

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 8, 2019

1:26 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative John Lincoln, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Dave Talerico
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Sara Rasmussen

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Geran Tarr, Co-Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

Requesting that the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management implement an oil and gas leasing program in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

- MOVED HCS SJR 7(RES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Douglas S. Vincent-Lang - Anchorage

CONFIRMATION (S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 7

SHORT TITLE: ENDORSING ANWR LEASING; RELATED ISSUES

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) BIRCH

02/20/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/20/19	(S)	RES
02/25/19	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

02/25/19 (S) Moved SJR 7 Out of Committee
02/25/19 (S) MINUTE(RES)
02/27/19 (S) RES RPT 5DP 1NR 1AM
02/27/19 (S) DP: BIRCH, GIESSEL, COGHILL, BISHOP,
REINBOLD
02/27/19 (S) NR: KIEHL
02/27/19 (S) AM: KAWASAKI
03/04/19 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
03/04/19 (S) VERSION: SJR 7
03/04/19 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
03/04/19 (H) <Bill Hearing Postponed to 3/6/19>
03/06/19 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/06/19 (H) RES
03/06/19 (H) RES AT 1:20 PM BARNES 124
03/06/19 (H) Heard & Held
03/06/19 (H) MINUTE(RES)
03/08/19 (H) RES AT 1:20 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR CHRIS BIRCH
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Speaking as the sponsor, provided comments during the hearing of SJR 7.

DOUGLAS S. VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner Designee
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as commissioner designee to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

SAM ROHRER, President
Alaska Professional Hunters Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Commissioner Designee Vincent-Lang.

SYLVIA PANZARELLA
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition during the confirmation hearing of Commissioner Designee Vincent-Lang.

MARK RICHARDS, Executive Director
Resident Hunters of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support during the confirmation hearing of Commissioner Designee Vincent-Lang.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:26:13 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR JOHN LINCOLN called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:26 p.m. Representatives Tuck, Hannan, Talerico, Spohnholz, Rauscher, Rasmussen, Hopkins, and Lincoln were present at the call to order.

SJR 7-ENDORSING ANWR LEASING; RELATED ISSUES

[1:26:42 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN announced that the first order of business would be SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7, Requesting that the United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management implement an oil and gas leasing program in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

[1:26:55 PM](#)

SENATOR CHRIS BIRCH, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as the sponsor of SJR 7, reminded the committee the comment period for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) leasing program draft environmental impact statement (EIS) closes 3/13/19 and the purpose of the resolution is to serve as the official comment of the Thirty-first Alaska State Legislature. He described the time needed for the passage of SJR 7 and cautioned if amended, the resolution will miss the deadline by two days. He urged the committee to pass the resolution without amendment.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN said a forthcoming amendment was submitted following the requirements of the co-chairs; however, the maker of the amendment wishes to make changes to the amendment [that was drafted by Legislative Legal Services, Legislative Affairs Agency].

[1:29:01 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:29 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

[1:30:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS explained the language in the amendment drafted by Legislative Legal Services was divided into two separate amendments labeled Amendment 1 and Amendment 2. Amendment 1 read:

Page 3, following line 12:

Insert new resolution sections to read:

"WHEREAS, to protect the state's record or [sic] successful development, the input of the Gwich'in and Inupiat people, who currently and traditionally reside in the North Slope Borough and the Yukon-Koyukuk census areas, may be taken into consideration, and the full effects of development on the Porcupine and Central Arctic caribou herds, on which they traditionally rely, as well as the full environmental effects of the infrastructure needed to bring the resources to market, may be addressed through the environmental permitting process; and

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said the only change to this portion of the language from the drafted amendment is on line 5, a change from "must" to "may".

[1:32:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS moved Amendment 1 [text provided previously].

[1:32:34 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN objected for discussion purposes.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS further explained the purpose of Amendment 1 is to ensure comments are heard from residents who utilize the land and traditional use of the Porcupine and Central Arctic caribou herds in the area of ANWR [designated by section 1002 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (the section 1002 area)]. Furthermore, Amendment 1 addresses the full environmental impacts of the production infrastructure [that is supported by SJR 7] such as feeder lines, seismic activity, and ice roads.

