

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 3, 2015

1:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative David Talerico, Co-Chair  
Representative Craig Johnson

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Board of Fisheries

Robert Ruffner - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

ROBERT RUFFNER, Appointee  
Board of Fisheries  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

MARTIN LUNDY  
Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries, as well as the reappointment of Orville Huntington.

CRIS SOMERS  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

DAVID FRY  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

WES HUMBYRD  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

DONALD JOHNSON  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

MARK RICHARDS, Chairman  
Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

RYAN ASTALOS  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

MERRILL LAKE  
Bethel, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

LESLIE MORTON, President  
Kenai Watershed Forum  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

SCOTT ANAYA

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

STEVE VANEK

Ninilchik, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

JOHN MCCOMBS

Ninilchik, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

DENNIS RANDA

Kasilof, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

ED SCHMIDT, MD, Chairman

Kenai Area Fishermen's Coalition

Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

BRIAN GABRIEL, Vice Mayor

City of Kenai

Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

LISA GABRIEL

Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

RICK KOCH, City Manager

City of Kenai

Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of Robert Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

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**CO-CHAIR BENJAMIN NAGEAK** called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Representatives Herron, Josephson, Olson, Seaton, Hawker, and Nageak were present at the call to order. Representative Tarr arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**Board of Fisheries**

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK announced that the only order of business is the confirmation hearing for the appointment of Robert Ruffner to the Board of Fisheries.

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ROBERT RUFFNER, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, noted he lives between the Kenai and Kasilof rivers and said he is humbled by the support he has received and heard about for his appointment. It is a tremendous responsibility to work on fisheries in the state of Alaska and one that he is very eager to take on. He has lived in Alaska since 1996 and is a geology graduate of the University of Minnesota where almost all of his focus was on river-related studies. He took some graduate work in numerical modeling and statistical techniques, an important aspect that he can bring to the Board of Fisheries. Upon moving to Soldotna he received the opportunity to become the first employee of the Kenai Watershed Forum and has worked there since 1997. He recently spent some time in public service with the Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Commission and the Road Service Area Board and found it to be a very rewarding experience.

MR. RUFFNER related his fishing experience in Alaska, saying most of the fish he has harvested have been through the annual personal use dip net fishery in the Kenai and Kasilof rivers. He said he has caught all five species of salmon, trout, and Dolly Varden by rod and reel throughout the state. Regarding commercial fishing, he said he spent two days in the late 1990s on a Cook Inlet gillnet boat, which was a good experience to learn how that fishery operates.

MR. RUFFNER addressed why he wants to serve on the Board of Fisheries, saying fishing is something he shared with his grandfather and is now sharing with his own kids. Fishing is deeply rooted in his family and is something he really likes and wants to do. Having worked in conservation for fisheries for

nearly 20 years and having watched the Board of Fisheries, he said he thinks the board is something he can do and make a positive contribution to the state. Alaska is a big state with diverse fisheries and he recognizes that this is a tremendous responsibility. He said his interest is not just in Cook Inlet, but across the state and he recognizes the uniqueness in the different fisheries and how those need to be managed going forward into the future.

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MR. RUFFNER discussed what he would have to offer as a board member. He said that along with his personal use and sport fishing experience, all of the sockeyes in his freezer came from the Kenai River dip net fishery. He pointed out that his background is in earth sciences, rivers, math, and statistics. While on the Board of Fisheries he wants to ensure to the extent possible that data is used to inform the decisions made by the board. This can be fisheries, economic, and social data, all of which is information that helps inform decisions. He has a good background in being able to look at and understand statistics and understand when confidence is or is not had in those numbers. He also has a good understanding and knowledge about habitat from his work with the Kenai Watershed Forum. He understands and believes strongly in Alaska's sustainable salmon policies. The policies are well written and should be drawn upon whenever possible. As an individual he likes to learn and be challenged and being a board member would certainly fulfill that need. He stressed that he has a strong commitment to public service and the public process. The Board of Fisheries is unique when looking at how fish and game are managed across the U.S. It has a tremendous public process. In preparing for this he learned there are 84 advisory committees across Alaska with almost 900 people serving on those advisory committees. They have the ability to provide a wealth of knowledge to the seven members of the board. The public process that is used to reach the final decisions the board makes is something he believes very strongly in and he will do his due diligence to listen to the public across the entire state.

