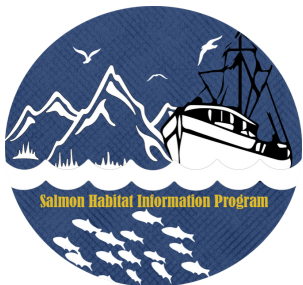


# SALMONSTATE FISHERMEN SURVEY

SPRING 2020

SURVEY RESULTS FROM ALASKAN  
FISHERMEN POLLED IN SPRING OF 2020.



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[www.AlaskaSalmonHabitat.org](http://www.AlaskaSalmonHabitat.org)  
[AlaskaSalmonHabitat@Gmail.com](mailto:AlaskaSalmonHabitat@Gmail.com)







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# Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Alaska-based nonprofit organization SalmonState, through its Salmon Habitat Information Program (SHIP) conducted an online survey of Alaska commercial fishermen to help better understand COVID-19's early impacts on Alaska's fishermen.

The survey asked about Alaska fishermen's concerns related to Alaskan fisheries both before the outbreak of COVID-19 and in the midst of the pandemic in April, 2020. It also asked what they would like elected-officials at municipal, state and federal levels to do, what would help them, and areas where they would like more information.

Their responses are presented in this survey report.



*These images are Facebook advertisements used for the survey.*





# Survey Highlights

- Fishermen's top concerns prior to COVID-19 were: 1) fish prices; 2) the proposed Pebble Mine; and 3) climate change.
- Fishermen's top concerns regarding COVID-19 as it relates to their commercial fishing business are: 1) loss of income; 2) preventing the spread of COVID-19 in coastal communities; and 3) bad policy decisions happening while fishermen are distracted.
- In order to try and mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19, fishermen are doing more work with less time and fewer resources. Over half of respondents indicated that they would seek additional non-fishing income. Some said they would fish a longer season; others plan to fish with fewer crew members. Many fishermen indicated that they would employ a combination of strategies to mitigate the effect of COVID-19 on their business.
- Emergency funds directly to fishermen are the number one thing fishermen need as they face the 2020 season and beyond. (82.73%) indicated that emergency funds intended to support fishermen could be best applied as direct payments to affected commercial fishermen, with the second and third most popular options being favorable debt consolidation opportunities (33.25%) and debt forgiveness (28.61%).
- The majority of fishermen who took the survey are not represented by any commercial fishing organization. Less than half (47.77%) of the respondents are members of a commercial fishing organizations, gear group, or trade association.





## Survey Methodology

SalmonState works with Alaska commercial fishermen to ensure that Alaska remains a place where wild salmon and the people who depend on them thrive. In service to this goal and in light of the unprecedented challenges brought on by the COVID-19 global pandemic, as well as the myriad impacts the virus is having on Alaskans and their businesses, SalmonState is currently prioritizing bringing independent fishermen's voices to the forefront of COVID-19 related decision-making and recovery efforts.

The web-based survey was administered electronically via Survey Monkey from April 14, 2020 through May 3, 2020. The survey asked fishermen to respond to 12 quantitative and 3 qualitative questions.

Independent fishermen can be notoriously difficult to reach, which makes the response rate all the more impressive. SalmonState cast a wide net and used a variety of communication channels, including, emails to individuals and industry groups, boosted Facebook and Instagram posts, Twitter, word of mouth, and through traditional media. In addition, the survey was promoted through coverage in commercial fishing news outlets, including: National Fisherman, Pacific Fishing, Undercurrent News and Alaska Fish Radio. Prizes were offered to incentivize responses.

A total of 817 people took the survey. The first question ("Where do you fish?") sought to limit survey respondents to self-reporting commercial fishermen, their family members and other individuals working in the industry such as tender operators or seafood processors. Respondents were verified through the Commercial Fishery Entry Commission (CFEC) permit holder database, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) crew license database, and other informal means of validation. Of the initial 817 respondents 779 (95%) were verified or reliably self identified as fishermen, industry workers or family members of fishermen. The 38 respondents who attempted to complete the survey but are not in the commercial fishing industry were removed from this report and all survey results.





## Survey Methodology

As fishermen are notoriously difficult to survey, there are few comparable surveys for reference. SalmonState's Spring 2020 survey is an extremely large sample size for the target population. This survey elicited almost twice the number of respondents as a 2015 Seafood Marketing Institute fishermen survey[1], and several hundred more responses than the United Fishermen of Alaska's Salmon Habitat Survey from 2016[1].

According to the most recent commercial fishing permit data[2] at least 3.06% of Alaska commercial fishing permit holders and 0.83% of crew license holders[3] (crew license number does not account for permit holders who also have a crew license) completed the survey. With a total population size of 36,991 (CFEC permit holders and Crew License holders in 2019) and a verified sample size of 779, we have a 95% confidence level for quantitative questions. The margin of error, as calculated by Survey Monkey is 3%.

The survey consisted of 12 quantitative and 3 qualitative questions. Three fishermen who completed the survey were selected at random on May 4th, 2020 to win one of three incentive prizes — \$100 gift certificates to Lummi Fishing Supply.



**779**  
**Verified**  
**Responses**

[1] <http://www.ufafish.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SHIP-Habitat-Survey-Nov.-2016-1.pdf>

[2] <https://www.cfec.state.ak.us/plook/#permits>

[3] [http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/license/pdfs/licenses\\_stamps\\_tags\\_issued\\_2019.pdf](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/license/pdfs/licenses_stamps_tags_issued_2019.pdf)





# SalmonState 2020 Fishermen Survey



## Survey Methodology

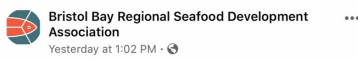
Examples of Survey Recruitment

### Alaska Fish Radio

Home Alaska Fishing

#### Survey wants AK fishermen's views on challenges/opportunities in the time of COVID

by Laine Welch | Apr 16, 2020 | AK Congress, AK Legislature, Economics, Fish Radio Programs, Health & Nutrition



FISHERMEN: amplify our collective voice by taking this short survey to identify challenges and concerns from our fleet related to COVID-19 and other issues!



SURVEYMONKEY.COM  
SURVEY: Spring 2020 Challenges and Opportunities for Alaska's Fishermen



### National Fisherman Since 1946

All News • Mid-Atlantic • Northeast • Alaska • Gulf & South Atlantic • National & Internati

April 30, 2020

#### Alaska's salmon season: Hundreds of fishermen chime in

by Jessica Hathaway in Alaska, News

**undercurrentnews**  
seafood business news from beneath the surface

HOME ▸ DATA ▸ SPECIES ▸ COMPANIES ▸ DOWNSTREAM ▸ UPSTREAM ▸

FISH FACTOR PLANT-BASED PROTEINS NORTH AMERICA

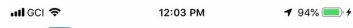
## Fish Factor: Alaska salmon projections; Fishing survey; Pollock on the menu



Way to go folks! We have seen hundreds of responses already but let's not stop there. Fill out the survey for a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate from LF...



