

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

March 22, 2011

6:06 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Steve Thompson, Chair
Representative Craig Johnson, Vice Chair
Representative Lance Pruitt
Representative Scott Kawasaki
Representative Bob Miller

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Alan Austerman
Representative Bob Herron

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS(S):

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

Cora Campbell - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

Benjamin Brown - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Board of Fisheries

Michael Smith - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

CORA CAMPBELL, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointed commissioner to Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G).

JULIANNE CURRY, Director
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

GERALD McCUNE, Lobbyist
United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA)
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

KARL JOHNSTONE, Vice Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

RICK GEASE, Executive Director
Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA)
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

CRAIG COMPEAU, Board Member
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Alaska (SFW)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

KEN LARSEN, Secretary
Prince William Sound Charter Boat Association
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Commissioner Cora Campbell.

BENJAMIN BROWN, Appointee
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC)
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC).

MICHAEL SMITH, Appointee
Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF).

RICK GEASE, Executive Director
Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA)
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Michael Smith.

KARL JOHNSTONE, Vice Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Michael Smith.

CRAIG COMPEAU, Board Member
Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Alaska (SFW)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Michael Smith.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[6:06:41 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVE THOMPSON called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Thompson, Kawasaki, Pruitt, Miller, and Johnson.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): **Alaska Department of Fish & Game**

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CHAIR THOMPSON announced that the only order of business would be confirmation hearings for various board and commissioner appointments.

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CORA CAMPBELL, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), provided a brief biography of growing up in Petersburg, Alaska, in a fishing family. Additionally, she provided a summary of her education and work in the fishing industry and political arena.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked a series of prepared question, beginning with:

Can you give us your view concerning the priority that is given to subsistence hunting and fishing in Alaska.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL stated support for the subsistence priority law as set forth by both the state and federal governments. She stated her belief that continuing subsistence traditions represents an important use of Alaskan resources, and said she intends to manage the department accordingly.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON continued:

How will you work to improve the relationship between the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, the Board of Game, and the Board of Fish, and Alaska subsistence users.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL replied that dialogue has been initiated with the named entities and she expressed a desire to work cooperatively. Additionally, areas of shared interests are being identified in order to promote working together.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked:

What will you do to address the ... low salmon returns.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL answered that the low salmon returns are a cause for great concern, particularly the lack of Chinook to the Yukon River. The Chinook salmon are being researched on a global level to gain a better understanding of the run; utilizing test fisheries, sonar, and working through the North

Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) process to obtain by-catch control.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON posed:

Most people agree that we should manage fish and game and wildlife in our state upon the basic scientific principles. Can you explain your knowledge of these principles in which the management of these resources is based.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL said that three principles apply, regardless of the resource being discussed: sustained yield where all populations are managed to a size that allows for self sustainability; precautionary, which states that the more uncertainty that exists in a population assessment, precautions are taken to incorporate a built-in buffer regarding harvest opportunities; and the eco system principle holding that everything is interrelated and interdependent, thus a single population should not be managed in isolation. The principles would be applied differently, depending on the resource being considered. Regarding salmon populations the goal would be to allow harvest in excess of escapement needs. When considering a population of long lived, slow growing rock fish, the harvest approach would need to be more conservative.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON summarized the final question:

Most of your experience is in commercial fishing. That causes some concern for some of the other user groups. Can you please explain why it should not be a concern for personal use and sports fisherman, that you as commissioner and all of your vast experience in commercial ... Please help me understand that.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL said she routinely sport fishes, participates in personal use fisheries, and holds a respect for all of the resources and fishery responsibilities. Citing her work at the governor's office, she said she has learned to work with all users, has become an advocate for fisheries first, and believes she will be able to address issues in a fair and balanced way.

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REPRESENTATIVE MILLER queried whether she has plans for helping improve the salmon runs and stemming the by-catch issues.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded that the NPFMC has taken action, which is now being implemented, that places a cap on the number of Chinook that can be taken by the Pollock toll fisheries. The cap is being argued, but it's the first time one has been imposed, and represents a step forward. The department is also working through the council process to create a similar program for non-Chinook by-catch, in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries, as well as to address Chinook by-catch in the Gulf of Alaska (GOF).

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER noted that the programs mentioned were entered into prior to her appointment, and asked whether she has any new initiatives to offer for consideration or implementation.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL responded that development of the Bering Sea non-Chinook by-catch, and GOF Chinook by-catch programs have occurred as a result of her being seated on the council. Mechanisms for cooperative information sharing are being considered, as an alternative to a hard cap maximum on fisheries involved with by-catch limits.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER asked whether she has previously held a position that involved hiring and firing.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL said yes, although firing has not been necessary.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON referred to the self imposed, one percent levy, which the Bristol Bay fishermen impose on themselves for salmon development, and inquired how it works and whether it's a model that could be used elsewhere.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL said that the state collects the levy and passes it on to a Regional Seafood Development Association (RSDA). Members are permit holders, who have chosen to assess themselves, and are governed by participants elected to a board of directors, which manage the funds for the best benefit of the fisheries. She named three existing RSDA's and said that provisions exist to allow additional RSDA's to form, on this model. To a follow-up question, she deferred to the department

with purview over the collection and disbursement of the RSDA assessments; the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development (DCCED). She clarified that ADF&G is not involved with the program nor does it provide oversight.