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REPRESENTATIVE HERRON related he has received letters of support for Mr. Ruffner, but no one from his district has commented pro or con on Mr. Ruffner's nomination. One person asked that Mr. Ruffner not be supported due to interactions with the Kenai

Watershed Forum. Representative Herron requested Mr. Ruffner to comment on this complaint.

MR. RUFFNER replied he is unaware of what that complaint is, but said anyone who has stood for something is going to have some enemies at some point in time. He stated he is very proud of what he has stood for in working for the Kenai Watershed Forum. The forum has done some really important work on the Kenai Peninsula, some of which is related to water quality and ensuring there is clean water for the fish. The forum started the first systematic water quality study in the late 1990s for the Kenai River. Lots of agencies have mandates and strategic plans that suggest water quality should be watched, but the forum was an organization that put a lot of people together in the same room and came up with a plan to actually take some water quality information. Some issues were found as a result of that, one of which was the discovery in the mid-2000s of gasoline from outboard motors. The forum did research and numerical modeling to understand how that might be corrected, and ultimately went with a clean motor technology that solved the issue. The Kenai River now is in complete compliance with state water quality standards for gasoline. The forum has done a number of things like that and any time changes are made as a result of science, he said, it is going to upset some people and he understands that.

REPRESENTATIVE HERRON said one of [the Kenai Watershed Forum's] publications is called "Stream Temperature Monitoring for Alaska Salmon Streams." He requested Mr. Ruffner to comment on how that publication could help him in his new endeavor.

MR. RUFFNER responded that when looking at the state water quality standards one thing of concern across Southcentral and Western Alaska is that temperatures are being exceeded for salmon streams. There is no silver bullet or answers to help correct that, but it is something that needs to be understood because part of the board's decision making is understanding how conditions are changing that may affect fish populations. If some declines are seen the board will understand that one of the things that may be going on is that there are warmer temperatures than are suitable for fish and the board can take that into consideration.

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REPRESENTATIVE OLSON declared a conflict in that he has known Mr. Ruffner for 18 years and has been involved with him on a

number of projects. He said Mr. Ruffner is being far too modest when talking about the gasoline problem on the Kenai Peninsula, noting that Mr. Ruffner was the first to identify the magnitude of the gasoline and then found a solution to the problem. Mr. Ruffner got grant money to buy back the two stroke engines over an extended period of time. It was painless because everybody didn't have to go buy a four stroke engine in one year. It worked out quite well because now it is more quiet on the river, there is less visible sheen, and it is much more practical. Additionally, Mr. Ruffner spent a fair amount of time putting in culverts in streams throughout the watershed. Mr. Ruffner had the ability to do the culverts at about 40 percent of what the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities could do them for because he did them with volunteer labor. Mr. Ruffner has helped people around the state on that. Mr. Ruffner shared both his vision and his ability to get things done with other groups around the Kenai Peninsula. Representative Olson said he was extremely pleased when Mr. Ruffner's name was put forward and he has received all positive letters but one about Mr. Ruffner.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON related that a few years back he attended a few Kenai Watershed Forum meetings. He joined the forum subsequent to seeing how those meetings were conducted and the coordination among the different user groups concerned about habitat and ensuring that fish were coming back for everyone. He requested Mr. Ruffner to state how he would address aquatic invasive species and their control.

MR. RUFFNER answered his conservation work has included a lot of strategic thinking in figuring out where to get the best bang for the buck, and one thing is to contain invasive species when they are first noticed. There are a number of cases across the state where an invasive species popped up and took off and containment wasn't possible. That causes long-term problems and in some cases it turns into an ongoing operating expense to just try to control that problem species. Something [the Kenai Watershed Forum] would like to see happen is that when a new species shows up that will be detrimental to the state's fisheries is that there be a way to contain it quickly. An example on the Kenai Peninsula is elodea, a plant that has appeared on some of the peninsula's lakes. It is relatively expensive to knock back elodea, but the forum played a role in the cooperative weed management program on the peninsula, including raising some funding and research on how effective the treatments have been. It seems the results are good on the

three lakes where elodea has appeared, and it is the role of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to work on elodea. Northern pike is the other invasive species seen on the Kenai Peninsula, which has been around for a while and fortunately has not spread, but when they do spread pike are very detrimental to salmon and trout species. To that end, the Kenai Watershed Forum has been assisting the Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). The forum has expertise at measuring water flow. The treatment for pike is rotenone, a piscicide that kills fish, and to apply rotenone ADF&G must know in detail how much water there is in the streams in order to set the rates. At the end of the line where the rotenone is applied, another buffer must be applied to reduce the effects. So, the forum has been assisting ADF&G in collecting that specific kind of water quality information and setting that up for the department.

