

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

April 4, 2013
10:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Paul Seaton, Chair
Representative Eric Feige
Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Bob Herron
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Kurt Olson
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 98

"An Act relating to escapement thresholds and escapement goals for certain salmon stocks."

- HEARD & HELD

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Board of Fisheries

Tom Kluberton - Talkeetna
Claude Vincent Webster - King Salmon

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 98

SHORT TITLE: SALMON ESCAPEMENT GOALS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) NEUMAN

02/01/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/01/13	(H)	FSH, RES
04/04/13	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM CAPITOL 120

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 98, as sponsor.

BRUCE KNOWLES, Chairman
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission
Willow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 98.

TOM KLUBERTON, Appointee
Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)
Talkeetna, Alaska

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

GERALD MCCUNE, Lobbyist
Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton to the BOF.

JOHN MCCOMBS
Ninilchik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with opposition for HB 98, and with cautious approval of the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

WES HUMBYRD
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

FRITZ JOHNSON
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

PAUL SHADURA, President
Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

MEGAN SMITH
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

DR. ROLAND MAW
Kasilof, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

CLAUDE VINCENT WEBSTER, Appointee
Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF)
King Salmon, Alaska

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

NORMAN VAN VACTOR, President
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC)
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

H. ROBIN SAMUELSEN JR., Member
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC)
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

GERALD MCCUNE, Lobbyist
Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with support for the appointment of Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

RICKY GEASE, Executive Director
Kenai River Sportfishing Association
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF.

ACTION NARRATIVE

10:05:19 AM

CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Present at the call to order Representatives Seaton, Kreiss-Tomkins, Herron, Johnson,

and Feige; Representatives Gattis and Olson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 98-SALMON ESCAPEMENT GOALS

10:05:57 AM

CHAIR SEATON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 98, "An Act relating to escapement thresholds and escapement goals for certain salmon stocks."

10:07:13 AM

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN, Alaska State Legislature, said HB 98 is to address the lack of salmon returns throughout Alaskan waters. Every region has issues and the bill directs the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to prioritize stocks of concern. Further, it directs the Board of Fisheries (BOF) to adopt in regulation specific management objectives for each identified stock of concern. The department, in consultation with the BOF, would set the management objective for that stock. HB 98 stipulates that the objective must include a sustained escapement threshold (SET) and an optimal escapement goal (OEG). An escapement bar would be set for specific areas as well as a sustainable escapement threshold.

10:14:09 AM

BRUCE KNOWLES, Chairman, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission, stated support for HB 98 and reported that currently there are 11 stocks of concern, and the possibility of six more becoming eligible in 2013 according to ADF&G. Particular management is needed to ensure a higher escapement goal to protect these stocks. The current escapement goals do not meet the needs of the mixed stock returns in many areas, he opined, as not enough adults of certain species are able to return to the spawning ground sanctuaries. He pointed out that an SET has yet to be established on any stream in Alaska, but it is the point at which salmon will cease to populate an area. He stressed the need for the department to have this managerial tool as an option.

10:16:36 AM

REPRESENTATIVE NEUMAN said concerns have been expressed for the optimal escapement goals because of the allocative factors; however, the allocation will be handled by the BOF.

CHAIR SEATON announced that HB 98 would be held.

[The committee heard comments on HB 98 later in the meeting.]

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Board of Fisheries

[Contains discussion of HB 98]

[10:17:15 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON announced that the committee would now turn its attention to the confirmation hearings for the appointments to the Board of Fisheries.

[10:17:33 AM](#)

TOM KLUBERTON, Appointee, Board of Fisheries (BOF), said introduction to the BOF process began for him as a member of the Mat-Su Borough Assembly working to reinstate the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Sportsman Committee. As the de facto chairman, he lead the committee through the board process to have the Susitna and Yentna River sockeye salmon listed as a stock of yield concern; 2008. Following that experience he followed a number of requests to accept a nomination to the BOF. The term he has served is currently coming to a close and, he said, serving for a second cycle should prove to be more productive; building on the educational experience of the first term. Finally, he said he has received many inquiries and substantial support to continue service.

[10:20:52 AM](#)

GERALD MCCUNE, Lobbyist, Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU), stated support for Tom Kluberton's appointment, and cited the letter of support contained in the committee packet from CDFU.

