

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 20, 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 Paul Seaton
Representative Andy Josephson
Representative Geran Tarr

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Kurt Olson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 137

"An Act raising certain fees related to sport fishing, hunting, and trapping; raising the age of eligibility for a sport fishing, hunting, or trapping license exemption for state residents to 65 years of age; requiring state residents to purchase big game tags to take certain species; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 137

SHORT TITLE: HUNTING, SPORT FISH, TRAPPING FEES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) TALERICO

03/06/15	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/06/15	(H)	RES, FIN
03/20/15	(H)	RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

JOSHUA BANKS, Staff
Representative David Talerico
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a sectional analysis of HB 137, Version N.

EDDIE GRASSER, Lobbyist
Safari Club International-Alaska
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 137, supported increasing the fees for hunting and fishing licenses.

ROD ARNO, Executive Director
Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC)
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in regard to aspects of HB 137.

RON SOMMERVILLE, Board Member
Territorial Sportsmen
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in regard to aspects of HB 137.

THOR STACEY, Lobbyist
Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA)
Auke Bay, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 137, supported the proposed 100 percent increase in nonresident tag fees.

GEORGE PIERCE
Kasilof, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 137, opposed the proposed raise in license fees for Alaska residents but supported the proposed raise in license fees for nonresidents.

BRUCE DALE, Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to HB 137.

GARY STEVENS
Chugiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Suggested changes to HB 137.

STEVEN FLORY
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 137.

RICKY GEASE, Executive Director

Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc. (KRSA)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137 and suggested some additions to the bill.

LARRY MORRIS
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137 and suggested some changes to the bill.

DEB RUDIS
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137 and suggested some changes to the bill.

NANCY HILSTRAND
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 137, supported the proposed license fee increases and made suggestions.

DON QUARBERG
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered suggestions regarding HB 137.

KEITH WOODWORTH
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137.

BARRY WHITE-HILL
Alaska Chapter Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137 and suggested some changes.

TOM LAMAL
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 137 and suggested some changes.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR BENJAMIN NAGEAK called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Representatives Seaton, Johnson, Josephson, Tarr, Hawker, Talerico, and Nageak were

present at the call to order. Representative Herron arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 137-HUNTING, SPORT FISH, TRAPPING FEES

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK announced that the only order of business is HOUSE BILL NO. 137, "An Act raising certain fees related to sport fishing, hunting, and trapping; raising the age of eligibility for a sport fishing, hunting, or trapping license exemption for state residents to 65 years of age; requiring state residents to purchase big game tags to take certain species; and providing for an effective date."

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REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS), labeled 29-LS0625\N, Bullard, 3/16/15, as the working document.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER then objected for discussion purposes.

JOSHUA BANKS, Staff, Representative David Talerico, Alaska State Legislature, drew attention to the committee packet and the written summary of changes to HB 137 that would be made by the proposed CS, Version N. He explained that the first change is a title change to reflect major changes within Version N.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER removed his objection. There being no further objection, Version N was before the committee.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that HB 137 has not previously been before the committee. He requested that a sectional analysis be provided for Version N rather than an explanation of differences between Version N and the original bill.

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK concurred and requested Mr. Banks to provide a sectional analysis of Version N.

MR. BANKS reviewed the sectional analysis for Version N provided in the committee packet. He explained that Section 1 relates to AS 16.05.251(a), which deals with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's (ADF&G) ability to establish different open and closed seasons for fishing based on different age groups. Currently,

ADF&G can do this for residents that are over age 60 or below age 16. Version N would raise the age from 16 to 18 and would raise the eligibility for a permanent resident license from age 60 to 62. Section 2 would raise the resident [sport] fishing license fee from \$15 to \$20 and the fee for blind residents from \$0.25 to \$0.50. Section 3 would raise the resident hunting license fee from \$25 to \$30. [Section 4] would raise the fee for a resident hunting and trapping combination license from \$39 to \$450. Section 5 would raise the resident trapping license fee from \$15 to \$20. Section 6 would raise the resident hunting and [sport] fishing combination license from \$39 to \$45. Section 7 would raise the fee for a resident hunting, trapping, and [sport] fishing combination license from \$53 to \$60. Section 7 would also limit those who are eligible for a low-income license and increase the income limit as well. Under current statute a person only has to show receipt of some form of welfare assistance and doesn't have to meet the income requirement. After hearing from several groups the sponsor thinks that if a person is meeting the income requirement the person should be eligible for a low-income license, but not merely because the person is receiving federal assistance. The income limit would be raised from \$8,200 to \$29,820, the current federal poverty level for a family of four in Alaska.

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MR. BANKS said Section 8 would raise nonresident sport fishing license fees as follows: a 14-day license from \$50 to \$60; a 7-day license from \$30 to \$40; a 3-day license from \$20 to \$30; and a 1-day license from \$10 to \$15. Section 9 would raise the nonresident annual sport fishing license from \$100 to \$130. Section 10 would raise the nonresident hunting license from \$85 to \$125. Section 11 would raise the nonresident hunting and trapping combination license from \$250 to \$325. Section 12 would raise nonresident big game tag fees as follows: black bear from \$225 to \$335; brown/grizzly bear from \$500 to \$750; bison from \$450 to \$675; caribou from \$325 to \$485; deer from \$150 to \$225; elk and goat from \$300 to \$450; moose from \$400 to \$600; sheep from \$425 to \$635; wolf from \$30 to \$45; wolverine from \$175 to \$260; and musk oxen from \$1,100 to \$1,650. Section 13 would raise the waterfowl conservation tag from \$50 to \$10 and would also make some conforming amendments to the increase in ages for residents from age 60 to 62 and from age 16 to 18. Section 14 would raise the nonresident small game hunting license fee from \$20 to \$30.