SURVEYMONKEY.COM  
SURVEY: Spring 2020 Challenges and Opportunities for Alaska's Fishermen



SalmonState's Alaska Salmon Habitat Information Project (SHIP) is conducting a survey to help ensure that the perspectives of Alaska's fishermen are heard in upcoming responses to the coronavirus pandemic, and inform future actions. The survey will be open until May 1. Share your perspective to help make sure that we as food producers and small business owners are not left out of the...



SURVEYMONKEY.COM  
SURVEY: Challenges and Opportunities for Alaska's Fishermen



2 days left for your chance to win. Get 'er done!



SURVEY: Challenges and Opportunities for Alaska's Fishermen

<https://www.undercurrentnews.com/2020/04/21/fish-factor-alaska-salmon-projections-fishing-survey-pollock-on-the-menu/>

<https://www.alaskafishradio.com/survey-wants-ak-fishermens-views-on-challenges-opportunities-in-the-time-of-COVID/>

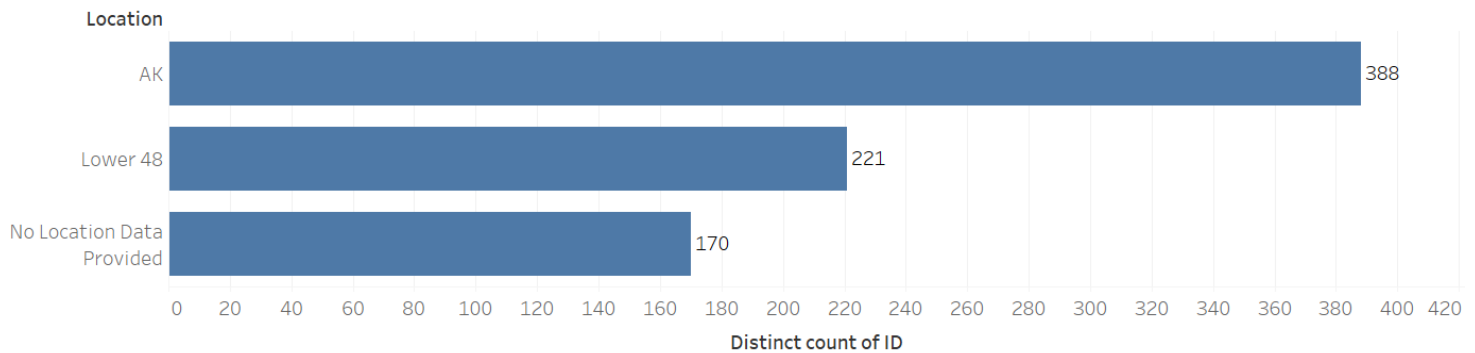




## Demographics of Participants

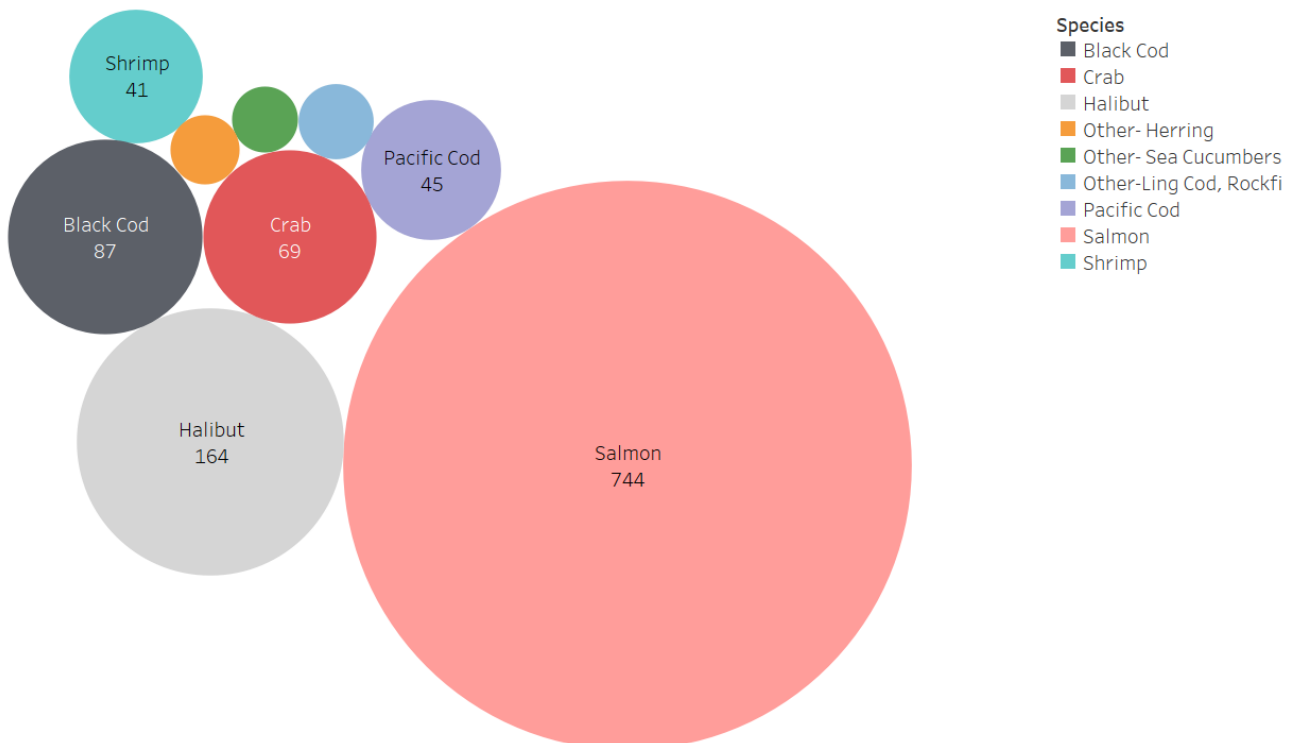
78% of respondents provided home address data. Of those, 388 or 50% of survey takers are in Alaska (i.e., are Alaska residents), with 28% based in the Lower 48, and 22% not providing resident information.

Location of Survey Respondents



Fishermen taking the survey represented a broad spectrum of commercial fisheries of Alaska, almost all gear types, and species of commercially harvested Alaskan seafood. Roughly 95% of respondents said that they participate in a salmon fishery, with the majority of respondents fishing for both salmon and other seafood species.

