

Statutes for Regional Seafood Development Associations

SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 419(FIN)
"An Act relating to regional seafood development associations and to regional seafood development taxes."

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

* Section 1. AS 16.43.160(e)(2)(A)(iii) is amended to read:

(iii) Department of Community and Economic Development - commercial fishing loan program, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, regional seafood development program, and community development quota program;

* Sec. 2. AS 16.43.160(e)(2)(A)(ix) is amended to read:

(ix) Department of Revenue - fisheries business tax program, fishery resource landing tax program, salmon enhancement tax program, seafood development tax program, salmon marketing tax program, and dive fishery management assessment program;

* Sec. 3. AS 43.76 is amended by adding new sections to read:

Article 6. Seafood Development Tax.

Sec. 43.76.350. Two percent seafood development tax.

(a) A person holding a limited entry permit or interim-use permit under AS 16.43 shall pay a seafood development tax at the rate of two percent of the value, as defined in AS 43.75.290, of fishery resources taken in a fishery that the person removes from the state or transfers to a buyer in the state.

(b) A two percent seafood development tax on fishery resources taken in a fishery may only be levied and collected under (a) of this section if

(1) the commissioner of community and economic development has designated an organization to be the qualified regional seafood development association for the seafood development region in which the fishery occurs; and

(2) the two percent seafood development tax for the fishery is approved under AS 43.76.370.

Sec. 43.76.355. One and one-half percent seafood development tax. (a) A person holding a limited entry permit or interim-use permit under AS 16.43 shall pay a seafood development tax at the rate of 1.5 percent of the value, as defined in AS 43.75.290, of fishery resources taken in a fishery that the person removes from the state or transfers to a buyer in the state.

(b) A 1.5 percent seafood development tax on fishery resources taken in a fishery may only be levied and collected under (a) of this section if

(1) the commissioner of community and economic development has designated an organization to be the

qualified regional seafood development association for the seafood development region in which the fishery occurs; and
(2) the 1.5 percent seafood development tax for the fishery is approved under AS 43.76.370.

Sec. 43.76.360. One percent seafood development tax. (a)

A person holding a limited entry permit or interim-use permit under AS 16.43 shall pay a seafood development tax at the rate of one percent of the value, as defined in AS 43.75.290, of fishery resources taken in a fishery that the person removes from the state or transfers to a buyer in the state.

(b) A one percent seafood development tax on fishery resources taken in a fishery may only be levied and collected under (a) of this section if

(1) the commissioner of community and economic development has designated an organization to be the qualified regional seafood development association for the seafood development region in which the fishery occurs; and

(2) the one percent seafood development tax for the fishery is approved under AS 43.76.370.

Sec. 43.76.365. One-half percent seafood development tax.

(a) A person holding a limited entry permit or interim-use permit under AS 16.43 shall pay a seafood development tax at the rate of 0.5 percent of the value, as defined in AS 43.75.290, of fishery resources taken in a fishery that the person removes from the state or transfers to a buyer in the state.

(b) A 0.5 percent seafood development tax on fishery resources taken in a fishery may only be levied or collected under (a) of this section if

(1) the commissioner of community and economic development has designated an organization to be the qualified regional seafood development association for the seafood development region in which the fishery occurs; and

(2) the 0.5 percent seafood development tax for the fishery is approved under AS 43.76.370.

Sec. 43.76.370. Election to approve, amend, or terminate seafood

development tax. (a) A qualified regional seafood development association for a seafood development region may conduct an election under this section to approve, amend, or terminate a seafood development tax in one or more fisheries in a seafood development region after

(1) the association pays a fee of \$500 for each fishery in which an election is held; and

(2) the commissioner of community and economic development approves

(A) the notice to be published by the qualified regional seafood development association;

(B) the ballot to be used in the election; and

(C) the registration and voting procedure for the approval, amendment, or termination of the seafood development tax.

(b) The seafood development tax is levied under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 on fishery resources taken in a fishery, or is amended or terminated, on the effective date stated on the ballot if

(1) the levy, amendment, or termination of the tax is approved by a majority vote of the eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holders in the fishery who vote in an election held under this section;

(2) at least 30 percent of the eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holders in the fishery cast a ballot in the election to levy, amend, or terminate the tax; and

(3) the election results are certified by the commissioner of community and economic development under (d) of this section.