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MR. BANKS, continued the sectional analysis, explaining that Section 15 would raise the nonresident alien hunting license fee from \$300 to \$450. He said nonresident alien is defined in AS 16.05.940(23) as someone who is not a citizen of the U.S. Section 16 would raise the nonresident alien big game tags as follows: black bear from \$300 to \$400; brown/grizzly bear and bison from \$650 to \$900; caribou from \$425 to \$600; deer from \$200 to \$250; elk and goat from \$400 to \$500; moose from \$500 to \$600; musk oxen from \$1,500 to \$2,000; sheep from \$550 to \$650; wolf from \$50 to \$75; and wolverine from \$250 to \$350. Section 17 would increase the resident king salmon tag from \$10 to \$15. Section 17 would also make conforming amendments for the increase in the resident blind license fee, the required age for a resident to obtain a license, and the age of eligibility for a permanent license. Section 18 would raise the nonresident king salmon tag as follows: 1-day tag from \$10 to \$15; 3-day tag from \$20 to \$30; 7-day tag from \$30 to \$45; 14-day tag from \$50 to \$75; annual tag from \$100 to \$150; and the nonresident military tag from \$20 to \$30. Section 19 would increase the age from 16 to 18 for when a resident is required to obtain a fishing, hunting, or trapping license. Provisions in Section 19 for nonresidents remain the same. Section 20 would increase the age of eligibility from 60 to 62 for a resident to receive a permanent license. The reasoning for this change is that a person must wait until age 62 to start drawing Social Security. Section 21 would clarify in uncodified language that residents who are currently receiving the permanent license under AS 16.05.400(b) will continue to be eligible for this license. Section 22 creates an effective date of January 1, 2016.

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REPRESENTATIVE HERRON inquired whether there is an explanation for the amount of increase chosen for each fee or whether it done by using a standard ratio.

MR. BANKS replied that originally the fees were increased by about 50 percent, with rounding up or down to the nearest \$5 increment. However, in response to feedback from Alaskans some of the fees were lowered.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON concluded, then, that the chosen amount of increase was essentially random.

MR. BANKS hesitatingly responded yes.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR observed that Section 11 is about a 23 percent increase and some of the other sections are a 50 percent increase. She asked what the range of increase is, from highest to lowest, for all of the sections.

MR. BANKS answered that percentage-wise he does not know off the top of his head. He directed attention to Tab 6 in the committee packet which includes a comparison of current statute, the original bill (Version H), the proposed CS (Version N), and a proposal brought forth by some of the outdoor groups.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked what the current license status is for 16 and 17 year olds, what would be changed, and why.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO answered that this proposed change is his personal feeling. A person cannot register to vote until age 18 and when there is a draft a person must register at age 18. So, a person is treated as a child until age 18, except when it comes to the purchase of a hunting and fishing license. Also, in Alaska's remote communities, increases in these fees could be tough. Many families in those remote communities have teenagers who participate in fishing, hunting, and trapping, and it is much easier on a family with a 16- or 17-year-old if the age is increased to the age for voting or graduating from high school.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON surmised a 16- or 17-year-old would be subject to any penalty for violation of fish and game code, but would simply get a free license.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO replied correct.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON inquired whether a legal opinion has been obtained as to whether the proposed changes for resident versus nonresident fees do not violate the "Carlson Disparity Test."

MR. BANKS confirmed that a legal opinion was requested and is included in the committee packet under Tab 9. The response from Legislative Legal and Research Services states that the Carlson case is not applicable to HB 137. That court case dealt with commercial fishing and the court found that that had a different standard than recreational or subsistence hunting and fishing.

The committee took an at-ease from 1:20 p.m. to 1:21 p.m.

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK requested Mr. Banks to explain the differences between the original version, Version H, and Version N.

MR. BANKS explained that after filing the original bill the sponsor received a lot of feedback, primarily against the resident big game tags. The sponsor originally thought to put a modest big game tag fee on a number of animals that nonresidents already pay for, but received almost unanimous opposition to that and so it was taken out. In addition to taking that out, some of the resident license fees were lowered. The hunting license was originally \$35, in Version N it is \$30; the hunting and trapping combination was \$50, in Version N it is \$45; the hunting and fishing combination was \$50, in Version N it is \$45; the hunting, trapping, fishing combination was \$70, in Version N it is \$60. The original bill increased the low-income license fee from \$5 to \$10, Version N takes out that increase. Conforming amendments were taken out in Sections 13, 17, 19, and 22 of Version H, the original bill. Version N also lowers some of the nonresident license fees: the 14-day sport fishing license is lowered from \$75 to \$60, the 7-day sport fishing license is lowered from \$45 to \$40, the annual sport fishing license is lowered from \$150 to \$130; and the hunting and trapping combination license is lowered from \$375 to \$325. Version N increases the waterfowl conservation tag from \$5 to \$10, a provision that was not in the original bill. Ducks Unlimited spoke to the sponsor and requested that this provision be included in the bill. Version N reduces a number of the nonresident alien big game tag fees: black bear is reduced from \$450 in the original bill to \$400 in Version N; brown grizzly bear and bison from \$975 to \$900; caribou from \$635 to \$600; deer from \$300 to \$250; elk and goat from \$600 to \$500; moose from \$750 to \$600; musk oxen from \$2,250 to \$2,000; sheep \$825 to \$650; wolverine from \$375 to \$350. Version N increases the age at which a resident is required to have a sport fish, trapping, or hunting license from age 16 to 18. This would help younger Alaskans and encourage them to hunt and fish at a younger age without having to pay a license fee. Version N decreases the age of eligibility from 65 to 62 for a permanent resident hunting, trapping, and fishing license. This was done because the original increase was a bit too high and age 62 lines up with the age that a person can start receiving Social

Security benefits. Conforming amendments related to that change are made in Sections 1, 13, and 17.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR understood there is some general support for the nonresident increase shown in the last column on the comparison sheet under Tab 6. She understood the reason for support of that more substantial increase is that it has been 20 years or more since some of those fees have been increased, plus there is the opportunity for federal matching funds at 3:1. She asked what the sponsor's rationale is for not adopting the recommendations supported by a number of groups.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO answered that while going through these numbers he presumed there is a sweet spot, but he does not know exactly where that is. He said is not married to any of these numbers, he just thinks it is an issue that needs to be addressed since it has been 23 years since anything has been changed. He said he wishes he knew exactly which numbers to put in for the maximum benefit to the state and allowed that these are just his thoughts. Therefore, he continued, testimony will be vital to where these numbers go.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR thanked Co-Chair Talerico for his leadership on this issue and agreed that it is time to look at this.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO added he understands the concern of people, but said his wallet currently holds his forty-third combination hunting and fishing license. He said he has always taken pride in being part of the system. Outdoorsmen have traditionally supported fish and wildlife conservation and participating in this program. Regarding the senior discount, he said he thought it might be awkward for him to stay at 60 because next February he will qualify for a free license and he is having a hard time with that because he probably sees himself as being younger than he is and he cannot see why he would get one of those licenses. He added that he proudly purchases a combination hunting and fishing license every year and he wants to be a participant in the conservation and management of wildlife.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON inquired as to what would be the amount of increased revenue and what the state intends to do with that revenue.

