



February 28, 2025

House Resources Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 33 – Conflict of Interest Bill

Dear House Resources Committee Chairs and Committee Members:

Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of the world's premier sportfishing river -- the Kenai. Since 1984, the Association has been a leading advocate for fisheries conservation in Alaska, working diligently to ensure that Alaska's sportfishing and personal use fishery rights are protected and the fisheries are healthy for generations to come.

KRSA has long advocated against modifying the ethical standards surrounding conflicts of interest for board members serving on the Board of Fish. The current conflict of interest procedures already allow for a conflicted board member to participate in the public process on matters where they have a direct financial interest.

This is stated in the HB 33 Research ADF&G Policy on Recusal:

“Recused board member participation: Board members who are recused from taking official action on a proposal(s) may participate as a general member of the public, including providing public testimony and discussing the proposal as a member of the public in the Committee of the Whole process.”

To further clarify, board members can share their knowledge, expertise, and opinion on proposals in which they are conflicted, but as a member of the general public, and must remove themselves from the board table during board deliberations and voting.

During a Board of Fish meeting, public testimony allows three minutes per individual to speak. After which, the Board can ask any questions they have of the testifier. In the next step, the Committee of the Whole process, the Board can interact with and direct questions to state agencies, to proponents or opponents of proposals, and representatives of ADF&G Advisory Councils. Every member of the public, including conflicted members, is allowed another ten minutes to speak about the specific proposal under consideration.

Following the Committee of the Whole work, the Board enters into their formal deliberations. Think of this step as the closing arguments on a matter, and the final opportunity for board members to

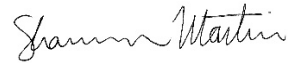
sway one another. During this step, conflicted members, as you know, recuse themselves and join the public in observing the deliberations without directly influencing them.

This segregation is important, because in the case of the Board of Fish, “deliberations” are a formal phase of the meeting. This time is reserved solely to the Board and any questions they may have of the department. This is the time when the Board ensures that their decision-making process has incorporated directives under statute, and where they establish board intent. It sets the record. I’ll say it another way: the “deliberations” phase establishes how a proposal may be implemented and interpreted by the Department of Fish and Game or Department of Law.

Allowing a conflicted individual to have influence over how allocations or regulations are interpreted or implemented, even if the influence isn’t a final vote, is inappropriate.

In conclusion, KRSA believes loosening the ethical standards to allow board members influence on proposals that they have a financial interest in, will only undermine the integrity of the board and we believe that this bill is not in the public’s best interest.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Martin".

Shannon Martin
Executive Director