Service—or those directing the Forest Service—cannot see the forest for the trees. Where the Forest Service sees board feet, Alaskans see a complex forest ecosystem—in fact, the largest temperate

rainforest in the world, host to 14,000 miles of anadromous salmon habitat, 12,000 square miles of estuarine habitat, 20,000 lakes and 40,000 miles of river. We see one of few largely intact forest ecosystems remaining on the planet. We see an extremely productive bioregion rich in natural capital—forest, rivers, estuaries—that return goods and services every year, year after year, provided we don’t destroy the forest for the trees.



Photo credit: Colin Arisman

### To provide some sense of the value of those goods and services:

- Southeast is the state’s largest salmon producing region in terms of volume, with over 53 million salmon returning every year—24 million more than Bristol Bay.
- Annual commercial fisheries dividends from the Tongass include 300 million pounds of seafood per year, 10,000 jobs and a \$700 million total economic impact on Southeast communities.
- Tongass lakes and rivers are worth an estimated \$363 million in fishery/recreation assets and regulating services.
- Tongass Coastal wetlands provide \$22.3 billion in ecosystem services.
- The 11 million acres of Tongass rainforest annually provision \$13 billion in ecosystem

services—including water regulation, wildlife/ fish habitat, and carbon sequestration.

But all that value depends on the natural capital of the Tongass—the forest, the rivers, the estuaries-- remaining intact as a forest, not board feet.

The 2000 Roadless Area Conservation FEIS identified numerous risks to aquatic habitat associated with timber road construction, including increased sediment, degraded water quality, habitat fragmentation, and high temperature regimes. Road construction in inventoried roadless areas is likely to add to existing habitat loss. There are currently 1,100 stream crossings, most with failed culverts, on Forest Service lands alone in southeast Alaska that function as small dams, blocking 250 miles of important stream spawning habitat. The recently released DEIS, which informs this decision, notes that: “roads pose the greatest risk to fish resources on the Tongass” (p. 3-112), but then goes on to claim that exempting the Tongass from the Roadless Rule (under all alternatives) would have “negligible” effects on fish habitat (p. S-15). Consequently, according to the DEIS (p. 3-51), “While there would be some variation in the level of protection, these variations are not expected to affect the fishing industry.” Recognizing that this statement is at best unsubstantiated, ALFA went to work during the fall of 2019 to engage fishermen in speaking up for Alternative 1—retaining the Roadless Rule in the Tongass—and, with the assistance of Paul Olson, preparing extensive public comment in support of Alternative 1. Although the comment period closed in December, it is clear that the decision will be driven by politics or legal action. Thanks to support from Alaska Conservation Foundation, ALFA will continue to engage fishermen in advocating for Roadless Rule protections.





Photo credit: Colin Arisman

# About ALFA

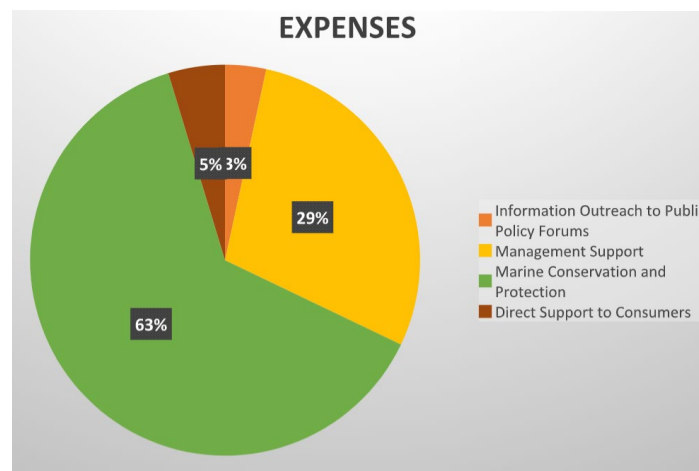
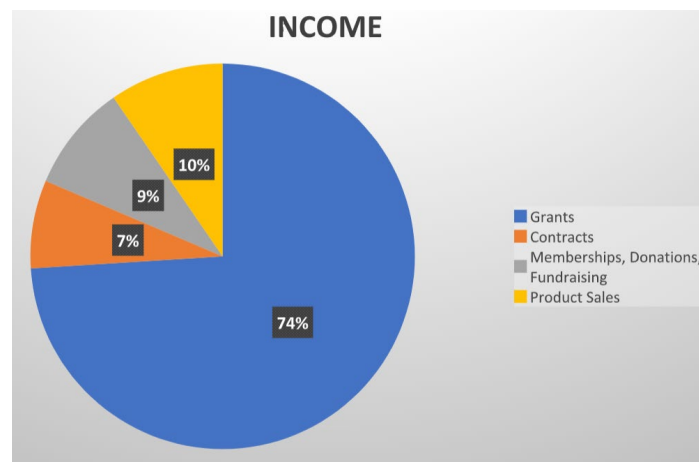
## Our Finances

ALFA runs on important membership funding from fishermen, local businesses, and seafood processors. Membership dues are supplemented by grant and contract funding that supports ALFA's fishery Conservation Network research, engagement with national networks, and education & outreach.

We also fundraise annually with a fish raffle, membership drive, and a series of events that serve both to raise funds and educate the public.

## As the year ends, we extend our gratitude:

We could not carry out our work without generous support of these organizations- as well as local businesses, fishermen and community members. We remain committed to safeguarding the health and productivity of Alaska's fisheries and to enhancing the economic viability of our community based, small-scale fishermen membership.



# Our Crew



**Linda Behnken**  
Executive Director



**Dan Falvey**  
Research Director



**Willow Moore**  
Deputy Director



**Paul Olson**  
Policy and Legal Advisor



**Allison Martin**  
Office Manager



**Natalie Sattler**  
Alaskans Own Coordinator



**Hahlen Behnken Barkau**  
Alaskans Own Assistant

## Board of Directors

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Steve Fish  
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Phil Wyman  
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Wendy Alderson