MR. BANKS drew attention to the fiscal note under Tab 5 in the committee packet, stating it provides good estimates of the projected revenue but is based on the original bill version. Version N has lower fees and also has the resident game tag fees. Tab 7 of the committee packet has spreadsheets for the numbers in Version N. For the hunting license there is the possibility of bringing in \$500,000 incremental revenue, for the fishing license there is the possibility of bringing up to just shy of \$2 million incremental revenue, the king salmon stamp fees are just under \$900,000, and for the big game tags there is the possibility of \$1.2 million. Because people may not want to pay an extra fee there is the likelihood of a decrease in license and tag sales, so this is based on 90 percent sales.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO added that several people who contacted him asked why raise extra money for a department when there should be cuts. He explained that a subcommittee of the House Finance Committee is putting forth a budget that cuts about \$12 million from the proposed ADF&G budget. The proposed increases in license fee will not be enough to replace that \$12 million. The budget cut is needed and appropriate, but it is also important for the committee to consider that substantial cuts will have to be made next year as well. But, the ability to have some data and research is important to Alaskans for continued [fish and wildlife] management. He said he fears that if the research and data goes away, then [fish and wildlife resources] will need to be managed conservatively, which may mean that Alaska residents could be giving up some opportunity, such as shortened seasons and closures. Therefore, part of his inspiration is to ensure that Alaskans do not lose their opportunity in the future given that more cuts to the state budget are foreseen.

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK opened invited testimony.

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EDDIE GRASSER, Lobbyist, Safari Club International-Alaska, stated that the leadership of the hunting and fishing community has come together and agreed that an increase in hunting and fishing license fees is necessary given the budget crisis and cuts. Hunters have always asked for and received the ability to pay for their use of wildlife and for conservation measures. He noted that besides representing Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter, he is the non-voting chair of the Legislative Outdoor Heritage Caucus Advisory Council to which nine major

groups belong. In the history of the U.S. conservation movement, hunters and fishers have gone to state legislatures and the U.S. Congress to find ways to fund wildlife conservation, and that is what is being talked about here today. There needs to be assurances that there will be sufficient funds available for managing the state's wildlife and fisheries, otherwise there will probably be restrictions on the ability to do serious Alaska traditions like hunting and fishing. He pointed out that it has been a while since fees were increased. He said he bought his first license in 1968 when a hunting and fishing combination license was \$7. By his estimates using an online inflation calculator, Alaska residents would be paying \$73 today, rather than \$25, had the fees for a hunting and fishing combination license kept up with inflation. It is important to note, he continued, that the entire leadership of the outdoor community has come together behind this idea of a license increase.

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ROD ARNO, Executive Director, Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC), stated that AOC is a coalition of about 48 clubs throughout Alaska, as well as individual members. The AOC came together before statehood and is interested in preserving the Alaska lifestyle of gathering a wild food harvest. He said that about 200,000 out of Alaska's 700,000 residents buy some kind of hunting or fishing license. Because AOC members realize it is a privilege to be able to harvest a public resource they are willing to do what they can to manage that resource on a sustainable yield basis. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) has a legislative directive through the intensive management law. Harvestable surplus is declining in numerous places throughout the state and it takes money to get the sound science necessary for managing a predator/prey situation to where it is sustainable yield. The working members of the AOC are willing to pay this increase even though it affects their budgets because they have the results of intensive management.

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MR. ARNO drew attention to Tab 15 in the committee packet which provides the compromise points. He related that the AOC, Safari Club International, Alaska Professional Hunters Association, and Territorial Sportsmen sat down, came to agreement, and made compromises. Despite the public's concern and a fair amount of opposition to raising fees, the groups agreed to go ahead and have a \$50 trophy hunting fee for sheep in the Tok Management

Area and in Chugach State Park. Management is a bit different when managing for trophy. A side benefit in any place where there is a harvestable surplus of trophies is that there must be a big population to get to that point, so those areas still benefit regular Alaskans who are not trophy hunting. Another compromise was to revise a resident tag for coastal brown bear in game management units (GMUs) 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10, which would be a fee of \$50. Most residents hunting in these areas are hunting for a trophy brown bear. Along with that trophy fee of \$50 the current statewide tag fee of \$25 on brown bear would be dropped due to the revenue that would come in from the trophy fee. In rural Alaska, he maintained, that \$25 tag fee cuts down on the harvest in areas where the state is trying to raise the ungulate population. The [Board of Game] would still have the authority to modify those tag fees in those trophy areas. He related that part of the compromise among the groups was agreement for keeping the nonresident tag fee at a 100 percent increase. The number of nonresident hunters coming to Alaska has fluctuated very little over the last 40 years. That number is about 10,000 and has ranged from 8,000-14,000. There is no place like Alaska as far as hunting goes just by the magnitude of the state's wild lands that have been kept intact. So, there will always be 10,000 nonresidents who will come to Alaska and pay that 100 percent increase in tag fee for the opportunity.

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MR. ARNO said another agreement among the groups was developing a new intensive management surcharge of \$10 that would apply to every license and that would have a three-year sunset. This surcharge would be in addition to the price of the tags and is similar to the present surcharge for sport fish facilities and which has a sunset date. The intensive management surcharge would go into the fish and game fund with the idea that people want more of a harvestable surplus and are willing to pay for it. He allowed there will be some opposition to the surcharge, but said it can be seen how it works out over the three years. He noted that for the surcharge for the sport fish facilities is not applied to the low income license fees. Mr. Arno reported that another agreement was for creating a new voluntary fish and wildlife conservation decal priced at \$20. He said this is something that has been talked about for decades because managing for abundance benefits the other 500,000 Alaskans who appreciate the ability to see wildlife.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON inquired whether Mr. Arno is saying that he hopes the increased revenue will go to expanding intensive management.