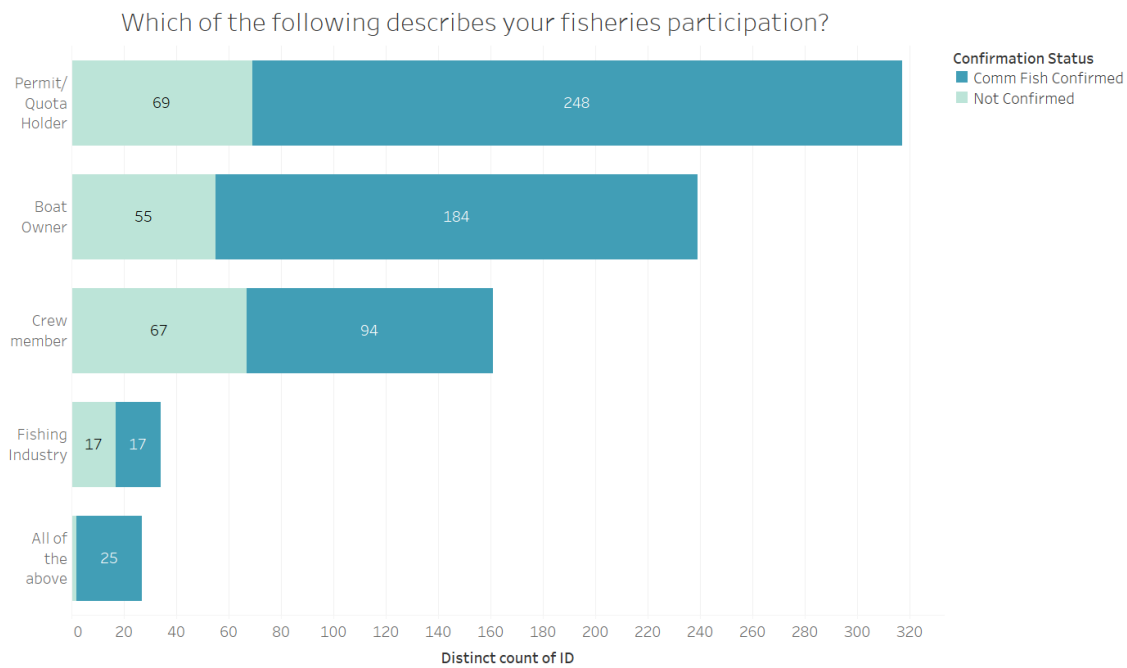
What Species do you harvest?





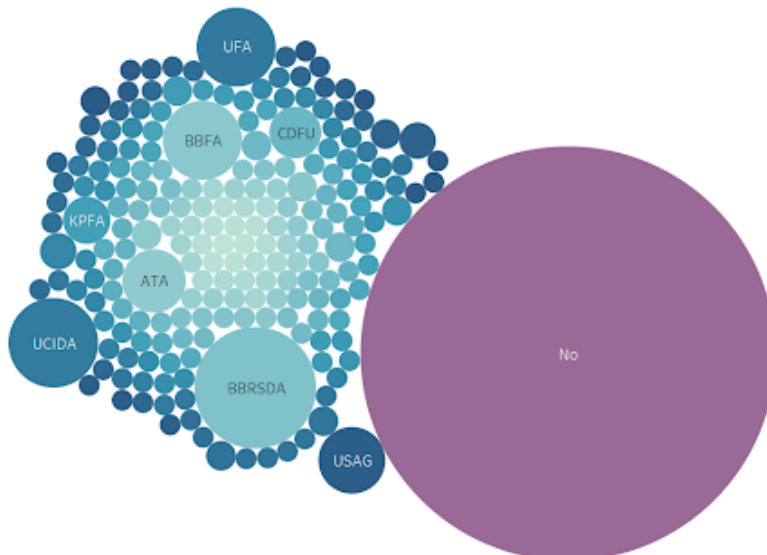
## Demographics of Participants

Most respondents identified as permit holders, crew members, boat owners, individual fishing quota (IFQ) holders or identified as having another role or position in the commercial fishing industry such as tender captain, processor or industry support worker.



More than half of the fishermen surveyed do not belong to a fishing organization gear group or industry trade organization, meaning they are independent business owners whose voices are not represented by other organizations.

Are you a member of any commercial fishing organizations, gear groups, or trade associations? (49% Yes, 51% No)





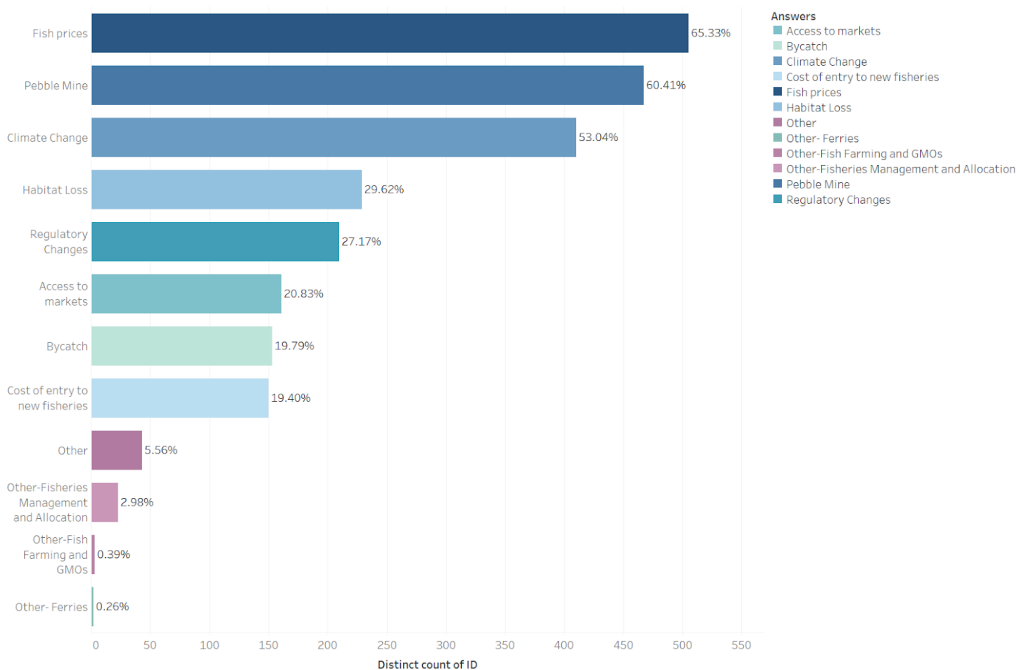


# In-Depth Survey Findings

## Concerns Prior to COVID-19 Pandemic

When asked about issues facing Alaska’s fisheries prior to COVID-19, there was consensus amongst fishermen that fish prices, the proposed Pebble Mine, and climate change were the top three concerns. Nearly one third of respondents chose Habitat Loss. Responses for “Other” fell into several common categories, including worries about the Alaska Marine Highway, fish farming (including GMOs) and hatcheries, fishery management and allocation, and outmigration of permits from coastal communities. Several region-specific concerns were raised, including Upper Cook Inlet salmon fishery allocation, Kenai River salmon fishery management, weak salmon returns to the Yukon River, and weak Southeast Alaska king runs. The table below breaks out quantitative responses to this question.