(c) In conducting an election under this section, the qualified regional seafood development association shall adopt the following procedures:

(1) the association shall hold at least one public meeting, not less than 30 days before the date on which ballots must be postmarked to be counted in the election, to explain the reason for the proposed seafood development tax, the amendment of the tax, or the termination of the tax and to explain the registration and voting procedure to be used in the election; the association shall provide notice of the meeting by

(A) mailing the notice to each eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holder;

(B) posting the notice in at least three public places in the seafood development region in which the fishery occurs; and

(C) publishing the notice in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the region at least once a week for two consecutive weeks before the meeting;

(2) the association shall mail two ballots to each eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holder; the first ballot shall be mailed not more than 45 days before the date ballots must be postmarked to be counted in the election; the second ballot shall be mailed not less than 15 days before the date ballots must be postmarked to be counted in the election; the association shall adopt procedures to ensure that only one ballot from each eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holder is counted in the election;

(3) the ballot must

(A) indicate whether the election relates to a seafood development tax under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365;

(B) indicate the fishery that is or will be subject to the seafood development tax to be levied or amended;

(C) ask the question whether the seafood development tax shall be levied or amended, as appropriate;

(D) indicate the geographic boundaries of the seafood development region in which the seafood development tax will be levied;

(E) provide an effective date for the levy or amendment of the seafood development tax in the fishery; and

(F) indicate the date on which returned ballots must be postmarked in order to be counted;

(4) the ballots shall be returned by mail and shall be counted by the commissioner of community and

economic development or by a person approved by the commissioner of community and economic development.

(d) The commissioner of community and economic development shall certify the results of an election under this section if the commissioner determines that the requirements of (a) - (c) of this section have been satisfied.

(e) The rate of the seafood development tax levied in a seafood development region shall be uniform for all fisheries and fishery resources in the region.

(f) If a seafood development tax has not been levied on a fishery resource in a seafood development region, the initial tax levied in any fishery in the region may be set at a rate set under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 in accordance with procedures set out in this section. If a seafood development tax is currently levied on fishery resources in any fishery in a seafood development region, an election to approve the initial levy of a seafood development tax in another fishery in the region shall be for a levy of the tax at the current rate in the region. The election to approve the levy of a seafood development tax within a fishery shall be conducted among the eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holders in the fishery.

(g) An election to amend the current rate of the seafood development tax within a seafood development region shall be conducted among the eligible interim-use permit holders and entry permit holders in each fishery within the region that has approved the levy of the tax under this section. In an election to amend the current rate of the seafood development tax within a region, a person shall receive, and may cast and have counted, a separate ballot for each fishery in the seafood development region that is subject to the tax for which the person is an eligible interim-use permit or entry permit holder.

(h) Except as provided in AS 43.76.375, an election to terminate a seafood development tax within one or more fisheries in a seafood development region shall be conducted under the same procedures established under (a) - (d) of this section for an election to approve or amend a seafood development tax.

(i) In this section, "eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holder" means an individual who, 90 days before the date ballots must be postmarked to be counted in an election under this section, is listed in the records of the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission as the legal owner of an interim-use permit or an entry permit that authorizes the individual to operate commercial fishing gear in the fishery that is or will be subject to the seafood development tax that is the subject of the election.

Sec. 43.76.375. Termination of seafood development tax.

(a) The seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 may be terminated by the commissioner of revenue upon majority vote of eligible permit holders who vote in an election held under AS 43.76.370 in which at least 30 percent of the eligible permit holders cast a ballot. The seafood development tax may be terminated in one

or more fisheries within a seafood development region under this section.

(b) The commissioner of revenue shall terminate a seafood development tax under (a) of this section following an election conducted by the qualified seafood development association for the seafood development region if

(1) a petition is presented to the commissioner of community and economic development requesting termination of the seafood development tax in a fishery that is signed by at least 10 percent of the number of persons who are eligible to vote in an election under AS 43.76.370 to approve the levy of the seafood development tax in the fishery;

(2) an election is held in accordance with AS 43.76.370; the ballot must ask the question whether the seafood development tax for the fishery shall be terminated; the ballot must be worded so that a "yes" vote is for continuation of the seafood development tax and a "no" vote is for termination of the seafood development tax;

(3) a majority of the votes cast in the election by eligible interim-use permit and entry permit holders are for the termination of the seafood development tax;

(4) at least 30 percent of the permit holders who are eligible to vote in the election cast a ballot in the election; and

(5) the qualified regional seafood development association for the fishery provides notice of the election in accordance with AS 43.76.370 within two months after receiving notice from the commissioner of community and economic development that a valid petition under (1) of this subsection has been received.

Sec. 43.76.380. Liability for tax on fishery resources sold to a buyer. (a)

Except as provided under (c) of this section, a buyer who acquires a fishery resource that is subject to a seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 shall collect the seafood development tax at the time of purchase, and shall remit the total tax collected during each month to the department by the last day of the next month.

(b) A buyer who collects the seafood development tax shall

(1) maintain records reflecting the fishery in which the fishery resource was caught; and

(2) report to the Department of Revenue by March 1 of each year the total value, as defined in AS 43.75.290, of the fishery resources caught in each fishery that the buyer has acquired during the preceding year.

(c) A commercial fisherman who transfers possession of a fishery resource to a buyer who is not a fisheries business licensed under AS 43.75 is liable for the payment of a seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 if, at the time possession of the fishery resource is transferred to a buyer, the seafood development tax payable on the fishery resource has not

been collected. If a commercial fisherman is liable for payment of the seafood development tax under this subsection, the commercial fisherman shall comply with the requirements under (b) of this section to maintain records and to make reports to the Department of Revenue. Notwithstanding (a) of this section, a person subject to this subsection shall remit the total seafood development tax payable during the calendar year to the Department of Revenue before April 1 after close of the calendar year.