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REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER cited the question on the Board of Fisheries application which states: "Could you or any member of [your] family be affected financially by decisions to be made by the board or commission for which you are applying?" He noted Mr. Ruffner answered "yes" to this question. He then cited the next question, "Please explain the potential financial benefit," to which Mr. Ruffner replied "no."

MR. RUFFNER responded he thinks that is a mistake in filling out the electronic form and pressing the wrong button on the application. Stating he is stepping down as the executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum sometime in June or July, he said he doesn't see how he would have a financial conflict of interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER requested the record to show that the response on the conflict of interest statement provided to the committee is incorrect.

MR. RUFFNER confirmed the conflict of interest statement is incorrect.

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REPRESENTATIVE OLSON disclosed he and his wife have been members of the Kenai Watershed Forum for a number of years.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON recalled he recently saw the video, "The Breach," about salmon, dams, and related issues. The video states that hundreds of years ago the North Atlantic was teeming with salmon in Europe and the [North American] East Coast. The West Coast [also once teemed with salmon] and now British Columbia's Fraser River has had closures. He asked what can be done in Alaska that is not currently being done to avoid repeating that kind of history.

MR. RUFFNER responded that is a big question and Alaska, by and large, has done a lot of things right. Alaska is blessed by its geography and sparse population. One thing that really needs to be paid attention to, in his opinion, is the small incremental things that individuals do, more so than perhaps the big high-profile projects. The big high-profile projects garner a lot of attention, but it is those small, cumulative effects that add up over time that are a little bit more insidious and people don't recognize them when they are happening and they happen at a time scale that's different than political responses happen to them. He said those are the kinds of things his organization has paid attention to and addressed.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON presumed Mr. Ruffner knows as much about fish habitat as anybody on the board, but that Mr. Ruffner will have a lot to learn about commercial fishing. He inquired whether Mr. Ruffner will be able to learn quickly.

MR. RUFFNER responded he likes to be challenged and is excited to learn about commercial fishing, as well as learning about the various issues around the state. He said he has been studying the issues around the state since applying for the board.

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK opened public testimony on Mr. Ruffner's appointment.

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MARTIN LUNDY, Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS), noted that the Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS) is comprised of more than 150 paying skipper and crew memberships and 75 paying business members, representing the interests of roughly 1,500 fishing men and women. He said SEAS is committed to the protection of the resource that provides its means of income and SEAS supports the appointment of Mr. Ruffner to the Board of Fisheries as well as the reappointment of Mr. Orville

Huntington. Highly competent, focused, and intelligent people are needed on the board and, based on the scientific educations of Mr. Ruffner and Mr. Huntington, both will serve the Board of Fisheries well. Mr. Ruffner has a solid background in science and his service on the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission has provided him with an intricate knowledge of fisheries and fisheries issues important to the state. Mr. Ruffner has a proven track record of working with varied stakeholders and a prized perspective and approach for work with the Board of Fisheries. Mr. Ruffner's experience and leadership with the Kenai Watershed Forum is a striking example of dedication to scientific research, the significance of habitat preservation, and using analytical skills to move forward for the good of the resource and those who harvest the resource. With such a solid background, SEAS is confident that Mr. Ruffner will excel in his new role on the Board of Fisheries. Mr. Lundy urged the committee's support of Mr. Ruffner and Mr. Huntington.

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CRIS SOMERS said she has lived in Alaska since 1967 and has been a commercial fisher since 1978. She urged the committee to support Mr. Ruffner's nomination to the Board of Fisheries. She said the board has been divided and divisive for far too long and does not need more regional representation from people with an agenda; rather, it needs someone who is all about the fish and that defines Mr. Ruffner. Mr. Ruffner's expertise with habitat makes him the ideal candidate and by all accounts he is someone who can unite people and look at things from all sides. It would be a refreshing change from boards who have in the past dismissed her livelihood as recreation and injected politics into the process. It is possible to have enough fish for everyone with proper management and eliminate the fish wars.

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DAVID FRY stated he has been a commercial fisher all his life. He urged the committee to vote to confirm Mr. Ruffner to the Board of Fisheries. The board is badly in need of someone who can unite all user groups in support of doing what is right for the fish instead of the "gimnee, gimnee" that goes on now. This board has become way too political and needs someone who will help bring people together.