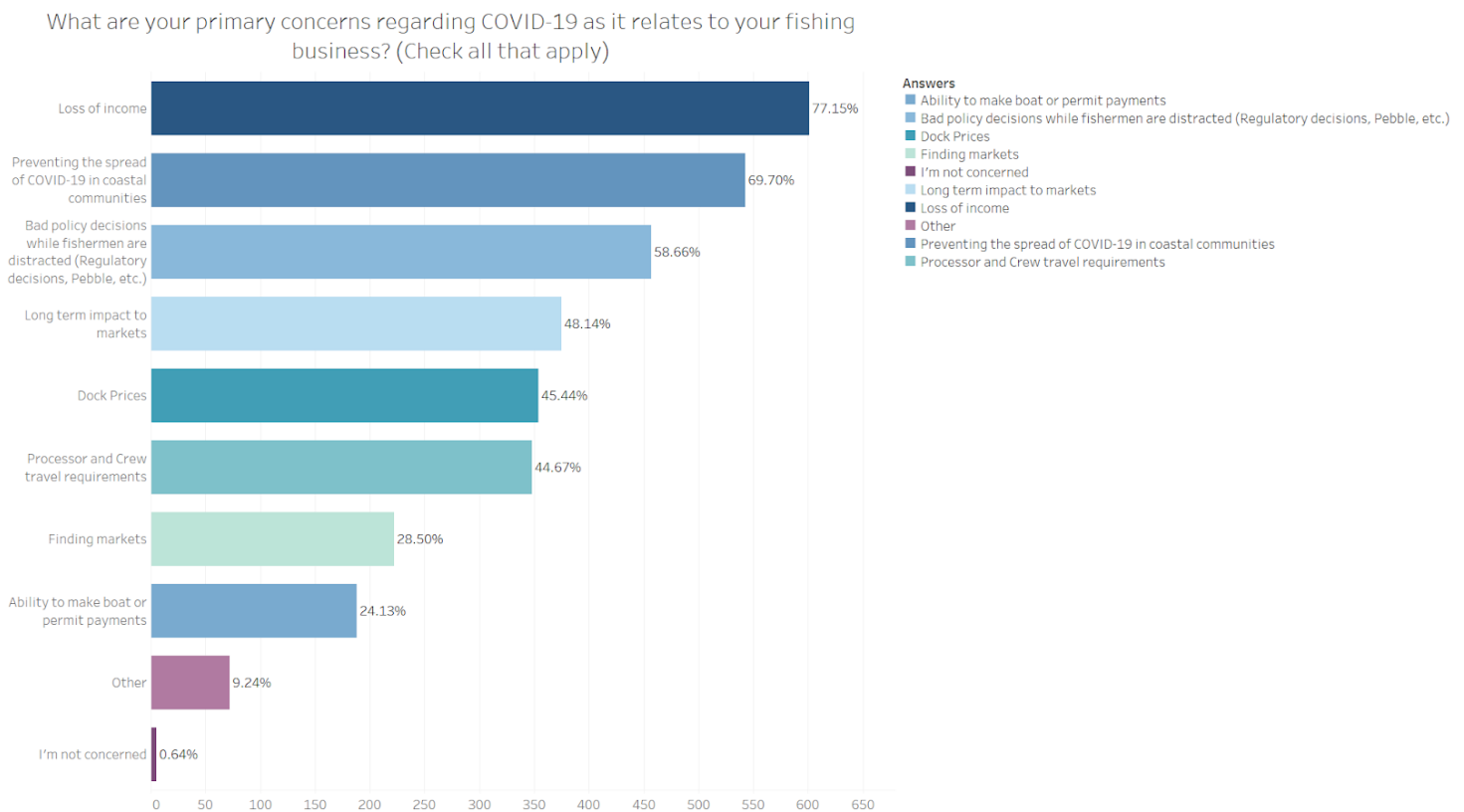
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic what were your primary concerns related to Alaskan fisheries? (check all that apply)





## Concerns During COVID-19 Global Pandemic

Nearly overnight COVID-19 changed everything for Alaska’s fishing industry. Traditional seafood markets such as restaurants evaporated and consumer purchasing patterns changed dramatically resulting in a chaotic marketplace and record increases in unemployment. The economics of commercial fishing continue to worry fishermen now. Fishermen were predominantly concerned about loss of income, closely followed by preventing the spread of the disease in coastal fishing communities. Roughly 60% of respondents were concerned that potentially harmful decisions like Pebble Mine could be pushed ahead while fishermen are distracted during the pandemic.



