

**Media Contact:**

Julie Decker, Executive Director  
Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation  
907-276-7315  
[jdecker@afdf.org](mailto:jdecker@afdf.org)



## AFDF hires new staff, grows organizational capacity

---

**Wrangell, Alaska (May 20, 2022)** – The Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation (AFDF) recently hired two new staff members; Hannah Wilson has served as the Development Director since April, and Julie Cisco will serve as the Executive Administrator, beginning later this month. AFDF will also host two Alaska Sea Grant Fellows: a Science Policy Coordinator (Ben Americus) starting later this month, and a Mariculture Development Coordinator (Robin McKnight), beginning in August. These four positions will grow the organization’s capacity to provide unique services related to research and development in the Alaska seafood industry.



Ms. Wilson comes to AFDF after serving for two years as an Alaska Sea Grant (ASG) Mariculture Fellow with Alaska Sea Grant and NOAA Fisheries, where she helped develop the *Alaska Aquaculture Permitting Portal*. She also assisted with procuring funding for industry and research efforts, and worked closely with mariculture stakeholders on projects supporting farmers during COVID-19. Wilson holds an M.S. in natural resource management from the University of Montana. Her previous background includes work for environmental and educational nonprofits, and five seasons as a wilderness guide in Southeast.

Ms. Wilson’s work with AFDF will include management of seafood sustainability certifications for salmon and cod, coordination and outreach with AFDF membership, and collaboration with the mariculture industry and partners to support continued sustainable growth of the industry. Wilson says, “AFDF is a leader in building community resilience through an impressive portfolio of projects that directly benefit Alaskans. I am excited to join AFDF’s team in this valuable work.”



Ms. Cisco comes to AFDF with a background in both the harvesting and processing sides of the Alaska seafood industry throughout the state. She also has experience in grant and project management. Her duties will include support for the Executive Director as well as providing administrative services to AFDF’s partner organization, Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers. Ms. Cisco will also be taking over organization of the Alaska Symphony of Seafood event. Val Motley with FPN Events will be

transitioning away from the event after approximately 20 years of excellent work on the Symphony.

Of her new position, Cisco says: “This is an exciting opportunity as this is a new position and the first to share duties between the two organizations. I am looking forward to developing the role as it grows. Both entities have many projects that will be fun to be involved in.”



Ben Americus hails from Cordova, where he grew up gillnetting for toothy chum salmon in Prince William Sound. Ben attended Montana State University, earning a B.S. in Microbiology in 2016, and working five consecutive summers on the Alaska Hatchery-Wild Salmon Interactions study. Ben attended graduate school at Oregon State University from 2017-2022, where he researched the genetics of salmon parasites and new fish health interventions. He is excited to return to Alaska to support salmon fisheries with AFDF.



Robin McKnight was born and raised in Seward and has a background that ranges from science communication and interpretation to geography. Most recently, she has been in the Westfjords of Iceland earning her master's degree in Coastal and Marine Management while finishing up her thesis on women captains in maritime tourism. She looks forward to returning to Alaska and diving into the world of mariculture with the AFDF team in August.

“I am thrilled to be building out the AFDF Team and am proud of the level of talent that AFDF has been able to attract. It is a testament to the exciting and valued work that AFDF does every day,” says Julie Decker, Executive Director.

These new additions will join the existing AFDF Team, which includes the following employees and contractors: Julie Decker (Executive Director), Ekaterina Ratzlaff (Finance Director), Val Motley (Events Coordinator for Alaska Symphony of Seafood), Tommy Sheridan (Technical Facilitator for seafood certifications), and Frances Leach (Communications Consultant).

### **About the Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation**

Founded in 1978, AFDF is dedicated to identifying common opportunities in the Alaska seafood industry and developing efficient, sustainable outcomes that provide benefits to the economy, environment and communities. For more information, visit [www.afdf.org](http://www.afdf.org).