

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 16, 2015

1:01 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Benjamin Nageak, Co-Chair  
Representative David Talerico, Co-Chair  
Representative Mike Hawker, Vice Chair  
Representative Bob Herron  
Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative Kurt Olson  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Andy Josephson  
Representative Geran Tarr

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Department Of Natural Resources - Commissioner

Mark Myers - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Alaska Department Of Fish & Game - Commissioner

Sam Cotten - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 139

"An Act allowing the Alaska Gasline Development Corporation, or a subsidiary of the corporation, to build, operate, and maintain a gas pipeline within the boundaries of the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge, the Minto Flats State Game Refuge, the Captain Cook State Recreation Area, the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, the Willow Creek State Recreation Area, and the Denali State Park."

- HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MARK MYERS, PhD, Commissioner-Designee  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as Commissioner-Designee.

SAM COTTEN, Commissioner-Designee  
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as Commissioner-Designee.

ERNIE WEISS, Director  
Natural Resources Department  
Aleutians East Borough  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Commissioner Cotten to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:01:47 PM](#)

**CO-CHAIR DAVID TALERICO** called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Representatives Josephson, Herron, Seaton, Tarr, Hawker, Nageak, and Talerico were present at the call to order. Representatives Johnson and Olson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**Department of Natural Resources, Commissioner**

[1:02:35 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR TALERICO announced that the first order of business would be confirmation hearings for Mark Myers, the Commissioner-Designee of the Department of Natural Resources and Sam Cotten, the Commissioner-Designee of the Department of Fish and Game.

[1:03:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER expressed his endorsement for moving along both confirmations to the House floor.

1:03:46 PM

MARK MYERS, PhD, Commissioner-Designee, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be commissioner. He said that he is from Wisconsin and first came to Alaska in 1974 on a geologic field trip with his university. He has several geology degrees from the University of Wisconsin, and started with working for ARCO in order to be in Alaska. He spoke of his family, and he reviewed some of his experience with ARCO, including work in the Beaufort Sea and the Kuparuk River Unit development. He noted that he then earned a PhD and began working for the State of Alaska as a petroleum geologist and then, again, went to work for the industry. Later, he became director of [DNR's Division of] Oil & Gas, and when he quit after five years, he became the director of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in Washington D.C. He said that he then worked two years as the AGIA [Alaska Gasline Inducement Act] coordinator and was selected to become the Vice Chancellor of Research for the University of Alaska. He stated that he has also served 26 years in the Air Force Reserve as a pilot and intelligence officer from which he retired as a lieutenant colonel. He said he has had the privilege of looking at resource issues from a variety of perspectives and noted that he has been everything from a technical geologist, a research scientist, to a developer of oil and gas fields. He managed the small division in DNR with about 120 people and the USGS with 9,000 people and a budget of approximately \$1.4 billion. He serves on the National Petroleum Council, the Methane Hydrate Federal Advisory Committee, and the Arctic Council's Scientific Cooperation Taskforce.

1:10:36 PM

COMMISSIONER MYERS said his philosophy is expressed in the four standards he set for DNR: 1) stewardship, managing resources on the behalf of the people of Alaska and future residents, 2) transparency, being open as to why and how decisions are made, 3) science-based management, including the use of traditional knowledge and western science, and 4) integrity, which is necessary in gaining trust. He noted the changes in the world oil market and in the environment, including isostatic rebound, coastal erosion, and thermokarsting, and he said knowledge of these changes will lead to adaptive strategies "otherwise we are paralyzed by uncertainty," he stated.

1:13:13 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he appreciates his past interactions with Commissioner Myers, and asked about DNR's statutory mission, its current mission statement.