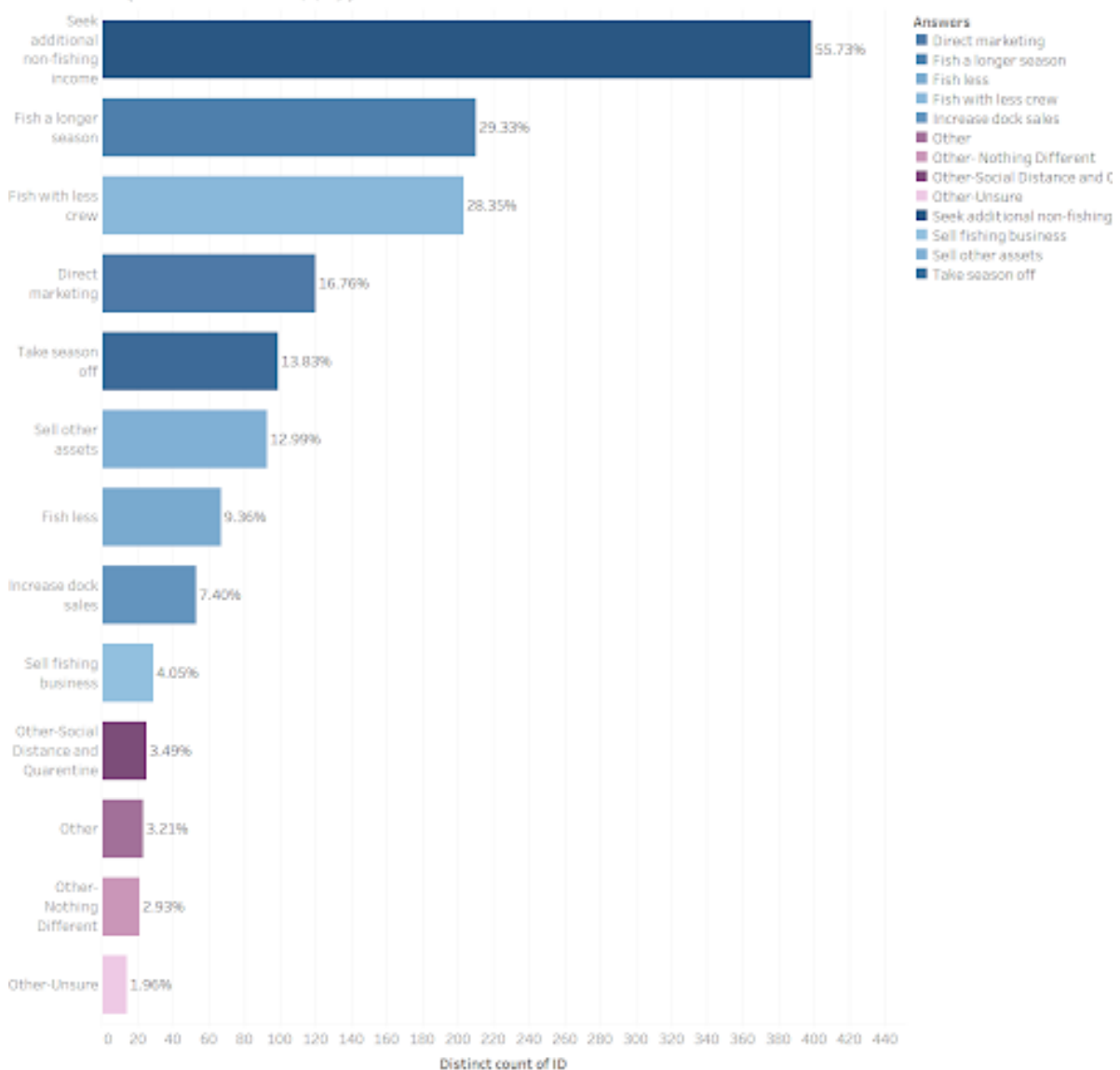




## Potential COVID-19 Crisis Mitigation Strategies Fishermen Will Employ

When it comes to mitigating the impacts of COVID-19, more than half of fishermen plan to seek additional non-fishing income. Nearly one third plan on fishing longer seasons or fishing with fewer crewmembers while a notable number are planning to take the season off, sell assets, or sell their fishing business altogether. Nearly a quarter of respondents expect to venture into direct marketing or increase dock sales. Generally, fishermen are all expecting to make some sort of change in how they fish or how they sell the fish they catch. Less than 3% plan on doing nothing different.

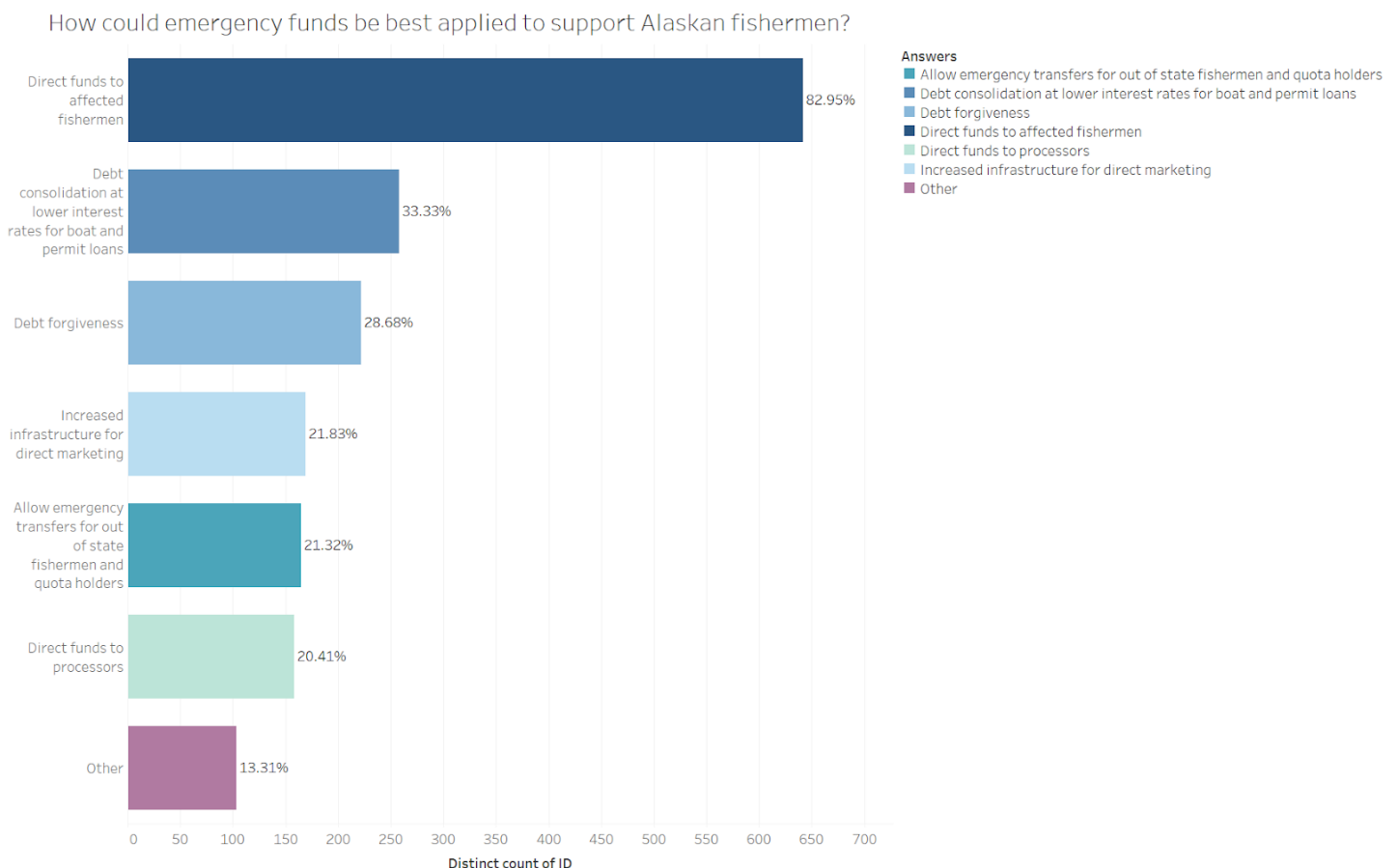
What strategies will you employ to mitigate impacts of COVID-19 to your fishing business? (Check all that apply)





## How Relief Funds Can Best Help Fishermen

By far the most common answer for how emergency relief funds can best help fishermen was “direct funds to affected fishermen,” with over 80% of fishermen selecting this response. In contrast, 20% of respondents suggested that funds should be directed to processors. Debt was another common concern, with debt consolidation and forgiveness getting 33% and 29% of responses respectively. A fairly equal number of fishermen thought that emergency funds would be best spent on increased infrastructure for direct marketing and allowing emergency transfers of permits/quota. “Other” rounded out the list at 12%.