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WES HUMBYRD testified he has been an Alaska resident since 1971 and a commercial fisher in Alaska since 1966. He offered his agreement with the previous witnesses that the Board of Fisheries has been politically driven. He said Mr. Ruffner would be a great advantage to the board because he would listen to the scientific data before making any decisions, which has long been needed on the Board of Fisheries. Mr. Humbyrd said that over the years he probably hasn't missed any of the board meetings and it would be really nice to see someone on the board who is looking out for the fish instead of the political agenda.

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DONALD JOHNSON said he has hunted and fished in Alaska for about 30 years. He posited that people look for a Board of Fisheries representative who knows what to do with regard to fisheries, but maintained that Mr. Ruffner doesn't have much of a background in that area and probably hasn't attended a single Board of Fisheries meeting. He charged that Kenai Watershed Forum board members are benefitting financially from each other. He said many people support the forum because they believe in water clarity and issues regarding the environment. Noting the forum's board members represent commercial fishermen, sport fishermen, scientists, environmental consultants, state troopers, the Alaska Sealife Center, and conservation people, he charged that these board members are financially interacting with each other, but this is not stated on the forum's web site or materials. People contributing funds to the organization have no idea that the board members are financially interacting with each other, he said. An environmental scientist could be financially interacting with a set netter and it cannot be told which one is which based upon the titles that are seen for the board members, he alleged. They could all be set netters or all could be environmental scientists and it would be unknown, but the official words on the web site just list each person as what the organization wants them to be. The board makes statements, performs studies, and spends money in a public manner that attempts to pick and choose causes, he contended, and the causes have basically been on the Kenai River and studies on muddy water, oil in the water, people throwing contaminants, and so forth. Those studies are basically directed at public fishing on the Kenai River. When asked why the forum doesn't address the commercial fishing industry that is occupying the lower Kenai River, the forum says that isn't part of the issue, he purported. The representation is muddy and should be clarified, and as executive director of such an organization Mr. Ruffner

should have been publishing the connections between the board members, he said.

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MARK RICHARDS, Chairman, Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, offered his organization's strong support for Mr. Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries. He cited Mr. Ruffner's extensive background with fisheries habitat and conservation issues associated with his work in founding and growing the Kenai Watershed Forum as the reason for this support. He said Mr. Ruffner knows the Board of Fisheries process and the issues that come before the board and will make informed decisions based on what is best for the resource using the best available science and data. Mr. Ruffner has experience with the various user groups and their representatives and is respectful, fair, and willing to listen to all sides. While some may want someone with specific ties to a certain user group, Mr. Ruffner cannot really be tied to any particular group except the one group whose main concern is the health of the resource and the sustainability of Alaska's fish stocks. Regarding concern about there not being a representative on the board from Anchorage, Mr. Richards noted there is no statute requiring that Board of Fisheries members must reside in a certain geographic location or community in order to serve. Most important is that all the board members represent all Alaskans, not just those in the community in which a board member lives. He said Mr. Ruffner will fairly represent all Alaskans and the committee should forward his name.

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RYAN ASTALOS, a sport fisher, spoke in favor of Mr. Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries. He said Mr. Ruffner, through his work at the Kenai Watershed Forum, has a proven track record of forming partnerships and alliances with state, local, and federal governments, industry partners, and other interest groups working for healthy and vital salmon and trout populations on the Kenai Peninsula. He stated that Mr. Ruffner will do a good job on the board.

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MERRILL LAKE supported Mr. Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries, saying Mr. Ruffner's work sets a great example for all Alaskans on what can be achieved when an organization works to benefit fish habitat which, in turn, benefits all user

groups. He said Mr. Ruffner has a proven track record of forming partnerships and alliances with state and federal governments, industry partners, and most importantly, local government and other interest groups working for a healthy and vital salmon and trout population on the Kenai Peninsula.

