

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

April 20, 2005

8:47 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Gabrielle LeDoux, Co-Chair
Representative Bill Thomas, Co-Chair
Representative Woodie Salmon
Representative Jim Elkins
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Mary Kapsner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative John Harris

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

McKie Campbell

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MCKIE CAMPBELL, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointed commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CO-CHAIR GABRIELLE LEDOUX called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at [8:47:53 AM](#). Representatives LeDoux, Thomas, Elkins, and Salmon were present at the call to order. Representatives Wilson and Kapsner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX announced that the committee would consider the confirmation of the appointment of McKie Campbell to the position of Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

[8:48:32 AM](#)

MCKIE CAMPBELL, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), stated that he was available to answer any of the committee members' questions.

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked Commissioner Campbell why he wanted the job.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL explained that he served in the ADF&G as Special Assistant to the Commissioner in 1991 during Governor Walter Hickel's administration, and he later acted as Deputy Commissioner. He commented, "I enjoyed that job more than any job that I've ever had." He said that he worked with a great group of people [at ADF&G].

[8:49:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked for further clarification of Commissioner Campbell's work history.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL explained that he worked as legislative committee staff in the Alaska State Legislature from 1981-1990. He then became Special Assistant to the Commissioner of ADF&G, and soon after became the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Alaska Governor's Office. In 1993 he returned to ADF&G as Deputy Commissioner.

[8:50:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked Commissioner Campbell to describe the hardest issue that he had to deal with during his service under the Hickel administration.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied, "Subsistence and wolves." Regarding subsistence issues, he said that [it was a challenge] to work with all parties throughout the state to try to achieve some kind of workable solution. He noted that the issues of

subsistence and wolf [population control] have been issues that the state has wrestled with for the last 50 years.

[8:52:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON asked Commissioner Campbell what he would change if he had to deal with subsistence issues again.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied:

I have been part of attempts to resolve subsistence 1986 through the time I left, and I have worked on attempts having to do with constitutional amendments [and] having to do without constitutional amendments. I believe the situation that we have right now is we have federal management. ... In 1990 what happened was the federal subsistence board adopted the state game regulations for subsistence entirely ... but since that time there has been this wide divergence. Some of that has been reasoned; they thought of it and they decided, "No, we don't like the standards the state set," and they've made decisions to have different standards or different limits.

But there's a whole bunch of things that have happened simply because either our board or their board is in slightly different cycles. The opportunities that are provided in the state subsistence law and the opportunities that are provided in the federal subsistence law are not markedly different; it's not greater opportunity one way or the other. But because they're slightly different, we have resulted in a real mess of regulations between the two.... That really is a disadvantage to the users and we are going to try to work with the federal government to see if there's some way we can jointly work together to clean those up.

[8:54:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER commented that there have been a number of both regular and special legislative sessions involving the subsistence issue.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL agreed. He noted that he was involved in every session from 1986-1994. He commented that no one walks

away from the subsistence issue unwounded, but "that doesn't mean we don't continue to need to deal with it."

8:55:40 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER remarked, "My constituents are actually quite pleased with federal management but that's not to say that it's a perfect system; I think dual management is very complicated, especially when you're dealing with mobile species." She opined that she is fortunate in that she comes from an area in Alaska that is all federal land, but she expressed sympathy for people from the Kodiak area, where the land is split between the federal government and [the state government]. She asked Commissioner Campbell, "Can you put on the record what kind of regulations you want changed in federal management, and is part of your plan to diminish the protections we have in [Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)]?"

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered, "I'd like to say unequivocally it is not part of the plan to diminish the protections under ANILCA; I'd like to get that firmly on the record first." He commented that the regulations are very complex, and often the differences between state and federal regulations do not result in significant differences in subsistence opportunity. He presented an example from about 10 years ago in which Red Creek sheep [hunting] was closed to everyone except for residents of Arctic Village. He commented that since that time there is no record of any sheep taken by anybody. He said, "If there's not a subsistence use of those sheep, we ought to go and look and say, 'Can we open it back up for wider access?'"

8:57:50 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER remarked, "Because there is no record does that mean none have been taken? ... Perhaps that's more of a reflection that the subsistence division [of ADF&G] doesn't have the resources to get the data on paper."

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied that this may be the case. He noted that one of the issues of subsistence is always the issue of reporting and keeping accurate records. He commented, "We're not talking about a diminishment of opportunity; what we're talking about is, 'Are there places where you can have clarification for all users and are there places where you may have the ability to increase opportunity for other users without any diminishment.'"

8:59:17 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS voiced disappointment in the ADF&G budget this year; he commented that the budget increases were for salaries only. He asked Commissioner Campbell if he will fight for the ADF&G budget to be increased for new fisheries.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered that he will. He opined that the ADF&G is "pretty beaten down right now." He said that when he worked at the legislature [25] years ago many of the legislators were commercial fishermen who knew the importance of fish and wildlife as the economic engine of Alaska. He commented that he hoped the House Special Committee on Fisheries will help ADF&G be ambassadors to the legislature for the importance of fish and wildlife to the state.

9:01:50 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS talked about the shrimp fishery and king crab fishery, which he surmised are underutilized in certain areas of the state.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded, "I think, unfortunately, throughout our state we have numerous examples of underutilized fisheries, and that's a lost economic opportunity to the state." He commented that he didn't think Railbelt legislators understand the value of [fisheries]. He continued:

The hardest type of economic development for our state to develop is economic opportunities in rural Alaska. And again, both fish and wildlife can provide multiple opportunities for economic base in rural Alaska that benefit our state entirely, because anything that happens out there is also going to benefit the Railbelt.