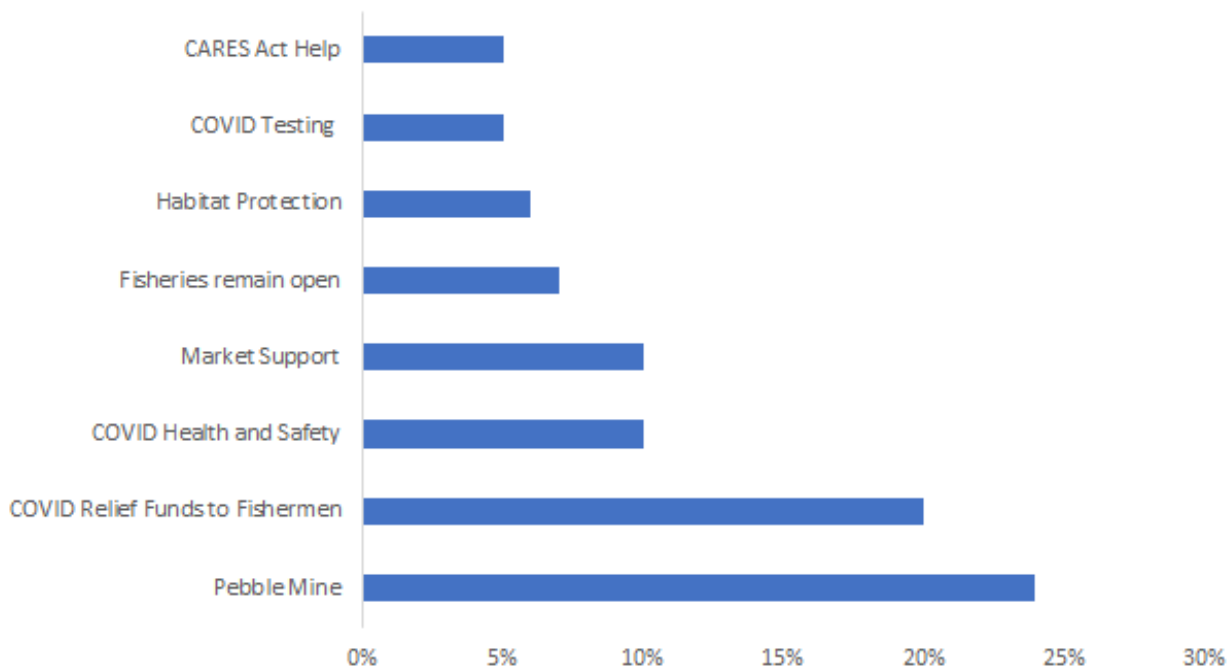




## Federal Government

Q: Alaska's Congressional Delegation, Senators Murkowski, Sullivan and Representative Young can help fishermen by:

Alaska Congressional Delegation Response Trends



When asked how Alaska's Congressional Delegation can help, fishermen composed thoughtful and detailed responses. Several themes emerged, including:

- Help stopping Pebble Mine was most frequent request, with 24% of respondents including it in their response
- 20% of respondents requested COVID-19 relief funds paid directly to fishermen.
- 10% of respondents asked for help ensuring that fisheries remain open whereas less than 2% suggested that closing fisheries was the best route for the 2020 salmon season.
- 10% of respondents asked for additional support with health and safety and 6% requested help with COVID-19 testing.
- 10% of respondents mentioned help with market support.



## Federal Government

What survey respondents said:

“Protecting habitat, getting disaster money to fishermen and buying salmon and halibut for government programs”. “Standing up to Pebble, help to rebuild international markets, stabilize the u.s. Economy”

“Help to develop a strategy to get the best prices for top quality fish that enter the market. Develop a more open and transparent system for determining prices. Work to combat the rise in farmed fish markets.”

“Assuring access to testing for COVID-19 and helping cover quarantine costs”

“Allowing people to fish. The world needs to consume wild caught fish. If that demand is not met then the farmed fish market will gain ground on wild caught. Let people work!”

“Keeping rural communities safe throughout the fishing season.”

“Direct funding directly to independent fisherman, and related infrastructure in our community cities help us create better opportunities to get our fish to domestic markets, anything that promotes owner operated fisheries, reduce bycatch”

“Convincing Trump to settle the trade war with China and convince them to remove the tariffs on Alaska seafood.”

“Not wasting money on programs like PSMFC Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission! Reaching out and asking what we need. Listening to Fishermen. We need more options to get our catch to the domestic markets. We need infrastructure that helps rural Alaskan's get their harvest to market. We need a more robust ferry system serving more small communities”.

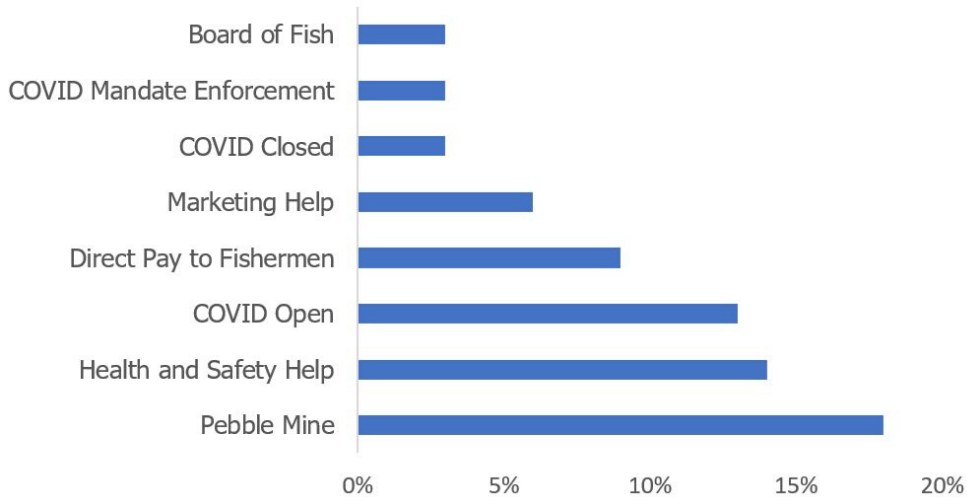




## State Government

Q: State government, specifically Governor Dunleavy and Legislators can help commercial fishermen by:

Governor Dunleavy Response Trends



Help stopping Pebble mine was the most mentioned request of Governor Dunleavy, the State of Alaska and legislators. After Pebble, respondents asked for the Dunleavy Administration and State to focus on COVID-19 related health and safety support for fishermen and fishing communities.

