

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

March 28, 2003

8:33 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Chair
Representative Peggy Wilson, Vice Chair
Representative Cheryll Heinze
Representative Dan Ogg
Representative Ralph Samuels
Representative David Guttenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Ethan Berkowitz

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 98

"An Act relating to sport fishing seasons and areas for persons under 16 years of age."

- MOVED HB 98 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 22

"An Act relating to commercial fishing permit brokers; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS ACTION

BILL: HB 98

SHORT TITLE: SPORT FISHING SEASONS FOR YOUTH

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SAMUELS

Jrn-Date	Jrn-Page		Action
02/14/03	0214	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/14/03	0214	(H)	FSH, RES
03/28/03	0669	(H)	FSH RPT 6DP
03/28/03	0669	(H)	DP: OGG, HEINZE, WILSON, SAMUELS,
03/28/03	0669	(H)	GUTTENBERG, SEATON
03/28/03	0670	(H)	FN1: ZERO(DFG)

03/28/03 0670 (H) FN2: ZERO(DPS)
03/28/03 (H) FSH AT 8:30 AM CAPITOL 124

WITNESS REGISTER

KELLY HEPPLER, Director
Division of Sport Fish
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified that the department is very
supportive of HB 98.

KATHY HANSEN
Juneau-Douglas Fish and Game Advisory Committee
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in full support of HB 98.

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 03-22, SIDE A

Number 0001

CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Wilson, Samuels, and Guttenberg were present at the call to order. Representatives Heinze and Ogg arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 98-SPORT FISHING SEASONS FOR YOUTH

CHAIR SEATON announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 98, "An Act relating to sport fishing seasons and areas for persons under 16 years of age."

Number 0067

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS, sponsor of HB 98, mentioned that a provision exists in statute for the Board of Game that gives authority to the Board of Game to establish age-specific youth hunts for those [not more than 17 years of age] - an age at which a license to hunt is not necessary. He informed the committee that this allows the Board of Game to have father-and-son hunts, for example and to limit the number of hunters in areas where animal populations are limited; it also allows young children the opportunity to go out and enjoy what Alaska has to offer. He stated that HB 98 is a similar provision, but pertains to the Board of Fisheries.

Number 0164

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS said that HB 98 is aimed mostly, but not solely, at urban environments, so that kids in the cities who don't have a chance to go out and catch a salmon can have access to that experience. He referred to several possibilities, such as stocking king salmon at Campbell Creek or having a kids' day at Ship Creek, saying that HB 98 would allow the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and the Board of Fisheries to better manage the fisheries and would also afford kids the chance to enjoy the sport of fishing. Representative Samuels concluded by saying "this is apple pie, Mr. Chairman."

Number 0214

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said she thought that kids 14 years old and under did not need a license, but had been informed, informally, by committee members that the age was 16 and under.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS said this bill does not mandate but rather simply gives the Board of Fisheries the authority to allow for a fishery for persons under the age of 16. He pointed out that the Board of Fisheries already allows for a fishery for senior citizens - for persons 60 years of age and older.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked if this might mean that that kids who were under 16 years of age could go out fishing with their dads, but the dads couldn't fish.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS confirmed that this was so.

Number 0302

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS referred to a silver [coho salmon] run in a stream that runs through his neighborhood where everybody fishes, commenting that ADF&G sets the regulatory environment so that there are not too many people there. He said that ADF&G is concerned about the traffic patterns at that location as well as at Bird Creek, outside of Anchorage. He indicated that HB 98 assists with limiting the number of fishermen as well as allowing "the neighborhood kid to walk down there and catch a fish without being trampled to death at a Ship Creek--type situation."

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON suggested that this bill might encourage more participation on the part of the dads.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS said there are a lot of people who live in Anchorage who cannot get out of town to go to where the salmon are; he reiterated that this bill offers an opportunity "for a kid to catch a fish."

Number 0411

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS added that there was a zero fiscal note accompanying the bill.

Number 0422

CHAIR SEATON referred to the Homer Spit Lagoon, which at times is open for snagging and becomes a real rat race. He noted that HB 98 allows for kids to fish on a different day, or perhaps for half of a day, saying that this would be advantageous.

Number 0492

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS mentioned that the bill has more to do with families than it has to do with fish.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked if the bill only pertained to Alaskan [residents].

