

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

February 14, 2003
8:32 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Chair
Representative Peggy Wilson, Vice Chair
Representative Ralph Samuels
Representative David Guttenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Pete Kott
Representative Cheryll Heinze
Representative Ethan Berkowitz

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME, SPORT AND HABITAT DIVISIONS, BY DIRECTOR KELLY HEPLER AND ACTING DIRECTOR KERRY HOWARD

TAPES

03-7, SIDE(S) A & B

CHAIR PAUL SEATON convened the meeting of the House Special Committee on Fisheries at 8:32 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Seaton, Wilson, Samuel, and Guttenberg.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

KERRY HOWARD, Acting Director, Division of Habitat and Restoration, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), presented a brief verbal overview of the division. She stated that the division is relatively small, with 117 positions, 18 of which are currently not filled, and that these positions are organized into three regional offices located in Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. Ms. Howard noted that one of the key mandates of the division is to assist the commissioner of ADF&G in protecting the state's fish and wildlife habitat from unnecessary disturbance or destruction. The division also promotes and maintains access to fish and wildlife resources for commercial, subsistence, and recreational users.

MS. HOWARD discussed the major functions of the division, one of which is the review of permit applications and project proposals. She said Title 16 of the Alaska Statutes gives ADF&G the responsibility to approve, deny, or condition permits for various activities that affect fish, wildlife, and habitat resources. Specifically, the division issues permits for activities that affect anadromous fish streams. The division does this by updating and maintaining the Catalog of Waters Important for Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Anadromous Fishes. The division is also responsible for permitting land use activities within game refuges, game sanctuaries, and critical habitat areas in the state. Another function of the division is to provide detailed, area-specific information on fish, wildlife, and their habitats to the Department of Natural Resources' land use planning process. Ms. Howard said the division participates in various planning programs for petroleum development throughout the state.

KELLY HEPLER, Director, Division of Sport Fish, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, presented an overview that focused on the division's strategic plan. He mentioned that the division's existing mission is to protect and improve the state's recreational fisheries resources.

MR. HEPLER referred to the committee packet and highlighted the division's core values, included in the following list: fish stocks and their habitats should be managed for sustained yield; management should be based on scientifically sound resource assessment; there should be a diverse utilization of fishery resources; sport fishing activities have value and are socially and economically beneficial to the people of Alaska; there should be an informed and involved public based upon open and honest communication; all division staff are important, and there should be a diverse, dedicated, and motivated staff that exude professionalism; and area offices and local or area-based management have value.

MR. HEPLER outlined the framework of the strategic plan, noting specific goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes. He also mentioned the success of the award-winning Homer Spit project, stocked with fish for recreational use. Mr. Hepler told the committee of the management problem of losing staff to federal agencies because of the pay being 45 percent higher.

ROB BENTZ, Deputy Director, Division of Sport Fish, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, in response to a question from

Chair Seaton, gave a brief review of the state's different sport fisheries. In addition to salmon, which had been emphasized during the presentation, he said the division is involved with resident species work, research, and management on the following species: steelhead, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, pike, burbot, lake trout, whitefish, and Arctic grayling.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.