9:03:48 AM

REPRESENTATIVE KAPSNER interjected that she needed to leave to attend a meeting. She noted that she still has a number of questions that she wishes Commissioner Campbell to answer on the record, so she will pose these questions at the House Resources Standing Committee confirmation hearing.

9:05:43 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON asked for examples of rural economic development ideas.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered that one such idea would be to find underutilized fisheries to develop, or build up existing fisheries; he said that most of these occur in rural parts of the state. He stated that this would give economic opportunity to the fishermen who live in the area, and if there is a raw fish tax, this would provide further funds to the local economy. As another example, he said, would be for village corporations to find economic opportunities in sport fishing and hunting. As a third example, he told the committee how a group of people on Little Diomedea are starting a cottage industry to tie flies, using polar bear hair, for sport fishermen.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL then turned to the topic of tourists, who he said would not come to Alaska if not for the wildlife here. He commented that he would like every tourist to leave the state with a taste for Alaska seafood.

[9:08:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS remarked that he has a lifetime [halibut fishing] permit for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, which he would like to be able to pass on to his children. He said, "I feel like I'm being displaced for cruise ships." He expressed his dislike for having the bay closed to commercial fishing.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL stated, "What happened in Glacier Bay was just flat wrong in my opinion. ... [But] we have a much better leadership of the [National Park Service] now ..., and I think we have some room to work."

CO-CHAIR THOMAS reiterated that he wants lifetime permit holders to be able to hand the permits down to family members.

[9:10:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON asked for Commissioner Campbell's feelings regarding the wolves around McGrath.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded that ADF&G has a lot of active predator control programs. He said that a [wolf hunter] told him that it is very important for [the hunter] to have wolves and bears be part of the ecosystem, but in the last eight years "things had gotten so out of whack" that many moose and caribou

populations were severely depressed. He said that wolves can target particular moose or caribou populations and "ride it down" while supplementing their diets with other foods, and therefore even if the moose or caribou population crashes, the wolves maintain their numbers. He commented that there are definitely places and times where Alaskans need to "step in and reduce wolf numbers."

[9:13:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS related a story in which an ADF&G representative was in Haines for a local advisory board meeting and there was a difference of opinion; the local residents believe that the bear population is too high and the moose population is too low, while [the department believes the opposite]. He voiced the opinion that the department isn't controlling the bear population properly. He also said that he thought the ADF&G employee was rude to the local residents.

[9:15:15 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL remarked that he will look into the bear issue in the Haines area. He noted that ADF&G will need to have adequate funds to do the background research. Regarding employee attitude, he commented that ADF&G personnel are well-educated and good employees, but some of them don't know much about customer relations. He said:

One of the things that I've already talked to the directors about [and] am going to be talking throughout the department about is how we treat and interact with our customers. It doesn't always mean we do what they want. ... But it does mean we can be dealing with people in a friendly, courteous, and above all, square way to no one ever feels they weren't given full truth or were misled.

[9:17:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX commented that a number of her constituents have told her that ADF&G employees have been injecting some sort of dye into the moose population around Iliamna in order to count the moose, but this dyeing process is making the moose unfit for human consumption.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied that he had never heard of this. He said that he will look into the issue, but "it sounds very bizarre." He commented that this is probably a "rural myth."

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX pointed out that she had heard this from several people, including a public health professional in one of the villages.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded that the only thing that he can think of is that the department injects moose when they are being moved to a new location, and those chemicals can make the moose unfit to eat for a short period of time. However the department takes care to ensure that the injected moose are not harvested during the time that those chemicals are still present.

[9:20:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked Commissioner Campbell if he supports the idea of processor shares.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered, "I don't know yet. In all fairness, rationalization is a very tough issue; we're working our way through it." He noted that he was [working for AD&FG] when the halibut fishery was changed to individual fishing quotas (IFQs).

CO-CHAIR THOMAS remarked that he was not supportive of IFQs originally, but now he sees the pros and the cons.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL agreed that there are pros and cons to the IFQ program. He noted that the program had substantial disadvantages for crewmembers.

[9:22:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR LEDOUX asked the commissioner if he has any thoughts on SB 113-GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERY.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded, "We are actively working on that right now and that is tied up in this whole processor share issue.... We will get that to you here in the very near future of what the department's position is."

[9:22:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON remarked:

Sooner or later the state is going to be faced with the idea that there's a lot of Outside hunters coming in, and there's going to be a point where the limit of resources that they're coming up here for is going to be [jeopardized]. ... How do you feel about controlling that influx of [Outside hunters] coming in to take our resources?

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied:

Under both state law and federal law subsistence use of those resources has a clear priority. ... If there is additional resource that is available over and above the needs of subsistence use then that needs to go to resident hunters. And then under state law, if there is additional resource available, and only when there's additional resource available, then I think you have an adequate supply for out of state hunters. But ... I think there's a clear hierarchy there of uses of those resources and I think that's firmly established in both law and in department policy.

[9:24:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON asked what the moose population has to be before the department enforces the law.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered that the moose population will vary by location relative to the local subsistence needs. He explained, "You look at how many local subsistence users there are and what their needs are and then after that you look at how many resident hunters tend to use the hunt. And it varies for every location."

[9:25:15 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL returned to SB 113 and stated that he has not had time to make himself fully knowledgeable on HB 113. He noted that ADF&G is on record supporting the bill.

[9:26:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON moved to forward the name of McKie Campbell to the joint session of the House and Senate for confirmation. There being no objection, the confirmation of

McKie Campbell was advanced 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 [9:26:39 AM](#).