COMMISSIONER MYERS stated that DNR's current mission statement, which is being reviewed, is "to responsibly develop Alaska's resources and making them available to the maximum use and benefit consistent with the public interest." Historically, the statements have included terminology to "conserve and develop." The previous Commissioner, Dan Sullivan, had a less balanced leaning toward maximum use, he said, but conservation is important as well in that there should be a true balancing of Alaska's resource needs. Alaska is an economy dependent upon resource development on public lands. The DNR job is challenging because resources are the economic engine of the state, he added. Other than tourism, most economic activities are on Alaska's 160 million acres and not on federal Alaska lands. He noted the need to balance fish versus oil, for example, and expressed the importance of good regulatory structures to preserve renewable resources while developing the nonrenewable ones.

[1:15:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said the legislature established the department with a statutory mission statement, and asked how he can create a different mission statement for DNR.

COMMISSIONER MYERS said he has requested legal advice on that issue, and noted that every commissioner has slightly modified the mission statement. His goal is to honor statutes and regulations, and he will not make a change without bringing it before the legislature. In practice, DNR management has been consistent regarding responsibilities, and the primary variation has been in the public process, he opined. It is imperative that Alaska has long-term, sustainable development and provides resources for communities as well. There are four core services that reflect what DNR does, perhaps more than the mission statement, he said. Those are to: foster responsible commercial development and use of state land and natural resources consistent with the public interest for long-term wealth and employment; mitigate the threat to the public from natural hazards by providing comprehensive fire protection and identifying significant geological hazards; provide access to state lands for public and private use, settlement, and recreation; and ensure sufficient data acquisition and

assessment of land and resources to foster responsible resource and community development and public safety, he explained.

1:18:51 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he is pleased that any changes [to the mission statement] will be brought before the legislature.

1:19:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER said that his most important factor for legislative conferees is professional qualifications. It is not relevant that Representative Hawker is in agreement with the conferees or not, he added, and in his 13 years with the legislature, no one has had such a complete and appropriate resume as Commissioner Myers. "Mr. Myers qualifications just scream off the page," he stated. He said that the management of DNR is broader than just geology, and he asked how Commissioner Myers will approach other issues.

COMMISSIONER MYERS said he has had a lot of experience in other areas, for example, as vice chancellor he was involved in research in every area that DNR is involved with: agriculture; water, including sea ice and glaciers; forest monitoring and management; parks and preservation; and environmental change. He added that the USGS goes beyond geology as well, including Landsat satellites and climate change research, and he advocated and got the new climate science centers. The agency provided much of the data the world uses. He said he worked with the Secretary of the Interior to release the Landsat data for free, and that resulted in 100 percent increase in its use and generates far more revenue in the private sector than the agency spent. He said he understands the issues, noting that DNR is a mini version of the Department of Interior (DOI), without fish and game, but with forestry. He added that he had many valuable experiences and learned from a lot of smart people. Land use management, economic development, and conflict resolution are critical pieces, and he said that "often the minimizing effect on resource development is a single other resource." He gave the example of water being the most limiting factor on economic development in many places. Conflict between oil and gas development and cattle ranchers may be as strong as between development and environmentalists, and he learned to bring the parties together upfront. Often, the permitting process is the key to success, he said, and he noted the difficulties are increasing because of regulatory factors and because of the diverse number of stakeholders. He said it is crucial to gather

basic scientific data and to have agency collaboration, and he has considerable experience in those areas.

[1:26:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER surmised Commissioner Myers is committed to being a science-based manager. [Commissioner Myers agreed.]

[1:26:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON noted that the Department of Interior is trying to "limit us," and Commissioner Myers will "try to change that future." He asked what DOI has lost in the meaning of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the future of the United States and to Alaska. "What have they ignored?"

COMMISSIONER MYERS said, "Quite a lot." He noted that he was asked to explain the resource potential of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Congress in 1995. He has observed that Congress never made the final decision on the 1002 Area of the refuge. It is only 8 percent of the refuge, but it is Congress's decision to make, he explained. The State of Alaska sees the resource potential, he added, and the USGS did the last professional resource assessment. "We don't know how much of it is there, but the numbers suggest a significant amount of hydrocarbons...about 10 billion barrels." It is a huge amount, and the question is if it can be developed without significant harm to wildlife. He said he personally believes it can be done, and has argued that many times in his career. He added that the value of wilderness is "a very different standard." It is much more subjective than measuring the effects on caribou, for example. It can be argued that a road through [the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge] to King Cove will destroy the wilderness status, but one cannot successfully argue that the road will significantly affect the black brant, he opined. If "wilderness" means "don't touch it," then it clearly needs Congressional approval, he stated.