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS said that this would apply to anybody, noting that a license is not necessary if a person is under the age of 16.

CHAIR SEATON said the person would need to demonstrate that he/she was under the age of 16.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS wondered how ADF&G determines the truth of a situation in which a person claims to be under the age of 16 and therefore does not possess a license.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON similarly wondered how proof of a person's age would be confirmed, since [a person] under 16 years of age does not have identification.

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS indicated that if a person is under 16 years of age, he/she can already go fishing without the need for a license. He said if a problem [regarding proof of age] exists, it exists independently of this bill; this bill does not exacerbate that problem.

Number 0603

KELLY HEPPLER, Director, Division of Sport Fish, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, testified that the department is very supportive of HB 98. He said that in working for the Board of Fisheries for more than 20 years, there were many discussions from users and advisory committees indicating interest in the capabilities being expressed in this bill. He pointed out that this gives the Board of Fisheries an option; it does not issue a mandate. He suggested that the procedure would involve the normal public process of adopting the proposal and would involve the local communities.

Number 0707

MR. HEPPLER continued by saying that enhancing the opportunity to "get kids excited about fishing" contributes to Alaskan traditions such as hunting and fishing, suggesting that involving kids away from computers and malls in urban areas can be a positive thing. He said he was thinking of the Homer Spit, where there might be an opportunity for a "take your daughter/son fishing day," wherein other people could be cleared out of the area and just the kids could be there with their families. He mentioned Campbell Creek as an area that is now very healthy, since there are about 700 or 800 fish over the escapement goal. He suggested that with 60,000 or 70,000 registered anglers in Anchorage, opening up the area to adults would cause some concern. However, opening it up for one or two days of "kid fishing" would be "a neat opportunity for a kid to get a king salmon in a small stream," because he/she may not have that opportunity anyplace else. He also mentioned Twin Lakes in Juneau as another area where fish are stocked. Mr. Heppler concluded his testimony by referring to a letter of support in the committee packet that was from the Board of Fisheries.

Number 0835

REPRESENTATIVE SAMUELS asked Mr. Heppler how the correct age of a youth was determined.

MR. HEPPLER responded that because a lot of high school kids in Anchorage are required to have identification cards, there is some sort of identification being carried. He stated that in fairness, oftentimes there is faith and trust when interviewing kids when you "look them in the eye" because there are some kids who look like they are 22 or 23, and some who look younger than

16. Mr. Heppler said that when there's been a problem in the past, for example, when somebody under 16 is seen breaking an obvious law, the parents are always called. He said the parent would be called right there from the stream bank. He added that this hasn't really been a problem in the past.

CHAIR SEATON asked if there was any anticipation of fines being suggested by the Board of Fisheries. He also asked if the Board of Game experienced the types of problems being discussed.

Number 0973

MR. HEPPLER said that to his knowledge the Board of Game had one hunt outside of Fairbanks that he thought turned out pretty well. He reported that 15 or 16 moose were taken that would not have been taken otherwise and that there were no safety complaints; people were happy and the parents were happy. He said [regarding HB 98] he'd like to get a note out, letting people know of the opportunity - certainly to the advisory committees - indicating a "heads up" and then involving the public process around the state for discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON offered that almost everybody who travels on the airlines these days needs to have some sort of identification. She said that it is probably fairly standard that kids also need to have identification.

MR. HEPPLER said he hoped that they all have identification, adding that when the kids are small, identification has been obtained through the [Alaska State Troopers.] He said that although "not everybody has that," identification has not been a problem in the past. He commented that the department doesn't like to put kids in handcuffs to haul them off to jail.

Number 1075

KATHY HANSEN, Juneau-Douglas Fish and Game Advisory Committee, testified that the advisory committee completely supports HB 98. She stated that especially in an area such as Juneau, where things are getting more restrictive, it is increasingly difficult to provide good opportunities for the younger kids to fish. She noted that on one of the streams that kids go to, there was a request for catch and release. She emphasized that it is slowly becoming more difficult for families to go out and have those fun fishing days because the need to regulate occurs more and more. She stated that this bill would be a good tool for the Board of Fisheries to use in the future in order to

combat some of that. Ms. Hansen concluded by saying that other advisory committees, such as those in Wrangell and Ketchikan, are supportive of this bill as well, even though they have not taken an official action.

Number 1232

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON moved to report HB 98 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HB 98 was reported from the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.