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LESLIE MORTON, President, Kenai Watershed Forum, noted that Mr. Ruffner is the executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum. She said the forum's mission statement is to work together for healthy watersheds on the Kenai Peninsula. The forum's three-part program includes restoration, research, and education. The forum works to restore and repair conditions that threaten the long-term health of watersheds and fish habitats. The forum has a terrific youth education program that reaches thousands of students. The forum maintains a comprehensive research program to provide quality data associated with the watersheds. The forum has always strived to have a mix of user groups represented on its board of directors so it can best serve the community and meet its mission of working together. The forum's board is currently comprised of two commercial fishers, two sports fishers, and herself - a school teacher and dip netter with no financial interest in commercial fishing. The forum has other educators, small business owners, and contractors on its board and at no time has there been a majority of commercial fishermen on the board. As executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum, Mr. Ruffner has dedicated his professional, and much of his personal, life to improving the quality of fish habitat. She said Mr. Ruffner's integrity and commitment are outstanding, and he is not at all one-sided and is actively involved in many aspects of the community where he is well respected beyond fish issues. For example, Mr. Ruffner was the 2008 Soldotna Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year. Most importantly, after years of working with Mr. Ruffner she can say that his willingness to reserve judgement and listen carefully to all sides of an argument before coming to a decision make him well suited to serve on the Board of Fisheries.

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SCOTT ANAYA stated he has been fishing on the Kenai Peninsula for nearly all of his adult life and, in that time, synonymous with health salmon populations on the Kenai Peninsula is Robert Ruffner. Mr. Ruffner has done a lot to keep salmon healthy, with the key point being salmon, not a user group or specific

type of fisher. He said he supports Mr. Ruffner's appointment because Mr. Ruffner will put salmon and Alaska first.

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STEVE VANEK said he has been in Alaska since 1964 and has been a commercial fisher since 1965. He spoke in favor of Mr. Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries, saying a habitat person is needed on the board. The loss of habitat has led to the demise of salmon worldwide. Not enough emphasis has been put on habitat in the past and Mr. Ruffner will bring that to the forefront. The current Board of Fisheries voted unanimously not to limit the number of clams harvested on the west side of Cook Inlet, even after the east side was closed and even after the local advisory committees all expressed the need to have limits on those clams. This is crisis management at its worst, he said, so he is happy to hear Mr. Ruffner's recognition of the value of local advisory committees.

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JOHN MCCOMBS testified he has been from Ninilchik for about 40 years. He said he did not know before last month that Mr. Ruffner is a dip netter, but he did know of Mr. Ruffner's accomplishments as boss at the Kenai Watershed Forum. Mr. Ruffner worked on culverts and water quality and made the case for having four stroke outboard motors on the Kenai River, he related. Mr. Ruffner is a leading steward of Kenai River habitat and there is need for a skilled habitat person on the Board of Fisheries. Therefore, Mr. McCombs said, he endorses Mr. Ruffner for the Board of Fisheries without reservation.

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DENNIS RANDA noted he has lived in the Clam Gulch area for about four years and has been a fishing guide on the Kenai River and active in resource and fisheries management for most of 30 years. He said he has known Mr. Ruffner for 18 years and while he and Mr. Ruffner haven't agreed on everything, they do see things quite a lot the same and he is hoping the committee will advance Mr. Ruffner's name. He said he is looking forward to seeing the changes that someone like Mr. Ruffner can bring to a management agency like the Board of Fisheries.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON understood Mr. Randa is a sport fishing guide on the Kenai River.

MR. RANDA replied yes.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON asked whether Mr. Randa has lots of colleagues that he knows by first name.

MR. RANDA replied he knows a few.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON inquired whether Mr. Randa has a sense for how his colleagues feel about Mr. Ruffner's appointment.

MR. RANDA answered he has had a mixed response from the guides he knows and has spoken to. He said he is disappointed in many of his fellow fishing guides and how they see management of the resource and how that fits in with their priorities in life.

REPRESENTATIVE JOSEPHSON requested Mr. Randa to expound about which issues get discussed about the health of the river and how to manage the river.

MR. RANDA replied he wishes that they were discussed!

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ED SCHMIDT, MD, Chairman, Kenai Area Fishermen's Coalition, testified he is a retired surgeon. He stated his organization represents "Joe Fisherman" - all people who fish on the Kenai Peninsula wherever they may live. His organization includes avid dip netters, sport fishers, and river ecologists and the board is composed mainly of retired state and federal fisheries biologists. He said he personally is an avid fly fisher who first visited the Kenai River in 1988 when he caught a world record fly rod salmon. He longs for the day when the Kenai River returns to health to produce world records of all species of salmon. He gets his red salmon from the personal use fishery and frequently has friends from Anchorage stay with him when they are down dip netting. He said he understands how important the personal use fishery is to Joe Fisherman. The best possible science is needed to manage this river for all user groups. A scientist is someone who uses impeccable logic to analyze the best available data. As a surgeon he had to strive to maintain that standard. When new data became available or results were not perfect, he had to modify his procedures accordingly. From a lifetime of training he recognizes and celebrates good practical scientists. Mr. Ruffner is an excellent scientist, Dr. Schmidt said, and his thorough, inclusive, and community-centered work at the Kenai Watershed Forum demonstrates both his knowledge and understanding of all fishing issues on the Kenai