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN agreed it is important to hear from local residents; however, she stated her concern is that any amendment would prevent timely passage of the resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked for clarification on the impact to the caribou herds.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said the amendment takes into consideration the long-term impacts on the population of the caribou herds and their migration pattern to the calving grounds within the [section 1002 area].

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ turned attention to the concern about the timeline for the resolution and suggested the legislature could easily waive [Alaska State Legislature Uniform Rules] and thereby improve the language of SJR 7 and meet its deadline.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK stressed the need to improve the language in legislation during committee hearings and thereby avoid problems later on in the legislative process.

[1:37:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN suggested the intent of the amendment could be more appropriately conveyed in a second resolution to Congress; she pointed out the topic of SJR 7 is directed to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of the Interior.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked the sponsor whether amendments were discussed during Senate hearings.

SENATOR BIRCH said no. In further response to Representative Rauscher, he said there was discussion related to the WHEREAS on page 3, lines 6-9, which read:

WHEREAS the state continues to strive to ensure the ongoing health and productivity of the Porcupine and Central Arctic caribou herds and the protection of land, water, and wildlife resources during the exploration and development of the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and

SENATOR BIRCH recalled comments on the floor of the Senate were that this issue is adequately addressed and noted in the summer [of 2018], the Porcupine caribou herd population was at an all-time high of 218,000.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER questioned whether the Senate would concur in House amendments.

[1:40:04 PM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH opined there are no serious issues with "any of the resolutions in that context," and the Senate directed SJR 7 not to Congress, but to BLM, to urge for a lease sale. In fact, the resolution does not choose one alternative from four that were identified [in the draft EIS]; however, the language of [Amendment 1] sets an unattainably high bar for state and federal regulators.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN surmised lease sales are one early step in development and resulting projects need specific permits and environmental impact statements.

SENATOR BIRCH said correct.

[1:41:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO pointed out in the [Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program] draft EIS, produced by BLM, four possible decisions were identified. He then remarked:

BLM has been in contact with the Arctic Village Council, the Inupiat community of the Arctic slope, the Native Village of Kaktovik, Venetie Village Council, Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government, Beaver Village, Birch Creek Tribal Council, Chalkyitsik Village Council, the Gwich'in Tribal Government - which is located in Fort Yukon - Anaktuvuk Pass, the Native Village of [Utqiagvik], the Inupiat Traditional Government, the Native Village of Nuiqsut, the Native Village of Stevens. ... No doubt, these folks have been in, BLM has been in contact and this was for consulting purposes.... ... I'm opposed to ... the amendment just due to the fact that I think that the agency has, has done their due diligence in this process

SENATOR BIRCH added there was extensive supporting testimony during the Senate Resources Standing Committee hearing of SJR 7 from the North Slope Borough, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and the Village of Kaktovik.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated Amendment 1 would urge [BLM] to continue working with the Gwich'in and Inupiat people during the EIS process and ensure developing [the section 1002 area] will not negatively impact the size of the caribou herds. He

stressed amending SJR 7 to include additional precautions may prevent litigation.

[1:45:57 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN maintained his objection.

[1:46:31 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[1:47:02 PM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Tuck, Hannan, Hopkins, and Spohnholz voted in favor of Amendment 1. Representatives Rasmussen, Rauscher, Talerico, and Lincoln voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 1 failed by a vote of 4-4.

[1:47:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS moved Amendment 2, which read:

Page 3, following line 12:

Insert new resolution sections to read:

"**WHEREAS**, while most Alaskans support development in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, many do so with the understanding that the state's workforce will be used to the maximum extent possible if the leasing program moves forward; and

[1:47:49 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN objected for discussion purposes.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS explained the language of Amendment 2 is similar to that of many resolutions passed by the legislature urging Congress to ensure the state's workforce will be used to the maximum extent possible should the EIS process and leasing program advance. He acknowledged state legislation cannot mandate "Alaska hire"; however, at the municipal level and through interstate commerce regulations, "this would not be an unconstitutional step based on our research on putting Alaskans to work for Alaska's resources"

[1:49:51 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 1:49 p.m. to 1:52 p.m.