[1:30:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON inquired as to his thoughts on the new term used by the DOI, "landscape characteristics," rather than "wilderness," and if the intent is to confuse people.

COMMISSIONER MYERS said it confuses him, and as a scientist prefers specific terms that everyone understands in order to reach common resolutions for any issue. New categorizations

ought to be clearly defined, he opined. One of the challenges faced by the state is that each of the federal agencies within DOI have specific missions mandated with very different purposes; therefore, land classification matters. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is a multi-use agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service protects wildlife, the Park Service protects the values of parks, and the Bureau of Reclamation provides water, manages dams, and promotes flood safety. He offered that BLM, being more multiple use, would have less restrictive terms than the Fish and Wildlife Service, but "I think there's a crossover of agency missions or a collapsing of those standards." He advised he already started a dialogue with the director of BLM and the chief of staff for the secretary [of DOI], and he challenged them on some issues. He further advised they were amenable to resolving some of the issues on a professional level. Rather than having an external fight, he said he wants to get "inside" because he knows the agencies and knows there are many good people in them. He noted that he is apolitical and approaches issues as things to be worked out in an acceptable way. He said he is optimistic because the first conversations went well.

[1:33:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE OLSON said he rarely comments on nominees unless they are unqualified, but Commissioner Myers was one of the first persons he met in Juneau, and he has known him personally and professionally and finds him to be very responsive and accessible. He recalled when Commissioner Myers worked with USGS, and the enthusiasm of his employees was "mind-boggling." Commissioner Myers has a good eye for talent and generates enthusiasm, he added.

[1:34:54 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK thanked Commissioner Myers for providing information, and he agreed with earlier committee comments regarding his breadth of experience. Regarding "the place where I was born," he said Congress makes a decision and not an agency, but "the agency, in this case, has usurped the power of Congress by quasi-designating an area as a wilderness." He said he was happy to hear the comments made by Commissioner Myers.

[1:36:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON spoke of two legal cases in the Supreme Court involving DNR. One was brought by the tribe in Nondalton

about land classification and public participation, he explained, and the second decision was in superior court, and it involved the Chuitna River and watershed. Comments are now being taken regarding the water rights application, he said. Judge Rindner almost held the agency in contempt "for failure to process the applications and treat them as ... a quasi-property interest." He asked whether there is a theme in those cases that Commissioner Myers would like to correct.

COMMISSIONER MYERS answered that he did not know the cases in detail, but he is receiving a lot of public comment on the water reservations. He said DNR recognizes the need to have a public process on water reservations, and those rights do exist. "We're going to adjudicate those very, very fairly," but it is an ongoing process. He believes that DNR has done what was asked by the courts. He noted that he was present for the issues surrounding shallow gas leasing and recognizes the need for that program as a source of rural energy while retaining other values. He said he believes they reached a good resolution, but it took a rewrite of the legislation because it had taken out the public process. There were a lot of angry people in the communities, including Homer, and it was "not so much the program but the lack of public input into the program." "Don't take out public process," he added, "it's expensive, it takes time, but it's critical ... for people to be heard." In Bristol Bay, for example, where there were lease sales, Commissioner Myers was the Director of Oil and Gas, and the state provided for a lot of public input. He said DNR worked with the tribal organizations and the communities and asked them what they needed to be protected, so there was not much pushback during those lease sales. By bringing in the public protection and mitigation issues upfront and by accepting that not 100 percent of the leases would be leased, a majority can be leased. That is how to reach the balances that are accepted by communities, he stated. He stressed the need for public process and transparency, which is challenging when there are limited resources and time, but they are critical.

