

Alaska Fisheries Committee,

I apologize in advance for any issues that may present themselves during this confirmation hearing. I will be calling in via satellite phone from a remote hunting camp where I am working. Written below I have provided a bit of my background as well as some information about how I think about and approach fisheries given my experience working in Alaska's fishing industry as well as an education in resource economics.

I was born and raised in northern California. My parents enjoyed the outdoors and exposed me to much camping and hiking and a bit of hunting and fishing as a kid. For some reason this minimal exposure to hunting and fishing was enough to influence my decisions as a young adult. At the age of 20 and after traveling the country living in my car for a couple of years, I sold my car and bought a sleeping bag, a backpacking pack, and a one-way plane ticket to Alaska. When I arrived in Anchorage, I stayed at a youth hostel and took the city bus to the city library where I googled hunting and fishing operations in Alaska. I called various operations and told them that I would work for room, board and industry experience. A lodge in Kodiak accepted my offer on the condition that in being from California, I did not have green hair as well. I flew to Kodiak the next day and then to a remote lodge via a De Havilland Beaver on floats. This lodge was both a hunting and fishing lodge and I worked for them for several years and in time I acquired a captain's license, a sport fishing guide license, and assistant guide license and I started to make a wage as well. I worked full length seasons at this lodge, which in Kodiak, and for us, began in April for spring bear hunting, then summer fishing, fall bear hunting, and deer season ending (for us) in November to December and then on to the 'show season' of promoting the company at hunting and fishing expositions such as Safari Club International.

I had found my calling with working in the hunting and fishing industry but I still had always wanted to have a college degree so I moved to Fairbanks and enrolled at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. I majored in Economics and built an interdisciplinary minor I titled Wilderness Leadership and Guiding Services. I continued fishing work in the summer and was introduced to interior game hunting of sheep and moose by working for a couple interior outfitters. In all honesty I wanted to graduate as quickly as possible and get back to my full-time hunting and fishing life. I doubled my course load and got it done but in one of my upper division economics courses I had a professor strongly focus on resource economics and specifically Alaska's resources. With hunting and fishing being what I loved, the economics behind resource management and resource consumption was incredibly interesting and I felt compelled to continue on to obtain my graduate degree in Resource and Applied Economics where I focused the entirety of my research on fisheries. By definition, [natural] resource economics deals with the supply, demand, and allocation of earth's natural resources. A graduate degree in resource economics prepares students to use economic tools to evaluate the allocation and the utilization of resources to achieve optimal environmental and social benefits. It also helps students to better understand the market and values associated with the environment and resource use as well as resource management decisions. I am fascinated by this economic way of thinking and its application to natural resources. I feel fortunate to live in Alaska, a state with an incredible natural resource endowment as well as a state that is largely resource dependent... it makes for great economics and a great lifestyle.

A large part of my education centered on economic methods for valuing non-market goods. This is important when applied to resources because many resources provide utility but do not necessarily have direct or observable market prices. Simply following monetary flows to determine the economic importance of a natural resource will understate its true value every time. Of equal importance, in my opinion, is the process at which natural resources are allocated for consumptive purposes. I believe that allocative decisions intended to optimize social and environmental welfare over time require us to evaluate the resource and the user groups by assigning values that may not be directly observable. I believe that the commercial fishery in the state of Alaska is incredibly important and has incredible economic opportunity for reasons spanning from maintaining generational heritage of families and communities across Alaska as well as its incredibly powerful position as a leading supplier of fish to a world market. I also believe that the subsistence and personal use fisheries in the state of Alaska is incredibly important because the health of an economy and the strength of a state is greatly supported by the well-being of its people and the ability of people to feel unified under tradition and belief systems. I believe the sport-fishery is incredibly important for reasons spanning from its significant growth over the last two decades as well as its influence in helping to maintain Alaska's status as a premier recreation travel destination.

Currently I teach economics and recreation management at the University of Alaska Fairbanks as well as help out at a Fairbanks flight school in the winter months. I also continue to work seasonally as a hunting and fishing guide. I am incredibly passionate about Alaska, Alaska's resources, and my Alaskan lifestyle and I would be honored to serve as a member of the Alaska Board of Fisheries and I understand the responsibility associated with helping to manage one of the best-managed fisheries in the world.

Thank you for your consideration,

McKenzie Mitchell

*"Alaska's fisheries are among the best-managed, most sustainable in the world. Alaska resources provide jobs and a stable food supply for the nation, while supporting a traditional way of life for Alaska Native and local fishing communities" (NOAA Fisheries <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/alaska>).*