MR. ARNO replied that for this particular tag, absolutely. If there wasn't management it would then be like what the federal government wants, he continued, which is to have biological integrity where the populations are allowed to go to the low level of equilibrium that doesn't provide the harvestable surplus that a lot of Alaskans depend upon for a wild food source. It's a matter of trying to work with ADF&G and the Board of Game to ensure that Alaskans who depend on that wild food source have the ability. It would go into the fish and game fund and would provide a cushion given how much ADF&G spends on intensive management. That money would be used specifically out of the fish and game fund for doing inventories and surveys; it wouldn't be used for doing actual control. It's that background data that is necessary and benefits all of the wildlife resources by having a good data base of the sizes of population and the health that it's in.

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK remarked that intensive management has been ongoing for a long time, including back to when he was on the Board of Game.

MR. GRASSER believed that Co-Chair Nageak was on the Board of Game in the 1960s and said that in those days intensive management was just regular management. In those days the same thing was being done but it wasn't called intensive management. He added that intensive management money is isolated, Pittman-Robertson money cannot be used as a match for intensive management. The idea is to have a pool of money that is specifically for intensive management programs where the Board of Game has identified the need.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that a lot of boating and hunter safety training takes place around the ability to get a hunting or fishing license. He expressed his concern that increasing the age from 16 to 18 for being required to get a hunting or fishing license will cause a loss in the impetus for those two safety programs.

MR. GRASSER agreed that is a good point, but said a bigger concern is that youth throughout the state, not just in urban areas, are being lost from the outdoor traditions of hunting,

fishing, and trapping. From the point of view of the groups, having an extension on going out with a parent or relative is a plus for maintaining this tradition. Education programs reach out to youth, including 18-year-olds. For example, ADF&G's program, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, is reaching all kinds of women with young children. This program is growing by leaps and bounds and teaches boating safety, as well as outdoor, camping, and survival skills.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked whether there have been situations where there is concern about excessive intensive management because predators are being removed that otherwise would be taken by guides or Alaskans. In other words, trapping or regular hunting cannot occur because of intensive management.

MR. ARNO responded he has probably spent more time at Board of Game meetings than some of the members of the board. When allocating a public resource it will always be found that there is conflict, but that conflict is minimal. He said he thinks the board has done an excellent job. For example, the Alaska Peninsula is managed for trophy brown bear and that area has moose and caribou and the department has done an excellent job managing predator/prey; the department has stayed true to ensuring that that brown bear population was not reduced to that point. He allowed there are trappers in the Nelchina Basin who are concerned with intensive management reducing their opportunity to harvest wolf, but at the same time they and their neighbors are seeing a lot more moose meat than there used to be. He said he has found that over the years trappers do say they would like to have more wolf, but those trappers know they and their friends are being fed by that moose resource and so that kind of conflict has not come to a loggerhead.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON inquired whether there is concern in this shrinking budgetary climate that there will be a lack of funding for intensive management. For example, whether the proposal is designed to forestall potential cuts or other concerns that enough is not currently being spent on intensive management. In other words, whether the proposal is designed to supplant or supplement what the state is currently doing.

MR. ARNO answered it is mainly looking at the budget, looking at the price of oil. Does intensive management need to be ramped up in other areas of the state? Absolutely not. The department has done a good job on the intensive management program. It is

not to ramp up intensive management but to keep up the steady flow of gathering that data. This is an opportunity like never before in 23 years for the public who consumes a public resource to say, "Boy, if things are tough we're more than willing to go ahead and scrape and come up with some more money ourselves."

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR, regarding the compromise to raise nonresident tag fees by 100 percent, inquired whether those fees would be comparable to the nonresident fees of other states.

MR. GRASSER replied that Alaska's tag fees are on the low side compared to tag fees in a lot of other states, especially in those states where there are drawing permit systems for elk, deer, bighorn sheep. Alaska's nonresident fees are less than half of what the nonresident fees are in some of those states.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked whether Alaska is shorting itself in this regard and Alaska should therefore be even more ambitious about fee collection.

MR. GRASSER responded he thinks it is about right and he thinks that is what the Alaska Professional Hunters Association supports. In most instances where the tag fees are more than double what they are in Alaska it's for a very limited resource that's on a drawing permit. A lot of Alaska's populations can be hunted without drawing a permit, so it is not quite the supply-and-demand scenario that is had in other states.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR inquired as to what gave the groups comfort that a 100 percent increase wouldn't have unintended consequences for the guide community such as fewer clients, as well as a ripple effect in Alaska's economy.

MR. GRASSER deferred the question to the Territorial Sportsmen and the Alaska Professional Hunters Association.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked whether someone who currently has a permanent license will be grandfathered in.

MR. ARNO believed they would be.

CO-CHAIR TALERICO understood that because those licenses have already been issued they would be grandfathered in.

The committee took an at-ease from 1:59 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

2:00:40 PM

RON SOMMERVILLE, Board Member, Territorial Sportsmen, noted he worked 24 years for ADF&G. Under Governor Hickel he was the ADF&G deputy commissioner in charge of budgets and every year for four years the department took a 5 percent reduction in general funds. This experience made it a little bit easier for him to put together the background materials for the groups to work out a compromise. He explained that federal matching monies, Pittman-Robertson money, can be used for some things but not others. He pointed out that Tab 15 within the committee packet includes a listing from ADF&G regarding how much money is in the Division of Wildlife Conservation as well as how much general fund money is in the Division of Sport Fish. Currently ADF&G has about \$6 million in each of those two divisions and the listing includes what that money is used for. He confirmed that Pittman-Robertson money cannot be used for intensive management, but said fish and game fund money and general fund money can be used for that. During the Hickel Administration, ADF&G lost every dime of general fund money due to the competition it was against. Similarly today, when the finance committees look at the state's budget, this money is going to disappear. Outdoor users probably cannot be taxed enough to replace all of this money, but the question is how much money can be gotten and that is the way the compromise came together. What is needed to replace the critical programs in ADF&G? It isn't just for intensive management and that is what the department's list shows. One of the key ones is endangered species. The Endangered Species Act has more potential impact on Alaska than any state in the union because Alaska is the testing ground for how the environmentalists can manipulate the Endangered Species Act to stop development.