A clear majority advocated for leaving the fisheries open with health and safety support measures in place. Only 19 respondents asked to close fisheries. Others suggested only Alaska residents be allowed to fish. Marketing or market help was mentioned 39 times. Requests ranged from help with international tariffs to local food security and direct dock sales. Some fishermen also asked for help with domestic marketing, processor relationships and USDA government seafood buys.

Direct cash relief to fishermen was requested by 54 respondents, or 8.5%, and debt relief was mentioned 17 times.

Many fishermen expressed concern about the complexity of state mandates and requested clarification or further guidance. One respondent specifically requested a “1 page COVID-19 guidelines” factsheet for fishermen.



## State Government

Q: State government, specifically Governor Dunleavy and Legislators can help commercial fishermen by:

Another theme that surfaced were fishermen's perceptions of the Dunleavy Administration favoring other interests over commercial fishing. Interests mentioned were mining, oil and gas, sport fishing. The Board of Fish was mentioned in 3% of responses, or 18 times.

Quotes:

"Stopping pebble mine. Protecting salmon habitat. Moving more of the fisheries supply chain instate. Funding AMHS."

"Markets markets markets"

"Keep fisheries open. Allow managers to manage. Relax travel restrictions. Set standards so essential critical workers can work. Test and screen at major airports. Work with seafood processors so we can pull off a salmon season. Pull their heads out and realize that AK is toast with oil, tourism and fishing all seriously impaired".

"Provide expanded state resources to assist fishermen in direct marketing of fish to national and international markets".

"Non-biased BOF appointments. A new Pacific Salmon Treaty team, all of them. Put a real fisherman onto the Council. Their power is in appointments. Also, the Commissioner is hugely biased, this is undermining the stability of commercial fishing in coastal economies."

"Assisting with medical infrastructure in rural areas. Acknowledging the commercial fishing industry is the foundation of the state economy at this point and support accordingly."

"Stop supporting pebble mine"

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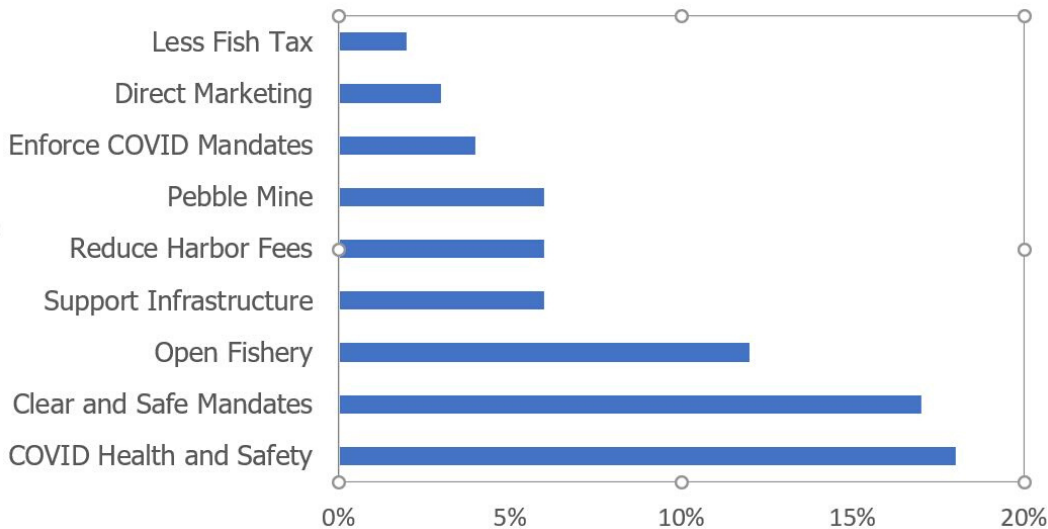




## Local Government

Q: Municipalities, local assembly and mayors can help fishermen by:

Local Government Response Trends



The first theme in response to this question was the need for clear and understandable guidelines for following local health mandates. Fishermen expressed confusion around the topic and suggested that having signs and airports and boatyards, as well as a one-page guidance document, would be helpful. All in all, 17% asked for clarification of mandates and health protocols. Second, the municipal level is the only place where fishermen mentioned processors needing support. 4% of respondents specifically stated that municipalities should do all they can to support processors and their workforce. Help with direct marketing specifically came up 18 times, from 3% of respondents. Other trends that emerged from this question are:

- COVID-19 health and safety measures were mentioned the most, by 104 respondents or 17%
- Ensuring that fisheries open was brought up 70 times, by 12% of respondents
- 37 fishermen mentioned that supporting local infrastructure like docks, cold-storage and ice are important help that municipalities can provide
- 33 fishermen, 6%, asked for reductions in harbor fees



## Local Government

Q: Municipalities, local assembly and mayors can help fishermen by:

Quotes:

“Sending out a list of all is required to be fishable, there is a lot of information out there on COVID19 and I personally am lost as to what needs to happen with my boat and crew to be able to fish”

“Recognize how much of an asset fishing is to coastal communities. The increased focus on tourism shouldn't be at the expense of commercial fishing. They can, and should, coexist.”

“Reduce harbor fees for fishermen set aside dock space for direct marketing.”

“Letting them fish, but keep all crew members on board till the pandemic is over to prevent any spreading to big fishing communities.”

“Promote funding to help affected fishermen from low prices and market declines due to Covid-19. Not raise harbor rates and fees like they are trying to do during this difficult time.”

“Being as forthcoming as possible with arriving fishermen on pandemic procedures .”

“Strictly enforcing covid-19 safety mandates and recommendations.”