[1:41:49 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said she was pleased with Commissioner Myer's emphasis on science-based policy. The governor said he is interested in additional collaboration and work with the university, and she said there are many opportunities for substantive work for policy development and as part of training state workers in Alaska.

COMMISSIONER MYERS said that Alaska needs to diversify its economy by bringing in a R&D [research and development] focus. Alaska has unique environments and resources and has an amazing opportunity with the Arctic to do [indecipherable] development-sensors for unmanned vehicles, which is disruptive technology for monitoring the environment and contributing to public safety, he stated. The university is one of the best in world for using small unmanned vehicles, and there will soon be partnerships with some of the major companies. It is an opportunity to bring in jobs and industry, he expressed. He spoke of micro-grids and generating power from combined renewable and fossil fuel systems and said the university test lab is competent in these areas. He stated that the university has been visited by the Secretary of the Navy and NATO parliamentarians for science and technology, and this shows opportunities. He stressed the university's technical capacity and scientific research equipment that the state cannot duplicate. He noted that the university can be funded by sources the state cannot, like the National Science Foundation. Alaska has a State Committee on Research, which identifies the state's research needs and the university's ability to perform that research. Training undergraduates builds critical thinking skills, and they will be that much more valuable as employees, he stated. Alaska needs people with doctorate degrees to understand arctic issues. The university produces about 50 per year, and they will be future leaders.

[1:47:13 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked whether it is within the power of the commissioner to make changes to mission statements.

COMMISSIONER MYERS said he has asked for a legal opinion, but there is a belief that it would require legislative approval and he would get that approval. He noted that Commissioner Dan Sullivan's mission statement exists without having received legislative consent.

[1:48:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR noted that the transition team encouraged developing formal training for conducting public hearings. She said that would be beneficial.

COMMISSIONER MYERS concurred. It is not just facilitation skills, it is understanding how adaptive management works and finding a method that works for the state. The university

teaches some of the fundamentals of it, and it is important that people are trained to the standards that the state really needs.

[1:50:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said there was a discussion about a decade ago regarding DNR usurping some of the roles traditionally played by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). He asked what happened, and asked about the relationship between the two agencies.

COMMISSIONER MYERS recalled that the Division of Habitat was moved from ADF&G to DNR by then Governor Frank Murkowski. The relationship works well depending on the personality of the directors and their willingness to elevate decisions, he added. It can work fine as long the division maintains core habitat values, but there was never trust in that decision by the wildlife community. The best answer is to have a strong collaboration between the agencies at the director level and to implement science-based management. He noted that when he was the director of Oil and Gas, he was frustrated at times because the Habitat Division was not using enough science in its decisions, "and I challenged them on it." He said it should not come to that; there should be good data to make good habitat decisions.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO noted his previous military experience, and said it was quite a commitment. He then opened public testimony. Upon determining no one wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[1:53:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON moved to forward the name of Mark Myers, Commissioner-Designee, to the full body for consideration. He reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects each member's approval or disapproval of the appointees and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. [The motion was adopted.]

The committee took an at-ease from 1:54 p.m. to 1:56 p.m.

**Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Commissioner**

[1:56:47 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR TALERICO announced that the final order of business would be a confirmation hearing for Sam Cotten, the Commissioner-designee of the Department of Fish and Game. He noted that Commissioner Cotten has served as a legislator.

[1:57:17 PM](#)