(d) The Department of Revenue shall deposit the seafood development tax collected under AS 43.76.350 - 43.76.399 in the general fund. The legislature may make appropriations based on this revenue to the Department of Community and Economic Development for the purpose of providing financing for qualified regional seafood development associations.

Sec. 43.76.385. Liability for tax on fishery resources shipped from the state. (a) The owner of fishery resources removed from the state is liable for payment of a seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350, 43.76.355, 43.76.360, or 43.76.365 if, at the time the fishery resources are removed from the state, the seafood development tax payable on the fishery resources has not been collected by a buyer.

(b) If the owner of fishery resources is liable for payment of the seafood

development tax under (a) of this section, the owner shall comply with the requirement of AS 43.76.380(b) to report the owner's liability for payment of the tax.

Sec. 43.76.390. Exemption. AS 43.76.350 - 43.76.399 do not apply to salmon harvested under a special harvest area entry permit issued under AS 16.43.400.

Sec. 43.76.399. Definition. In AS 43.76.350 - 43.76.399, unless the context otherwise requires,

(1) "buyer" means a person who acquires possession of fishery resources from the person who caught the fishery resources regardless of whether there is an actual sale of the fishery resources but excluding a transfer to a person engaged solely in interstate transportation of goods for hire;

(2) "fishery" has the meaning given in AS 16.43.990.

* Sec. 4. AS 44.33 is amended by adding a new section to read:

Sec. 44.33.065. Regional seafood development

associations. (a) The Department of Community and Economic Development shall assist in and encourage the formation of a qualified regional seafood development association for each seafood development region identified in (b) of this section for the purpose of promoting and marketing Alaska seafood products harvested in the region. The commissioner shall designate the first organization to apply and qualify under this subsection for recognition as the qualified association for a region to be the qualified regional seafood

development association for that seafood development region if the commissioner determines that the organization

(1) is established for the following purposes:

(A) promotion of seafood and seafood by-products that are harvested in the region and processed for sale;

(B) promotion of improvements to the commercial fishing industry and infrastructure in the seafood development region;

(C) establishment of education, research, advertising, or sales promotion programs for seafood products harvested in the region;

(D) preparation of market research and product development plans for the promotion of seafood and their by-products that are harvested in the region and processed for sale;

(E) cooperation with the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute and other public or private boards, organizations, or agencies engaged in work or activities similar to the work of the organization including entering into contracts for joint programs of consumer education, sales promotion, quality control, advertising, and research in the production, processing, or distribution of seafood harvested in the region;

(F) cooperation with commercial fishermen, fishermen's organizations, seafood processors, the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, the Fisheries Industrial Technology Center, state and federal agencies, and other relevant persons and entities to investigate market reception to new seafood product forms and to develop commodity standards and future markets for seafood products;

(2) provides for representation of commercial fishing permit holders for each fishery in the region that is subject to a seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350 - 43.76.399 on the board of directors of the organization;

(3) provides for membership in the organization by any commercial fisherman who holds a commercial fishing permit for a fishery that is conducted in the region and by other persons and groups in the region who wish to be members of the organization; and

(4) is organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state for the purpose of marketing and promoting seafood products taken in the region and seafood products taken in fisheries subject to a seafood development tax levied under AS 43.76.350 - 43.76.399.

(b) Seafood development regions are established for each of the following regions of the state and are made up of the designated commercial fishing management areas established by the Board of Fisheries in accordance with the boundaries of those areas as adopted by the Board of Fisheries:

(1) Southeast Alaska seafood development region – Southeastern Alaska area and Yakutat area;

(2) Prince William Sound seafood development region -- Prince William Sound area;

(3) Cook Inlet seafood development region -- Cook Inlet area

(4) Kodiak seafood development region -- Kodiak area;

(5) Alaska Peninsula seafood development region -- Alaska Peninsula area;

(6) Aleutian Islands seafood development region -- Aleutian Islands area;

(7) Chignik seafood development region -- Chignik area;

(8) Atka-Amlia Islands seafood development region -- Atka-Amlia Islands area;

(9) Bristol Bay seafood development region -- Bristol Bay area;

(10) Kuskokwim seafood development region -- Kuskokwim area;

(11) Yukon-Northern seafood development region -- Yukon-Northern area and Kotzebue area;

(12) Norton Sound-Port Clarence seafood development region -- Norton Sound-Port Clarence area.

(c) An organization may be designated as the qualified regional seafood development association for more than one seafood development region.

(d) A qualified regional seafood development association for a fishery may request state financial assistance from the department to aid the seafood development programs of the association.

(e) A qualified regional seafood development association requesting state financial assistance shall submit an annual financial report to the department on a form provided by the department. The department may require that a qualified regional seafood development association use a uniform system of accounting. A qualified regional seafood development association requesting state assistance shall submit an annual budget to the department on or before a date specified by the department.

(f) The department may adopt regulations necessary to implement this section.

(g) In this section, "fishery" has the meaning given in AS 16.43.990