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MR. SOMMERVILLE noted that a lot of the resource programs may or may not be able to be funded by Pittman-Robertson monies. Some of the education programs cannot necessarily be funded by Pittman-Robertson. The groups looked at these programs to see what proportion of them could be covered. The department was instructed by previous legislatures to manage for raising the abundance of prey species for use by Alaskans and the department has attempted to do that. From the department's listing it can

be seen what might be lost for the divisions of wildlife conservation and sport fish.

MR. SOMMERVILLE said the surcharge was created by the groups as part of the compromise because it was clear that the resident tag fees was going to disappear. Other states have gone to tag fees and they rise exponentially over time. But Alaska is different - a hunter is allowed to take five caribou a day in the northern parts of the state and every one of those people would be asked to buy a resident tag for that and that is not going to work. Other options could be pursued, such as getting a caribou tag by itself or have punch cards. He related that when he was regional supervisor for Unit 13, the Nelchina Basin, bear numbers were manipulated because it is critical in terms of predation on moose calves. When the moose population started deteriorating, the region would move the bear season a week into August so it overlapped with the moose and caribou season so that resident hunters would take a bear incidentally to their moose and caribou hunting. Putting a tag on it, which was eventually done, discouraged Alaskans for hunting that bear population. When the region's bear population was down and the moose population coming back up, the region moved the bear season back one week. However, this cannot be done any more for a variety of reasons. This example is why the groups got together in the compromise and came up with the intensive management surcharge. The key in this is the amount of money - the \$12 million - and how much of that are residents willing to pay in order to fund some of these programs. Coming up with this surcharge was after a lot debate regarding what people might buy. The surcharge amount could be \$5 or \$10, but the proposal by the groups is to try to raise as much as the residents are willing to pay and only legislators will make that decision, not the groups. Regarding a voluntary wildlife conservation decal, Mr. Sommerville recalled that when he was with ADF&G he twice tried to get the tourism industry to support some kind of tag or decal for watchable wildlife, but he met a dead end each time. A voluntary wildlife conservation decal was one of the ideas the groups came up with. Even though it is voluntary, other states have shown that people do buy them and the state makes money. He offered his personal appreciation to Co-Chair Talerico for introducing HB 137.

[2:09:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON inquired whether the benefit of the voluntary decal is that it is a novelty or collector's item. He

further inquired what the decal revenue will be used for and how can the purchaser know what the revenue will be used for.

MR. SOMMERVILLE replied that that was not identified by the groups other than it would go into the fish and game fund for fish and wildlife conservation purposes. He related that the groups do hear complaints from people who do not want to fund ADF&G because the department doesn't do something in a particular area that the person likes. However, he continued, it is the legislature that controls what the money is spent for. He argued that writing something finite into the bill directing that it has to go for watchable wildlife would result in a huge segment of the hunting community opposing it, which is why the groups drafted it this way. He said he personally doesn't oppose using it for that and it gives the department the option of submitting a budget to use it for that, but the legislature's oversight is what really controls that.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON commented that he knows what he is getting when he buys an annual Chugach State Park parking pass, but asked how someone purchasing a voluntary decal will know exactly what it is for.

MR. SOMMERVILLE responded there isn't anything that ties it to that, it's just another potential fund raising opportunity. For example, identification of the revenue from the Alaska waterfowl stamp program is prohibited, it goes in and is earmarked separately and is pretty much spent on the waterfowl program mainly because the legislature has kind of insisted on that. If the committee feels a program deserves special attention, it can be written into a bill and identified separately, but it isn't earmarked.

[2:12:14 PM](#)

THOR STACEY, Lobbyist, Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA), said the APHA is pleased to be working with groups that represent residents for hunting interests. The APHA recognizes that the fees for nonresident hunting licenses and tags haven't been raised since 1993 and from a comparative standpoint they are below market value or comparatively lower than other states. Clients are excited for the opportunity to contribute to Alaska's wildlife and the opportunity to enjoy what Alaska has to offer. When the clients leave they would like to feel as if they contributed to a sustainable future and did not take the last sheep or bear. Working with the resident groups is very important to the APHA, he said. The dialogue is not whether

nonresidents should pay more, rather it is how much more should they pay. The question about how much residents should pay will be answered by the legislature. The APHA is excited to be lending its support on the nonresident side and APHA supports a 100 percent increase for nonresident tag fees. It is a good starting point and a meaningful enough increase that APHA doesn't feel it will be back before the legislature in two or three years. If the current direction of the state budget goes the way it is, APHA feels it will build some inflation proofing into the fee increase. But the question is, Will it prevent people from buying hunts from the APHA's members? Is this fee large enough or out of line such that it will reduce the ability to sell trips? The APHA thinks the 100 percent increase is right on the line of that and therefore APHA does not want to go higher than that. This industry is different than others in that it doesn't need help from the state to sell its product. Alaska's wildlife is very valuable and a lot of people want to come to the state. Citing statistics from a recent report by the McDowell Group regarding Alaska's guide industry, he reported that 89 percent of Alaska's active hunting guides are Alaska residents. So, unlike a lot of other resource-reliant industries, a high percentage of the new dollars that come to Alaska's economy stay in the state. Annual economic activity is \$78 million, with about half of that in rural Alaska. The guide industry creates about 2,200 jobs in Alaska annually. He offered his appreciation to the bill sponsor.

[2:16:00 PM](#)

MR. SOMMERVILLE added that the increase calculated by the sponsor's staff is a little bit less than 50 percent. Inflation since 1993 would be 63 percent. Therefore, what the groups have proposed is low and will not match the \$12 million; it will require a lot of prioritizing in the department even if there is a 50 percent increase. The groups would like to at least see the intensive management fee and possibly go a little higher, but he respects what the bill sponsor has done.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[2:17:51 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK opened public testimony on HB 137.