[1:52:41 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER opined the aforementioned issue is unconstitutional.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS clarified at the federal level, Congress is allowed to regulate interstate commerce, and previous resolutions in this regard have included language urging for Alaska employment preference.

SENATOR BIRCH pointed out SJR 7 does not go to Congress; although no one would question a preference for Alaska hire, the resolution will go to "the administrative side" at BLM. He restated his concern about the limited time available to achieve passage of the resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO said he will not support Amendment 2, citing the 1977 Alaska Supreme Court opinion in Hicklin v. Orbeck which states, "The durational residence requirements are subject to strict scrutiny under the equal protection clauses of the federal and state constitutions because they penalize those who have exercised their fundamental right of interstate migration"

[1:56:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK expressed his support for Amendment 2 which is an opportunity to communicate the legislature's support for local hire, and specifies the "workforce will be used to the maximum extent possible."

SENATOR BIRCH said Amendment 2 is not necessary under these circumstances.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS reported his research has determined that there is sufficient time - due to a history of legislative support for similar resolutions - to allow for the change to ensure Alaskans receive maximum benefit for their resources.

[1:58:57 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN withdrew his objection.

[1:59:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER objected.

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Hannan, Hopkins, Spohnholz, Tuck, and Lincoln voted in favor of Amendment 2. Representatives Rasmussen, Rauscher, and Talerico, voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 2 was adopted by a vote of 5-3.

[2:00:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS moved to report SJR 7, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCS SJR 7(RES) was reported out of the House Resources Standing Committee.

[2:00:55 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:00 p.m. to 2:05 p.m.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):
Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commissioner

[2:05:02 PM](#)

DOUGLAS S. VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner Designee, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), provided a short history of his childhood and education in Wisconsin. In 1978 he attended graduate school at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and after graduation worked in Fairbanks, on North Slope (NS) and on wide-ranging projects for ADFG. He worked for the Division of Sport Fish for about 20 years in various positions and subsequently transferred to the Office of the Commissioner, working on policy issues including Arctic policy and marine policy. Commissioner Vincent-Lang's most recent position was as director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation. He and his family carefully considered before accepting the governor's appointment to this challenging but rewarding job. One of his basic philosophies is that ADFG manages resources that are held in public trust and he must earn trust by communicating with residents and by fulfilling his obligation to maintain in close contact with his staff.

[2:10:38 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG stated his goals are:

- ensure there is food on the table for Alaskans from Alaska's fish and game resources
- ensure public trust

- preserve the state's right to manage its fish and game resources as guided by the state constitution
- ensure there is an upcoming generation of hunters, fishers, and wildlife and fisheries scientists working in the field

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG acknowledged areas that have garnered criticism of his appointment: 1. absence of an extensive commercial fisheries background, but he said he is familiar with the important issues related to commercial fisheries and is in contact with the commercial fishing industry; 2. opposition to [Alaska Ballot Measure 1, Salmon Habitat Protections and Permits Initiative (2018)] due to the complexity of [AS Title 16. Fish and Game], although he has directed his staff to review the department's permitting authority; 3. support of active management of fish and game resources that is not based on natural diversity.

[2:14:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked Commissioner Vincent-Lang to elaborate on his review of AS Title 16.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he has directed his Division of Habitat staff to review [Ballot Measure 1 (2108)] and look for issues within the permitting authority of AS Title 16 that need to be updated.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ questioned the motivation of this review, in light of his opposition to [Ballot Measure 1 (2108)].

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG opined the average voter did not look at the details of [Ballot Measure 1 (2108)]; however, it is appropriate to review ADFG's permitting authority.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked for a specific example.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG remarked:

I think there are pieces of it where it intercedes with other regulatory forums ... for instance, is it necessary to have every body [of] water in the state of Alaska identified as a potential anadromous stream ...?

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked Commissioner Vincent-Lang to identify the previous commissioners he has served.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he worked for commissioners [Kevin Duffy, McKie Campbell, Denby Lloyd, and Cora Campbell].