SAM COTTEN, Commissioner-Designee, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), told the committee that he was a freshman legislator 40 years ago and served 14 years in the House and two in the Senate. He said he was born in Juneau but grew up mostly in Palmer and Eagle River. He did two military tours in Vietnam after high school. He enjoys sport fishing, and he has been a purse seiner in Cook Inlet for about 25 years. He said he worked for several years for the Aleutians East Borough as a resource analyst, working on oil and gas leases and on special area plans such as critical habitat plans. He noted that the legislature creates critical habitat areas and the agency puts together a management plan. There was a lot of public participation, and it gave him a feel for how important the public process is. He said the state would fully involve the public with any changes to such management plans.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said he primarily worked on fisheries issues when working for the Aleutians East Borough. The area has a mixed-stock fishery and is strategically located near the end of the Alaska Peninsula. It is the "Area M" fishery and often gets blamed when other fisheries were not doing too well, he said. This allowed him to get familiar with many other fishery areas. He was appointed to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and he will now serve on the council as the commissioner. There are many opportunities to protect Alaskan fishing communities, but it is a never-ending battle in some cases, he explained. The Seattle fleets are referred to as distant water fleets, and they have fished in Alaska for a century or more. The majority of fish caught between three and 200 miles are caught by non-Alaskans, but the fish are often landed, processed, or transferred within the state. He said he believes that the fishing industry is the largest employer in Alaska. He commented on the level of professionalism in ADF&G and the commitment to do the work. Many Alaskans depend on the department to get access to fish and game resources. He said working with the federal government presents challenges as those agencies have different mission statements than ADF&G. The polarization, he said, he would like to improve with better communication, working in communities, and outreach.

2:06:01 PM

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON noted that the transition team spoke to a "fish-first" policy, and he asked what that meant and if he subscribed to it.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said that refers to the sustained yield, scientific approach. He said harvest will be allowed on a continuous basis, recognizing that the fish come first. Sustained yield is a constitutional mandate, he added.

2:06:56 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON noted that Commissioner Cotten chaired this same committee many years ago, and asked how the legislature has changed its approach to fish and game.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said there is always a lot of passion about fish and game issues, but he has seen a large change in Alaska's demographics. When he was on the committee there were more legislators representing fishing communities, so there may be more challenges on understanding the importance of sustainable fishing communities. The population in Southcentral Alaska has increased demands on salmon resources in Cook Inlet, but the department has recognized that subsistence use is a priority and personal use is growing in popularity, he stated.

2:09:02 PM

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said the transition report states that there should be no significant loss of fish habitat knowingly permitted in the state. She asked how that can be accomplished.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said there are a couple of habitat issues now surfacing, including the Chuitna coal mine. One of his primary jobs is to protect fish, but there is a need to remain objective, and when "people come in and apply for Title 16 permits, we can't have our minds made up in advance." He noted that he comes from a mining family, so he sees a little bit of romance in mining, but he expressed concern on taking chances on Alaska's fishery habitat.

2:10:46 PM

REPRESENTATIVE NAGEAK said Commissioner Cotten received the legislative conservation award in 1988 by the Wildlife Federation of Alaska, and the Alaska Outdoor Council gave him a

recognition award in the same year, "and that's quite an accomplishment."

[2:11:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE OLSON asked about traditional knowledge.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN answered that science has to be the primary driver, "but if we ignore traditional knowledge, we're making a mistake."

REPRESENTATIVE OLSON said he has only seen it used successfully at the Red Dog Mine. The elders were consulted on caribou passages, he explained.

[2:12:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council manages the federal waters from three to 200 [miles from shore]. There was a problem in the 1990s with a trawl fishery killing more value in crab and halibut than was being harvested in the United States. At that time, the council allowed a fishery if it had any economic value, and he asked what Commissioner Cotten thought about net loss fisheries and bycatch issues.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said there are 10 national standards used by the council, and the first is to allow for optimum yield, but another is to reduce bycatch as much as practicable. For example, there is a bycatch limit in the Bering Sea and a limit to overall halibut removals, so when the bycatch equaled the overall halibut limit, the people of the Pribilof Islands and anyone else fishing in Alaska could not fish for halibut in the Bering Sea. "We took action and petitioned the Secretary for emergency response and visited the Halibut Commission and pretty aggressively chased after that," and in the June 2015 meeting there will be final action to significantly reduce bycatch for those trawl fisheries, he stated.