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CHAIR THOMPSON said that the charter industry is being devastated by the recent halibut regulation changes imposed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), and asked whether the state can take any action to mitigate this federal mandate.

COMMISSIONER CAMPBELL indicated that the concern is shared, and that the limits may be an overly restrictive measure to hold the charter fleet to the halibut allocations. The department is attempting to analyze whether there is a size limit which would be more reasonable than what the federal government has mandated; other mechanisms are being considered for proposal.

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JULIANNE CURRY, Director, Petersburg Vessel Owners Association, expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, and stated her belief that the appointee will do what is best for the resource and not favor individual entities or divisions.

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GERALD McCUNE, Lobbyist, United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, and said that she provides a breath of fresh air, arrives to meetings prepared, and does a great job. He opined that she will make an excellent commissioner for all Alaskans.

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KARL JOHNSTONE, Vice Chair, Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, and said she is capable of making advised policy decisions, is a leader, and focuses appropriate attention on the issues. Additionally, the leadership team, which she has appointed, is excellent.

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RICK GEASE, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, stating that she is smart, articulate, and approachable. He opined that concern for her understanding of scientific issues has been unfounded, as she has brought herself up to speed on the research and established appropriate priorities.

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CRAIG COMPEAU, Board Member, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Alaska (SFW), expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, and said the Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (SFW) board has been impressed with her knowledge of the issues on the game side of the department, and opined that fisheries concerns will be addressed as appropriately. He underscored that being a qualified appointee is not about the thickness of the resume, but the attitude.

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KEN LARSEN, Secretary, Prince William Sound Charter Boat Association, expressed support for the confirmation of Commissioner Campbell, stating that there is no objection to this appointment. However, the association would appreciate having specific considerations addressed regarding the recent IPHC mandate for charter caught halibut; statistics were offered.

CHAIR THOMPSON closed public testimony.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON said that opposition prevailed, when Commissioner Campbell was initially appointed; however, he noted, opinions reversed once she assumed the office.

CHAIR THOMPSON concurred with Representative Johnson's observation.

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC)

[6:40:17 PM](#)

BENJAMIN BROWN, Appointee, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), provided a

brief biography of being a lifelong Alaskan, and studying at Georgetown University. He continued at university, became a lawyer, and worked in a variety of venues including interning with the Honorable U.S. Senator Ted Stevens, in Washington D.C., as well as clerking for the Honorable Judge Larry Weeks, in Juneau. He pointed out that he does not have a vested interest in the fishing industry, which is a requirement for sitting on the commission.

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CHAIR THOMPSON asked what brought him to the CFEC.

COMMISSIONER BROWN said that when he learned that there would be an opening on the commission, he conferred with Judge Weeks, among others, regarding the requirements. He reported interest in how the CFEC process works and opined that learning the jurisprudence of the commission is appealing. Leaving private practice will allow him to focus on a specific, complex, if arcane, area of law.

Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)

[6:48:13 PM](#)

MICHAEL SMITH, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), provided a brief history of his life growing up on the banks of the Yukon River. He is an Alaskan Native, and participated in a number of fishery related groups including serving on the by-catch committee, the treaty council, and organizations that have formed to address the Yukon Chinook salmon issues. He described a few of the current fisheries activities he is involved in, which includes a sampling program of the Yukon River Chinook salmon.

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RICK GEASE, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, expressed support for the confirmation of Michael Smith, stating that he has been involved, with the board, for a number of years, has an understanding of the issues, and knows the importance of aligning the stakeholders. He said Mr. Smith is approachable, well prepared, and has a broad knowledge base of the fisheries in Alaska, particularly salmon issues. He predicted that management issues will be appropriately

addressed, and said that Mr. Smith will continue to bring a good understanding of the interior to the board.

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KARL JOHNSTONE, Vice Chair, Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), expressed support for the confirmation of Michael Smith, and said the BOF is a daunting task, but Mr. Smith has proven to be approachable, arrives prepared, remains open minded, and can make hard decisions.

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CRAIG COMPEAU, Board Member, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Alaska (SFW), expressed support for the confirmation of Michael Smith, and underscored that Mr. Smith is articulate, professional, represents all of Alaska, and is a good choice for the BOF.

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CHAIR THOMPSON reminded members that signing the reports, regarding appointments to boards and commissions, in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, Chair Thompson announced that the names of Cora Campbell, Benjamin Brown, and Michael Smith would be forwarded to the joint session of the House and Senate for confirmation.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.