[2:19:08 PM](#)

GEORGE PIERCE stated that the [proposed] increase is on the backs of residents who own the resource and it should instead be on the backs of nonresidents. When there is a shortage of fish or game, nonresidents should not qualify for any kind of a permit, he said. The boards are giving away Alaska's fish and game to special interests - fishing groups, hunting groups, guides for nonresidents. The Board of Game is trying to kill bears and wolves for moose declining, so why do nonresidents get to hunt when residents are restricted? He urged that he be given his resources first, not last. The boards need to investigate the interest on big game permits for nonresidents, the selling of the state's fish and game. He urged that the fees be raised for nonresidents and to quit the giving away of residents' game to special interest groups. It is the special interest groups that the committee is hearing from - moneyed guides are controlling the Board of Game. This is about money for guides. Alaska's game is being sold so the guides can make more money. He said he had thought that ADF&G, not special interests, managed the state's resources. How many Alaskans use hunting guides? The committee is being bamboozled to give the guides the right to give permits to nonresidents when according to ADF&G there is a shortage of fish and game everywhere. He urged that the rates not be raised for Alaska residents but raised for nonresidents.

2:23:19 PM

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON requested Mr. Dale of ADF&G to address how the new revenue would not be used for intensive management if HB 137 is passed. For example, whether it would be used for habitat issues, browse, data gathering to see whether a hunt should be by draw or be generally open, and so forth. He pointed out that twice during the 1990s voters expressed a majority objection to parts of intensive management and thus there is a constituency there.

BRUCE DALE, Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), replied that ADF&G would use a portion of increased funding matched with federal aid monies to conduct ADF&G's normal survey and inventory activities, as well as research. Increased, more frequent, and more robust surveys could be used in many parts of the state to increase the department's wildlife management activities. Additionally, access programs that maintain easements that allow hunters to get to state and other public lands are needed and that is a general funded program. So, those funds would be used to help

provide a more secure and more reliable funding source for those important programs.

[2:25:08 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK returned to public testimony.

[2:25:42 PM](#)

GARY STEVENS disclosed he is a board member of the Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC), but said he is testifying on his own behalf. The biggest of the several issues that he has with the bill is that the increases for the nonresident alien big game tag fees are inconsistent. If the nonresident big game tags are raised 50 percent as proposed in the current bill, or the 100 percent proposed by the people testifying previously, then the nonresident alien big game tags need to go up the same amount. The way it is currently the nonresident alien sheep tag only has an 18 percent increase and the moose tag only has a 20 percent increase and those need to increase at least 50 percent and up to 100 percent. Another issue is the senior license. Going from 60 years of age to 62 years is relatively meaningless. He proposed that the free license be done away with and that age 60 and older be applied to the \$5 license and let those people purchase a \$5 hunting, trapping, and fishing license on an annual basis. Regarding the proposal for a \$50 resident big game tag for sheep and coastal brown bear, he strongly urged that if this is done it not be designated as a trophy tag but instead be called a resident big game tag. If the bill is passed, he urged that a provision be added for a legislative budget review of the department and that that be provided publicly so members of the public who are paying this increase can see how those funds are being utilized.

[2:28:03 PM](#)

STEVEN FLORY noted he has held a seat on the Anchorage Fish & Game Advisory Committee at different times over the years, but said he will be resigning from the advisory committee because the Board of Game and Board of Fisheries don't listen to the advisory committees anymore and the legislature hasn't done anything about it. He said he opposes raising the hunting, fishing, and trapping license at all. Several years ago, he related, then-Senator Seekins proposed raising the fees and that was supported with the understanding that there were some times to it and that the department would actually have to produce. This is another step where the department isn't going to want to

produce, but just get more money. He referred to a pie chart he sent to the committee that shows that approximately 10 percent of the money going to ADF&G goes to wildlife conservation and 10 percent to sport fish, with the rest of the money going into commercial fish. There is talk about the \$12 million, but what should be talked about is the \$53 million going into commercial fish that has no return. At least the hunters, trappers, and fishermen are talking about putting more money in. If the legislature is going to cut ADF&G, it should start by cutting commercial fish money first. Regarding the most recent version of the bill, he said the one thing that is woefully short is how much higher the nonresident fees could be raised. The Anchorage advisory committee went through this a few years ago, he related, and found that Alaska is the bargain basement for prices on nonresidents and even after this proposed increase Alaska will still be pretty close to the bargain basement.

[2:31:11 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked what Mr. Flory means by saying that ADF&G needs to produce. He surmised Mr. Flory means the department should spend less on commercial fishing and more on other things.

MR. FLORY responded that 40 years ago tracking began on how much wildlife each state produced. At that time Alaska was ranked number one, but now Alaska is ranked 50. Alaska is producing less in comparison to what it used to produce. For example, Dall sheep numbers are down but Alaska continues to placate the professional hunters first and then worry about the residents.

[2:32:51 PM](#)

RICKY GEASE, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Inc. (KRSA), stated he supports the concept of increasing license fees on fish and game. It is important to maintain a good level of funding for the sport fishing and wildlife conservation divisions so they can handle their critical tasks to have an effective and efficient department to manage the state's natural resources. In the past years of plenty there have been some reductions in the sport fish and now with the fiscal cliff it is more important than ever to enact these increases. There has been decreased programming in education of the next generation of anglers. The last economic survey done for sport fishing was in 2007 even though it is supposed to be done every five years, which will result in not getting consistent baseline data for the state's socio-economic

programs in sport fishing. He said he likes the concept of a voluntary stamp that Alaskans and nonresidents can pay in addition to people who are actively harvesting the state's fish and game resources. He suggested there could also be a voluntary fish habitat stamp and proposed that there be a sockeye stamp similar to a king salmon stamp and that would follow the same regulations, with monies going into the fish and game fund. With declines in king salmon, the popularity of sockeye fishing is increasing exponentially, he reported. A lot of anglers and dip netters are being seen on the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. The Kenai River is the state's largest sport fishery for sockeye salmon and the largest dip net fishery for sockeye salmon. "We're bulging at the seams," he said. Additional funds for management are needed specifically for sockeye salmon and that is what a sockeye stamp would do. Programming for the Mobile Aquatic Classroom (MAC) van for sport fishing education has been decreased over the past few years. Education, research, and basic maintenance programs are what these funds go towards and KRSA supports these increases.

[2:36:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR queried whether Mr. Gease supports the fee increases as proposed in Version N or is comfortable with the fees proposed by the outdoor caucus that include an additional \$5 for resident sport fishing and increases for nonresidents that are higher than in Version N.