[2:15:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he is working with the Alaska delegation to clarify that [the council] is not obligated to conduct a fishery that is destroying [too many fish], and he is glad that Commissioner Cotten is looking at it. The fishermen should be told that if they are operating "in those conditions" they risk losing access to the fisheries. He noted that the

state has reviewed the king salmon problem and the sustainable salmon initiative, and Representative Seaton has attended many meetings regarding the Yukon-Kuskokwim [fisheries]. There were seven different theories on what might be happening, and those theories were to be tested, he said. He expressed concern that ADF&G has looked at Cook Inlet and is doing a gap analysis, "not testing any theories ... and we never eliminate anything because all we're doing is gaining information." He asked if the department will be testing scientific theories or merely collecting information.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said there is funding available from the legislature for Chinook salmon research, and it is an extremely high priority for the department to conduct that research and "learn what we can." In the Bering Sea, the Chinook salmon bycatch are primarily Alaska fish, and in the Gulf of Alaska, 95 percent of the bycatch are from Southeast Alaska, Canada, and Washington. It appears that, for some reason in Alaska waters, the marine survival of juveniles are suffering. He supports directing attention to that, but the best scientists point at ocean conditions, "and that means a whole lot of different possibilities."

[2:19:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that research by the Bering Sea sustainable salmon initiative tested seven theories that may be impacting king salmon by going out with RFPs [request for proposals] to collect data to prove or disprove those theories, yet ADF&G's gap analysis for Cook Inlet merely sought to collect information without proving or disproving a theory, so there is no way to move on. "So, I hope, as commissioner, you'll make sure that the people when they're doing and spending the dollars that we allocate are actually doing science and either looking at proving or disproving a theory instead of just saying 'we're going to collect some information.'" He added that it is difficult to support research when it generates information but does not come out with any answers.

[2:21:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked about the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in terms of management of personal-use [fisheries] now that Senator Begich is not in Congress and Representative Young might take the lead. She asked what Commissioner Cotten's role will be.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said he is watching it closely, and he has seen the most recent proposal that Representative Young has advanced. It is not much different from what has been on the table before, but it speaks to recreational and subsistence representation [on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council]. There are no designated seats, he said, but the wording encourages participation by a variety of user groups.

[2:22:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON requested an explanation of the give and take and mutual respect expected between federal wildlife policy prohibiting intensive game management and Alaska's policy.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN noted the difference between national park policy on intensive management and Alaska statutes, which require it. Alaska's goal is to reduce predators to the benefit of consumptive users. He said his concern is the lack of understanding of that goal by those at the park service who called it "game farming." He reiterated that the Board of Game is statutorily required to do intensive management, which may include habitat manipulation such as controlled burns.

[2:25:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON said there are "a lot of practices that are permitted, primarily over the past 20 years, that were unknown to Alaska in the 70s and 80s," and he asked whether that shows a shift in Alaska culture or just that Alaska populations have grown and require more prey. There is a divide caused by the intensive management law, he noted.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN suggested he was referring to baiting and snaring brown bears, which the UFWS and the National Park Service do not allow. He noted that brown bear baiting has not been effective for predator control. There are more efficient techniques, he added. The practice of crawling into dens to kill bears is probably not occurring very often, he added.

[2:27:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked if Alaska's recent warm winter will require different management decisions or responses.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said there may be lower water levels, but he is not sure what he would do about that. He said the fire potential will need state involvement.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said people have suggested that hibernating animals may emerge early and find a lack of plant availability.

COMMISSIONER COTTEN said he could not answer that, but there have been other weather factors affecting multiple species, like ice covering sheep feeding areas.

[2:29:22 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR TALERICO opened public testimony.

ERNIE WEISS, Director, Natural Resources Department, Aleutians East Borough, urged the confirmation of Commissioner Cotten. Commissioner Cotten has a long history of public service and leadership in Alaska, and he has the breadth of experience and the knowledge to lead the ADF&G. He said he has worked closely with him, and he has been a mentor and a good friend.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO closed public testimony.

[2:31:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON moved to forward the name of Sam Cotten, Commissioner-Designee, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, to the joint session for consideration, without reflecting the intent by any member to vote either for or against his confirmation. [There being no objection, the motion was adopted.]

The committee took an at-ease from 2:32 p.m. to 2:34 p.m.

[2:34:01 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:34 p.m.