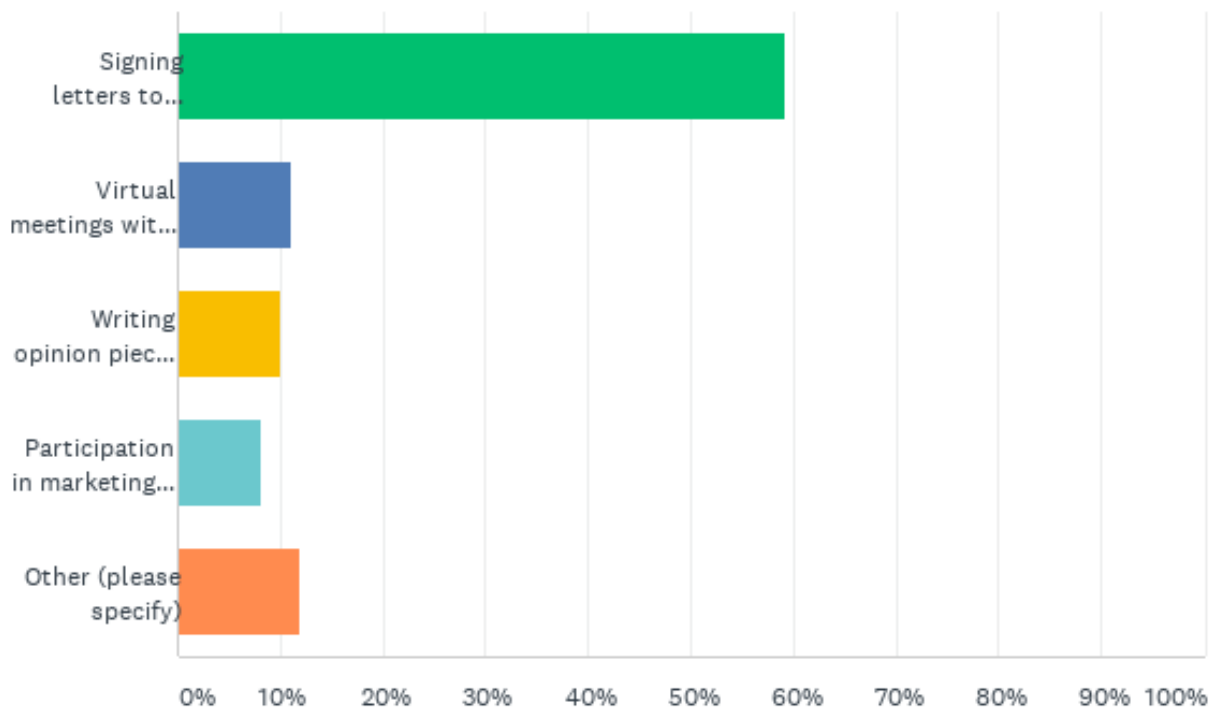
“Not freaking out about Covid and helping to come up with realistic science based guidelines to keep everyone safe.”

“Many small communities have enacted two week quarantines when coming from a different community. I agree with this. They are being left high and dry with no access to medical care. What I think they can do is make public what actions each community requires, work with businesses to help set up a method for delivering necessities to fishermen so they can minimize human contact.”



## Ways Fishermen Are Willing to Engage and Advocate

Q12 I am willing to advocate for my fishery in the following ways:



Nearly all fishermen surveyed are willing to advocate for their fishery. More than half said they would sign letters to decision makers. All other responses such as virtual meetings, authoring opinion pieces in the media, participation in marketing efforts, or “other” were selected by around one in ten survey takers. “Other” received 12% with many responses saying “all of the above” with many sharing specific examples such as the quotes below.

“Really anything, shit I’d chain myself to drilling equipment if it meant drawing attention to our trans boundary mine issue”

“all the above; particularly organize ( if helped in funding) programs in my town that will promote training youth to be tuned to how to run a fishing operation, and how to sustain local, low impact, small scale fishing.”

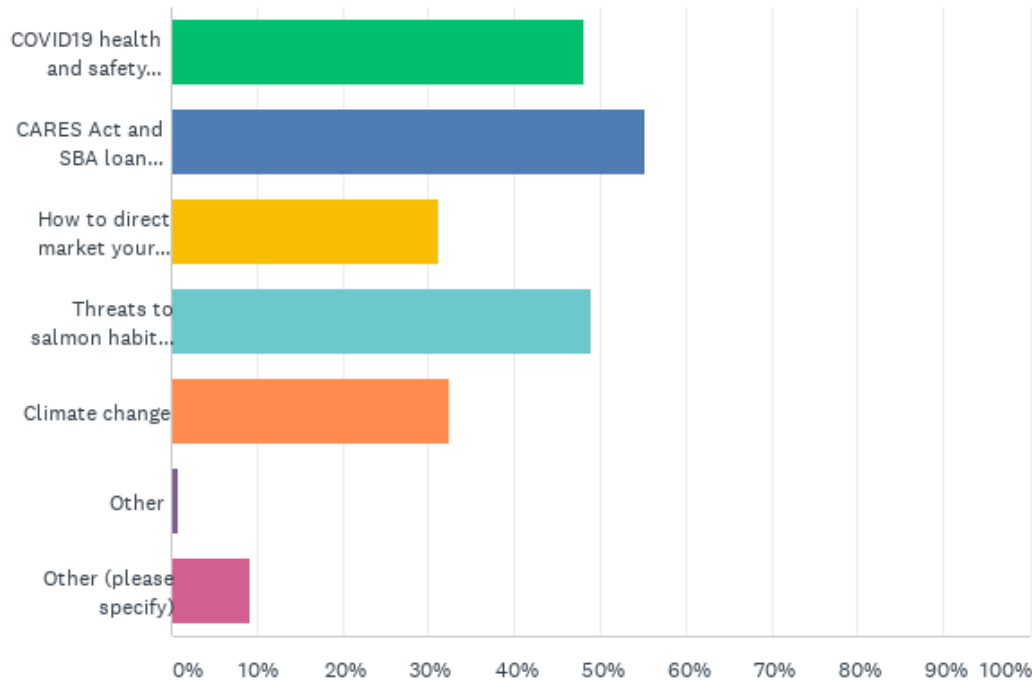
“I’ll do all the above and more”





## Other Topics on Which Fishermen Would like information

Q13 On which topics would you like more information? (check all that apply)



Approximately half of survey takers indicated an interest for more information on the Cares Act and SBA loan opportunities for fishermen, COVID-19 health and safety protocol, and threats to salmon habitat (e.g. Pebble Mine). With over a third also indicating a wish for more climate change information it appears habitat and climate issues are still very much top of mind for Alaska's independent commercial fishermen. Information on direct marketing and access to new markets was also of interest to over 30 % of those polled.

"Politics harms our fishery more than Covid19 can or ever will."

"Trawl Bycatch"

"If we do happen to get the Virus how will we be taken off the beach and to what Hospital and who will pay the expenses as well"



## Conclusion and Recommendations

- Support independent fishermen with immediate financial relief first and foremost.
- Stabilize industry with infrastructure such as adequate docks and harbors, ice, cold storage, and access points to facilitate dock sales.
- Do not use this time as an excuse to push through weakened habitat protections and the fast track permitting, particularly the proposed Pebble Mine.
- Clarify mandates at Federal, State and local levels. Including consolidating information, synthesizing, and providing clear expectations to keep communities safe.
- Accommodate full funding of necessary health and safety measures such as testing and safety equipment, to keep coastal communities, fishermen, and processing workers safe.



For more information please contact principal Investigators

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