MR. GEASE answered that for both resident and nonresident fees it is a low hurdle in terms of what people are being asked to pay, as well as when bumping up the amount from \$8,000 to closer to \$30,000 for claiming a hardship. Whether it is going from \$15 to \$20, or from \$15 to \$25, KRSA is very comfortable with that on both the resident and nonresident fees.

[2:37:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON, in regard to the sockeye stamp concept, asked what Mr. Gease envisions would be paid per salmon and who would pay it.

MR. GEASE replied it would be just like a king salmon stamp. An angler or dip netter wishing to retain a sockeye salmon would have to have a sockeye salmon stamp. The head of household person getting the permit for the dip net would pay that \$10 fee. A resident or nonresident angler fishing on the banks of the Kenai or Kasilof rivers would be required to pay that \$10

fee. It would be a one-time fee just like for the king salmon stamp and not based on the number of fish caught, but based on a person going out fishing for that species.

[2:38:40 PM](#)

LARRY MORRIS noted that while he is a member of the Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee, his testimony represents only his own views. He said he personally supports HB 137. The additional revenues would be eligible for matching monies like Pittman-Robertson. Revenues should be used for sport fish and game management. Management activities should be used for enhancement of resource availability. Conversely, lack of management could cause a default to the most conservative and restrictive available. Therefore additional revenues should not be used to increase general administration. He said he does not believe the nonresident fee increases will have a detrimental impact to industries such as the travel and leisure industry. Enhanced management of resources that provides greater availability has the potential to enhance demand from visitors. Reduced availability will surely have a greater impact. Mr. Morris suggested that instead of raising the license age to 18 there be a youth license at an incredibly reduced fee or no fee. He recalled that getting his first hunting license was special - an initiation to the new hunters and fishers that is almost like a rite of passage. Regarding the resident permanently disabled license, he suggested it be made a lifetime license for a fee. This would have a significant reduction in administration from the present annual requirement of reauthorization. It would also reduce the cost and effort required from those licensees in getting a doctor's note and the in-person filing of it. He also suggested that the one-day nonresident fishing license be eliminated. The cost of two one-day licenses is the equivalent of a three-day license, therefore eliminating the one-day license and making the shortest license be three days would reduce a lot paperwork for a lot of people.

[2:42:25 PM](#)

DEB RUDIS noted she is a retired wildlife biologist and avid consumptive and non-consumptive user of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources. She said that as a conservationist she supports the user fees for hunting and fishing that are deposited into the fish and game fund and various sub-accounts and that can be used as a match for federal aid in the wildlife restoration program. Having an adequate match of state dollars is key to acquiring the federal aid funds and excise taxes that

hunters and anglers are willing to pay for guns, ammunition, and various fishing equipment. She offered her hope that the bill could afford the opportunity for a conservation tag that could be imposed for both consumption and non-consumptive users. Many states in the West have such a conservation tag, she reported, and it is required to access areas such as state wildlife management areas, refuges, and sanctuaries. Funds from that tag could be used to ensure that there is wildlife education, wildlife viewing, and wildlife diversity in the state. She has purchased resident hunting and fishing licenses for many years and is now a recipient of the permanent identification card that provides her a number of privileges for hunting and fishing for free. She recommended that the name be changed to the Alaska Resident Senior Exempt Card, or a corollary, in recognition that a person must be an Alaska resident to maintain these free license privileges. In conjunction with this, a residency verification program should be written into the statute for every two to three years or on an annual basis. She said she presently knows of people who have moved out of state but return every year to use this resident card to illegally harvest fish and game and bring it back to the states in which they now reside. She further recommended that the resident hunting fee be raised to \$40, an amount that would just about meet inflation. Anything less would not meet the ability of residents to share in the cost of wildlife management and the world class hunting opportunities that are afforded. Ms. Rudis further recommended that fees be imposed for the taking of raptors by nonresidents for the sport of falconry and that there be some type of multi-year falconry permit for residents. There is currently no annual fee for resident falconers, yet there are extensive permitting requirements which take a lot of time by ADF&G staff. Nonresidents are now allowed to come to Alaska and take a bird of prey for falconry for no tag or permit fee. The Board of Game passed these regulations but has no ability to set fees, the legislature does. The taking of a highly coveted species like a gyrfalcon from Alaska by a nonresident falconer is now being allowed for free. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game does not even recover any administrative costs of issuing permits to these nonresidents.

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REPRESENTATIVE TARR said Ms. Rudis has good suggestions. She asked which states have a good model that could be looked at in regard to the conservation stamp.

MS. RUDIS answered that many New England states use conservation stamps. A problem in Alaska is that many of the areas are accessible only by boat or plane, making it hard to impose the requirement. However, there could be a posting at major access points and people would appreciate being able to pay a fee to actually preserve conservation of species.

MS. RUDIS, in response to Representative Josephson, confirmed that people come to Alaska to remove raptors for purposes of falconry. A person is allowed to trap a bird in Alaska and bring it back to the state in which the person is a licensed falconer and use that bird as a hunting bird. It is an ancient sport that goes back to the kings of Egypt.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked how often this can happen.

MR. RUDIS replied it would be one season that the people would be allowed to come to Alaska and bring a raptor back. These people are spending a lot of money to get here and are usually folks of pretty good means, and for them to not be required to get a license or a permit that costs them money doesn't seem to meet that program need.

[2:47:49 PM](#)

NANCY HILSTRAND noted she is a fish processor with Pioneer Alaskan Fisheries in Homer and has spent 17 years on a fish and game advisory committee, but is speaking on behalf of herself. She said she thinks there is an elephant in the room and that is the expenditures of wildlife viewers within the state of Alaska. She reported there are 72 million wildlife watchers in the U.S. and in Alaska there are 200,000 residents who are viewing customers and [669,000] nonresidents who are viewing customers. These customers bring \$2.75 billion into the state, which is \$1 billion more than the hunting. Together that is 8 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Alaska. Wildlife viewing creates 18,800 jobs, brings almost \$1 billion worth of labor income, and brings \$231 million into the government revenue. These are huge numbers and it is important to get a grasp on what these people can do. While she likes the decal idea, she said she thinks a license is needed because people want to know where that money is going. It would be more successful if there is more reason for them to buy a license other than just as a conservation decal. A decal can be there also, but there should be a license for a fee to pay into the wildlife viewing and the money it costs for the management and conservation of wildlife. She said she absolutely supports the increasing of fees on both

fish and wildlife and she would like to proudly be part of wildlife conservation to buy a license but she would like to be correctly profiled, which is something that a lot of people would like to have. It is nice to know that a group is separated out so there can be a count of the people who are putting money in. It will take time for it to evolve because it takes time for people to understand how this all works. It is just a matter of marketing. By working with the tourism and cruise industries money can be brought into the state. She thanked Co-Chair Talerico for introducing the bill.