[2:16:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN inquired as to programs that get kids outside.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG pointed out recently over 1,000 Anchorage kids participated in fishing days, which was very exciting. In addition, ADFG has a partnership with a foundation that conducts activities such as a charity shoot, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW), and family outdoor events. In further response to Representative Rasmussen, he said these activities are budgeted within the Division of Wildlife Conservation and the Division of Sport Fish.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted the commissioner was involved in the [Susitna Hydroelectric Project] during the '80s and asked whether adequate work was done on the impacts of the [Susitna-Watana Dam] to fish and riparian habitat when the project was renewed [from 2008-2016].

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said the information collected in the '80s should not be discarded, but should form a foundation and "then it should be updated with new information, if necessary."

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS recalled his experience on the Susitna Dam project in the 2000s and agreed that new data is critical.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK directed attention to the Division of Wildlife Conservation and surmised "putting food on the table" is linked to predator control. He asked for the best time of year to conduct aerial wolf hunting.

[2:20:47 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said springtime. He pointed out when he was the director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation, intensive management was moved from what was approved by the legislature to "a more scientifically-based system," guided by a change in policy. He explained an intensive management plan begins with the department's review of a certain population, after which a management plan is presented to the Board of Game (BOG) for approval; the BOG approval dictates what action is taken by ADFG. Thus, prior to intensive management there is an assessment of the population and the impacts of intensive

management, the board approval, followed by an annual or semi-annual review of the effectiveness of the operation. The number of predators, including numbers to support the use of predators, such as trapping, must be sustained and he assured the committee ADFG action in no way endangers the long-term sustainability of the predator population.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether Commissioner Vincent-Lang stated his preference to conduct predator control of wolves in the fall.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he did not remember a comment in this regard.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN observed ADFG is in a unique position to consider how climate change is impacting Alaska's resources. She questioned whether the commissioner is considering how to manage fish and game resources, taking into account impacts such as [fish] population migration and changing ocean conditions that affect salmon, and asked how ADFG can protect fish and game resources in perpetuity with advancing changes in the ecosystem.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he served on former Governor Sarah Palin's Climate Change Sub-Cabinet, and he co-authored ADFG's climate change strategy. In his role as commissioner, it would be irresponsible not to include the factor of climate change in the management of resources, for example, by adjusting hunt seasons or animal counts. The changing climate is one of many factors that vary by immediacy.

[2:25:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked how the commissioner incorporates science into an active management strategy.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG explained predator management is "based on the science policies that we implemented four or five years ago." Active management is a broad term; [wildlife managers] can allow resources to vary within their natural ranges, as is desired by the federal government on national wildlife refuges, or resources can be managed for public use and long-term sustainability. He remarked:

I'm more in favor of managing for long-term sustainability incorporating human use as a factor, rather than managing just within natural ranges, which means moose can go from zero to whatever number, or

bears can go from zero to whatever number, and that could incorporate management of harvest opportunity ... that can look at management of habitat, management of predator. It's the management of the ecosystem, incorporating human use as a factor.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ related her constituents are concerned that the reduced productivity of fisheries in Southcentral Alaska may be due to the priority of one user group negatively affecting personal use and subsistence fishing in the region.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he abides by management plans issued by the Board of Fisheries (BOF), which determines the allocation of resources in Cook Inlet. As commissioner, he can use his emergency order authority to ensure escapement objectives are met within the confines of a management plan.

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ asked whether the commissioner presents recommendations or possible future research strategies to the [BOF].

[2:28:30 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG expressed his hope [BOF] provides sufficient management flexibility to accomplish the board's stated goals. He said:

For instance, ... whether I have sufficient management authority to be able to commercially put fish in Cook Inlet without drawing the bank account down to zero, and still have some personal use opportunity, because I think the board wants to provide that balance between commercial and personal use and sport opportunity. ... Again, that mix is decided by the Board of [Fisheries], not by me.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK directed attention to ocean acidification, and factors in the ocean that affect salmon runs, and asked for comments.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he could not do much about the temperature of the ocean. He said he was searching for national and international partners to conduct research in the North Pacific Ocean to further understanding. In many cases the state meets its escapement objectives, but is not getting the desired return; because part of the problem may be bycatch, ADFG and the [North Pacific Fishery Management Council] may explore a

rationalization program that gives us a benefit back on reduced bycatch out in certain fisheries; however, if the problem is related to temperature, all ADFG can do is ensure escapement. Commissioner Vincent-Lang described an ongoing study.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked, "So, what do you see right and what do you see wrong ... what do we need to improve on?"