[10:21:47 AM](#)

JOHN MCCOMBS voiced opposition to HB 98, and stated cautious approval for the appointments of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF. He opined that the plans the appointees have configured to restrict the drift net fleet will harm the fishery and the local economy. He indicated that the state has funded the promotion of quality Alaskan salmon

products and restricting the fishery is a "cruel hoax." Further, he reported that Ninilchik has not had a representative from the area on the BOF for 30 years and neither of these appointments will rectify the void. The Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay fisheries are both unique to each other. The 2014 board cycle will be addressing concerns from the Ninilchik area and he suggested the meeting be held in Soldotna.

[10:23:29 AM](#)

WES HUMBYRD stated support for the retention of Claude Vincent Webster on the BOF. He opined that the appointee basis his comments and decisions on scientific data, not political interests.

[10:25:08 AM](#)

FRITZ JOHNSON expressed support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF. As a long-time commercial fisherman in Bristol Bay and a frequent participant at BOF proceedings, he said it's important that Bristol Bay have an effective voice in board deliberations. He finished, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

I haven't always agreed with Mr. Webster's positions on Bristol Bay issues, but I do have confidence in his understanding of the Board's statewide mandate to manage commercial, sport and subsistence fisheries for sustainability, and his ability to provide a broad understanding of Bristol Bay issues to the Board and public.

[10:26:20 AM](#)

PAUL SHADURA, President, Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association (KPFA), stated support for both appointees, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Our organization has been representing commercial fishermen within the waters of Cook Inlet since 1954.

At present, our members represent primarily commercial setnet fisher families; although we also have members, who represent the processing industry, drift fisheries, supplies and the general public.

The KPFA Board of Directors voted unanimously on March 29, 2013 to support Governor Parnell's nominees for vacancies on the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

We have worked with Vince Webster, Tom Kluberton and Reed Morisky and find that all three are approachable, respectful and concerned about the sustainability of our State's fisheries resources, this objective happens to be KPFA's mission statement, "Ensuring the Sustainability of Our Fishery Resources".

Individually they expend the extra effort; to listen to stakeholders; to understand complex science; to strive for a "balance" of opportunities for traditional harvesters. A feat that requires not only a concern for conservation, but also to maintain an abundant yield of fisheries stocks so that all citizens can appreciate our State's resources.

[10:28:23 AM](#)

MEGAN SMITH expressed support for the appointment of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster, and said she has seen both gentlemen in action and found them to be personable, concerned, and approachable. Additionally, they appear to be devoted to the public process, resistant to special interest group pressures, and dedicated to the conservation of the resources. As a new face at recent board meetings, she said equal consideration was given to her opinion by these board members.

[10:29:57 AM](#)

DR. ROLAND MAW stated support for both appointees to the BOF.

[10:30:56 AM](#)

CLAUDE VINCENT WEBSTER, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF), recounted his active interest in the fishing community where he has served on the local advisory committee for 15 years. He said he has been approached by a number of interest groups requesting that he accept the nomination to continue on the board.

[10:31:57 AM](#)

NORMAN VAN VACTOR, President, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), stated support for the appointment of Tom

Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster, and said it is not possible to please everyone with every decision. He cited that Mr. Webster comes from a region that represents perhaps the largest and most diverse fishery in Alaska, and opined that at board meetings he is thoughtful, knowledgeable, and a good listener.

[10:32:51 AM](#)

H. ROBIN SAMUELSEN JR., Member, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), expressed support for both candidates and elaborated that Mr. Webster is now a seasoned board member, and said his talents are clearly evident through the fairness he has demonstrated for the diverse fisheries, as well as concern for the resources. He said:

I don't agree with my wife always, and I don't agree with Vince always, but he's fair to the fishermen whether you're a sport, subsistence, or commercial [user].

[10:34:06 AM](#)

GERALD MCCUNE, Lobbyist, Cordova District Fishermen United, stated support for Claude Vincent Webster and said he brings valuable experience to the board.

[10:34:27 AM](#)

RICKY GEASE, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, stated opposition to the re-appointment of Claude Vincent Webster to the BOF, due to certain process issues that have occurred during his tenure, and said the chairman would be receiving written opposition for inclusion in the committee packet.

[10:34:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON made a motion to advance the confirmations of Tom Kluberton and Claude Vincent Webster to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, to the joint session for consideration. There being no objection, the confirmations were advanced.

CHAIR SEATON reminded members that signing the report regarding appointments to the boards and commissions in no way reflect individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees,

and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[10:35:28 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.