2:51:08 PM

MS. HILSTRAND, in response to Representative Tarr, confirmed that the document she was referencing from came from herself and from the survey that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service does every five years.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR inquired whether Ms. Hilstrand has a mechanism in mind for how wildlife viewers would buy this license.

MS. HILSTRAND responded that there are 18 million photographers in the U.S. and she thinks it should be mandatory for professional wildlife photographers. While it is probably not enforceable, a lot of photographers would take it as a badge of honor to buy it. And, the same with wildlife viewing guides who are making money off of wildlife, so it should also be a mandatory license for them. Most people realize that this is a good thing and that banding together with the hunters and fishers is good for managing wildlife.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked whether Ms. Hilstrand is suggesting something that's more geared towards the professional operators rather than individuals, or both.

MS. HILSTRAND replied all of the above. Anything that can be done to get people involved is what needs to be done. For example, there could be a 1 percent bed tax that is added. For someone getting a monetary return, she said she thinks it should be mandatory. Drawing attention to [an unidentified document in the committee packet previously referenced by Representative Tarr], she said it shows that people are willing to pay more and questions were asked to learn that. Now that it is known people are willing to pay it is just a matter of finding the mechanisms and an important part is the profiling. Noting she is on the board of the "Friends of Migratory Bird Staff" in Washington,

DC, she said the same thing is being done with the duck stamp because people are not profiled and people aren't willing to buy it until they know that they are going to be counted as the 77-80 percent of the people who use the refuges. It is important to profile people correctly so people are happy and proud to support [the decal] and be involved and be counted.

[2:54:34 PM](#)

DON QUARBERG noted he is a 39-year resident of Alaska. He offered his belief that HB 137 was precipitated in part by the availability of matching federal funds through the Pittman-Robertson Act, which provides \$3 for every \$1 that ADF&G matches from the sale of hunting licenses and tags. It currently appears that more federal money is available from this program than what the state can obtain through this match and this federal money is used for management of the state's game resources. He urged the committee to amend the bill to eliminate Section 7, which is AS 16.05.340(a)(6)(A) and formally called the indigent license. This would remove ADF&G from being a welfare program. He related that a local license vendor in Delta Junction estimates that nearly 30 percent of the sales are for indigent or welfare licenses, and that is with the current income ceiling of \$8,200. If HB 137 passes and raises that income limit to \$29,820, he said he cannot imagine how many more individuals will qualify. He suggested that the state's social services department evaluate who should receive this license and then provide such to that recipient through a transfer of funds to ADF&G for the full value of the license and tags, which would be a net cost of nothing to the state. This would significantly increase the Pittman-Robertson matching funds available to ADF&G and would also reduce the fraud, given that a person only has to sign a statement saying he/she doesn't make any money. He noted he is a person who has a "geriatric" license and said senior citizens have a smaller percentage of indigence than any other age group and he therefore urges the committee to consider whether this type of license is needed.

[2:57:48 PM](#)

KEITH WOODWORTH noted he is 71 years old and supports raising the age from 60 to 65. He said he stands by the written comments he has submitted to the committee that were based on the original version of HB 137. He said he supports the bill as originally written and further said that the tags in Alaska are greatly undervalued. The Western states have a ratio between resident and nonresident tag fees and license fees. A study he

did when Matt Robus was in Juneau came up with a ratio of about 1:7 or 1:11 and he believes that residents should be paying for their tags and more for their licenses.

2:59:31 PM

BARRY WHITE-HILL, Alaska Chapter Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, stated that his organization is a sportsmen's voice for public lands, water, and wildlife, which are critical for his family to put food on the table. He said he filled a couple of freezers during the hunting season in Alaska and then had the opportunity to hunt with resident friends in Idaho, New Mexico, and Nevada. During all those hunts and discussions with his friends it became obvious as to what a screaming deal is had in Alaska. Noting he is of the age for an exempt license fee, he said he would be willing to pay for a license at his age because it is an opportunity that the state is missing. As pointed out by Mr. Grasser, sportsmen and sportswomen have long been supporting the North American Wildlife Conservation Model of hunting and fishing. Funds from the 1936 Pittman-Robertson Act are a tax on firearms and ammunition, so it is a tax that sportsmen supported and created through legislation and from which Alaska is trying to get matching funds. It is critical to maintain the ADF&G staff necessary for having the science to support hunting and fishing into the future.

3:01:40 PM

TOM LAMAL testified he has been an Alaska resident for nearly 45 years and supports HB 137. Having researched how other states fund their departments, he said it appears Alaska could generate a lot more money by adopting some of their policies. A good example is Montana's self-funded Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks: 70 percent of the department's revenue comes from nonresident tag fees and 30 percent comes from resident tag fees. A self-funding concept will require ADF&G to manage for abundance so both residents and nonresidents will want to purchase tags. The western states also maintain a high allocation of their game resources for their residents and still fund their departments through tag fees. The nonresident can obtain up to 10 percent of their tags, but 10 percent is not guaranteed and at least 90 percent of their game is reserved for their residents. In order for ADF&G to support itself the residents are going to have to pitch in with tag fees and the guide regulations will have to be eliminated so that more nonresidents will apply for sheep, goat, and bear tags. This will require putting nonresidents on permits because the numbers

of applicants will be high. He urged the committee to look at how other states address these issues. A lot of agendas are being presented from all sides and he is asking that before members make decisions all Alaskans be considered and not special interests. Residents don't have a lobbyist so residents must depend upon the representatives they voted into office. This is not a budget cut, it is a way to create revenue for the State of Alaska. If money can be brought in, the state can ease cuts on schools and other programs. Alaskans first.

[3:04:14 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR NAGEAK closed public testimony and held over HB 137.

[3:05:22 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.