Peninsula. Because of this, Mr. Ruffner is very well qualified to examine fish issues anywhere in the state. There cannot possibly be a better candidate for the Board of Fisheries. Mr. Ruffner is the best possible choice for making the best possible decisions in an open and inclusive process.

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BRIAN GABRIEL, Vice Mayor, City of Kenai, reported that at its April 1, 2015, meeting the Kenai City Council unanimously passed Resolution No. 2015-14 supporting the appointment of Mr. Ruffner to the Board of Fisheries. He read the resolution into the committee meeting record. The resolution noted the City of Kenai is a fishing community and that commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence fisheries take place within the city's municipal boundaries and shore-based fish processing facilities are located within the city's municipal boundaries. The resolution also noted it is vitally important that members of the Board of Fisheries manage fishery resources and habitat for the benefit of all present and future Alaskans. It further stated that Mr. Ruffner has demonstrated exemplary leadership in building consensus among widely diverse user groups and his training as a scientist and statistician provides the basis for sound decision-making based on scientific analysis.

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LISA GABRIEL noted she has lived in the Kenai area for over 52 years and during that time she has been a sport, personal use, and commercial fisher, all of which she still participates in today. She expressed her support for Mr. Ruffner's confirmation to the Board of Fisheries. Based upon her personal experience in the board's process and her interaction with board members, she said she thinks Mr. Ruffner will bring a needed balance to the process not based on his home address but on his knowledge of fish and their habitat. She said Mr. Ruffner will be an asset to the Board of Fisheries for all areas in the state. She urged the committee members to support his confirmation.

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RICK KOCH, City Manager, City of Kenai, stated that within the City of Kenai's municipal boundaries is a vibrant personal sport fishing community benefitting most Alaskans. Also within the municipal boundaries is a commercially guided sport fishing industry consisting of hundreds of professional guides. During the three week personal use or dip net fishery, the shores and

waters at the mouth of the Kenai River are filled with as many as 15,000 people in a single day. Subsistence fisheries also takes place with the City of Kenai. The City of Kenai was, in large part, spawned by the robust commercial fisheries of Cook Inlet and it is the home port to many commercial fishing boats and five commercial fish processing facilities. His intention in telling the aforementioned is to let the committee know that all the residents of the City of Kenai and the surrounding central peninsula area are intimately involved with fishing issues and have skin in the game. The Kenai City Council unanimously passed Resolution No. 2015-14 strongly supporting Mr. Ruffner's appointment to the Board of Fisheries. Mr. Ruffner's professional accomplishments as executive director of the Kenai Watershed Forum is impressive. The city has worked with Mr. Ruffner on a number of fishery and fishery-related issues. For example, Mr. Ruffner provided the wisdom, foresight, and leadership to solve the hydrocarbon water quality issue in the Kenai River. The river had been listed as an impaired water body by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), but Mr. Ruffner's leadership resulted in the Kenai River being removed from the EPA's impaired water body listing in two years. This required his bringing together for a common purpose the City of Kenai, City of Soldotna, the borough, state agencies, and various user groups. Mr. Koch related that he has attended many meetings where a wide range of fishery interests are represented and without exception, Mr. Ruffner's goals have been based on what is in the best interest of the resource, not an industry, not a specific user group, and not one based in a geographical interest, and this is what the framers of Alaska's constitution envisioned when creating the board process.

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CO-CHAIR NAGEAK closed public testimony after ascertaining no one else wished to testify.

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REPRESENTATIVE HAWKER noted that forwarding the name of any individual to the joint legislative session for confirmation is not a commitment by any member of the committee to vote for or against that individual. He moved to forward the name of Mr. Robert Ruffner to a joint legislative session for the purpose of his confirmation to the Board of Fisheries. There being no objection, Mr. Ruffner's name was forwarded.

The committee took an at-ease from 1:59 p.m. to 2:01 p.m.

2:00:43 PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:01 p.m.