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG opined the state should hold the commissioner responsible for an optimal return on investment from ADFG's budget of \$197 million, of which \$65 million are general funds; currently, ADFG is returning \$11 billion due to overall good management of resources that provides economic opportunity. He said the department could do better with more money, and would do worse with less money, because less money means a more conservative management of fish and game resources and less economic opportunity.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS questioned whether a non-consumptive user should be appointed to the Board of Game.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG pointed out board members are appointed by the governor [and confirmed by the legislature]. In his experience, valuable board members are those who are active participants, are willing to serve, and who make informed decisions, whether they are wildlife viewers or hunters.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN opened public testimony on the confirmation hearing of Commissioner Designee Vincent-Lang.

[2:34:33 PM](#)

SAM ROHRER, President, Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA), stated his support for the confirmation of Mr. Vincent-Lang, Commissioner Designee, ADFG. He said Commissioner Vincent-Lang is building trust between ADFG and the public. While serving as director of the Division of Wildlife, APHA found Commissioner Vincent-Lang willing to meet with all stakeholders and work through controversial issues. In the event of disagreement, APHA's perspective was heard and the commissioner's stance was clear. Mr. Rohrer said APHA feels the commissioner's first priority is wildlife conservation and sound scientific management, and that he also supports statewide wildlife management authority, and will maintain ADFG's preeminent position.

[2:36:44 PM](#)

SYLVIA PANZARELLA said she and her husband have lived in Alaska for almost 20 years and they strongly oppose Mr. Vincent-Lang's confirmation as commissioner of ADFG. Although they are not opposed to ethical hunting for food, which can be a privilege or a necessity, she and her husband attribute Commissioner Vincent-Lang's wildlife management strategies to Safari Club International. Ms. Panzarella said Safari Club International [members] kill elephant, lion, and endangered species. Mr. Vincent-Lang has been an officer of the Safari Club Alaska Chapter and appointed a Safari Club registered lobbyist to a position at ADFG. She characterized members of the Safari Club as wealthy, extremist, unethical, and cruel. Furthermore, predators keep a herd healthy by culling the sick and weak in comparison to extreme sports hunters who kill the big and strong, a management style that creates an unnatural number of species specifically for Outside hunters. She credited the aforementioned statement to Alaskan biologists and Native elders.

[2:39:52 PM](#)

MARK RICHARDS, Executive Director, Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) informed the committee RHAK represents 2,000 Alaskans across the state who support a resident hunting priority. He stated RHAK's strong support for Mr. Vincent-Lang's confirmation as ADFG commissioner; the commissioner designee is qualified due to his long background with the department and his strong support for the state's right to manage its wildlife. Finally, Mr. Vincent-Lang is willing to engage with the public on controversial matters.

[2:41:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN, after ascertaining no one further wished to testify, closed public testimony.

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN asked whether the commissioner has a conflict as a member of the Safari Club.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he resigned from the Safari Club International. He recalled he joined the Safari Club to seek funds raised by the Safari Club Banquet and Fundraiser for two conservation projects and an annual donation of \$25,000 to the Outdoor Heritage Foundation.

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO observed there have been extreme and ugly reactions to the fact that mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (M.ovi) has been found in some Alaska wild game. He opined more scientific research is needed before decisions are reached.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG agreed more research is needed to understand all aspects of the M.ovi virus; however, he cautioned a massive outbreak could affect sheep and goat populations. He said he seeks a balance - not overly burdensome to livestock owners - that will prevent transmittal from domestic [sheep or goats] into wild sheep or goat populations; therefore, along with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Conservation, ADFG is working on regulations directing that a new domestic animal must be tested before entry in Alaska, in a manner similar to testing dogs for rabies. He noted [Government of Yukon, Canada] has taken steps to protect its wild sheep and goat populations.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER inquired as to the measures taken by the Government of Yukon.

[2:46:14 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said Yukon has closed its borders to animals without proof they are healthy. He returned to Representative Rauscher's previous question and expressed his desire to strengthen communication between the public and the department.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN questioned whether the commissioner has studied polar bear habitat and migratory bird management on the North Slope.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said he was on the [Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council] and was involved with polar bear issues while serving on various organizations; the state opposed the listing of polar bears under the [Endangered Species Act of 1973] that set a precedent resulting in the listing of ringed seals, both of which are protected under the [Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972]. The department worked with the North Slope Borough so the customary and traditional hunting of polar bears could continue.

REPRESENTATIVE RASMUSSEN asked whether ADFG has begun issuing electronic hunting and fishing licenses.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said the department is "getting closer" in this regard.

[2:50:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK encouraged ADFG to sell fishing licenses at its office in Kodiak.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN surmised there is a disconnect between state and federal management of hunting and fishing, in regard to rural preference, and asked the commissioner to comment on possible reconciliation of state and federal law.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG expressed his support for the subsistence priority in state law. The state subsistence priority provides benefits; for example, nonrural participants retain priority under certain circumstances, but under the federal system, they do not. He opined ADFG learned from the federal closure of the Yukon River to non-federally qualified users. He stated his commitment to manage for the state's subsistence priority; although the state must negotiate with its federal partners on conservation issues, some federal policies are misplaced and limit non-subsistence uses based on the "quality of hunting experiences and other things" In further response to Co-Chair Lincoln, he gave an example in Southeast where hunts were limited to non-federally qualified users, not because of conservation reasons, but because rural residents sought a higher bag limit.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN concluded the commissioner's belief is that subsistence priority should be limited exclusively to harvest limits.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG continued:

The default should be the state subsistence regulations unless there, unless there's conservation reasons, which under [Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANICLA)], the reasons that they, the Federal Subsistence Board, should be taking action to close non-federally qualified hunters.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN advised an issue in the Northwest Arctic is the population of the caribou herd, which is lower, but is still relatively healthy. Co-Chair Lincoln remarked:

Some of the, the types of hunting and practices at least from the local perspective [are] impacting not just the population levels, but how local residents are able to hunt and continue to hunt in a traditional manner like on the rivers ... and along traditional migratory routes.... ... In your view, as long as the number of animals is, is healthy then you wouldn't, [it] wouldn't be your role to impact how hunting takes place to, to benefit subsistence users.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG referred to a BOG regulation to allow taking of bear out of dens in the Yukon area, which was adopted by BOG in response to a proposal by local Native residents requesting an opportunity to teach youth about traditional spring bear hunting; this was a limited opportunity provided by BOG under subsistence regulations, and the Federal Subsistence Board subsequently closed the opportunity. In that case, the default regulation should have been the state regulation, as long as conservation is unaffected.

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN asked for descriptions of the top three ongoing conflicts between user groups.

[2:56:00 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG explained the Cook Inlet conflict between personal use/sport fishing and commercial salmon fishing is clearly a conflict. Also, meeting the demand for wildlife from a growing population is challenging; for example, [management of the] Nelchina caribou and moose population in Game Management Unit (GMU) 16, and the moose population in GMU 20. Finally, ADFG needs to continue returning investment to state.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK surmised the administration seeks to transfer power from the commissioners of state departments; for example, administrative directors have been centralized in the Office of Management and Budget, and he questioned the ability of any commissioner to properly manage his/her department. He expressed hope for the commissioner's success.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG opined ADFG's current budget was largely left intact.

[3:00:11 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR LINCOLN read the following statement:

The [House Resources Standing Committee] has reviewed the qualifications for the governor's appointee to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang and recommends that the name be forwarded to a joint session for consideration. This does not reflect intent by any member present to vote for or against this individual during any further sessions for the purpose of confirmation.

[3:00:59 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [3:00] p.m.