

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE  
ANCHORAGE LIO**

August 28, 2020  
3:03 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Peter Micciche, Chair  
Senator John Coghill, Vice Chair (via teleconference)  
Senator Click Bishop (via teleconference)  
Senator Cathy Giessel (via teleconference)  
Senator Joshua Revak (via teleconference)  
Senator Scott Kawasaki (via teleconference)  
Senator Jesse Kiehl (via teleconference)

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
John Jensen - Petersburg  
McKenzie Mitchell - Fairbanks  
Abe Williams - Anchorage  
John Wood - Willow

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Petersburg, Alaska

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

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee

Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Anchorage, Alaska

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

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, Appointee  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

JOHN WOOD, Appointee  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
Willow, Alaska

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

BEN MOHR, Executive Director  
Kenai River Sportfishing Association  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

ROLAND MAW, Executive Director  
United Cook Inlet Drift Association  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated concern that coastal Alaska is under represented on the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

SERENA FITKA, Executive Director  
Yukon River Drainage Fishing Association  
Valdez, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

REBECCA KNIGHT, representing self  
Petersburg, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

RACHEL ALLEN, representing self  
Chignik, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Wood, Ms. Mitchell, and Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of

Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

SUSAN DOHERTY, Executive Director  
Southeast Alaska Seiners Association  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Wood to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

BROOKE WOODS, representing self  
Rampart, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

DOROTHY SHOCKLEY, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams, Ms. Mitchell, and Mr. Wood to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

KAREN MCGAHAN, representing self  
Nikiski, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

NORMAN VAN VACTOR, President/CEO  
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

ROY SMITH, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

BROOKE DELKITTIE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

MARGIE OLYMPIC, representing self  
Newhalen, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

LINDSAY LAYMAND, representing self  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

EMME WILLIAMSON, representing self  
Olympia, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

HOLLY WISOCKI, representing self  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

THOREY MUNRO, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

JORDAN DYER, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

TAYLOR LAYLAND, representing self  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

JAN CONITZ, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

KATHERINE CARSCALLES, representing self  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

CATHERINE RILEY, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

BILLIE HOFFMAN, representing self  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

CATHERINE BURSCH, representing self  
Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

ALANAH HURLEY, Executive Director  
United Tribes of Bristol Bay  
Clark's Point, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

GALE VICK, representing self  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the appointment of Ms. Mitchell to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:03:01 PM](#)

**CHAIR PETER MICCICHE** called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bishop (via teleconference), Revak (via teleconference), Kiehl (via teleconference), Giessel (via teleconference), and Chair Micciche. Senator Coghill joined the meeting, via teleconference, soon thereafter.

#### **CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)** **Alaska Board of Fisheries**

[3:04:11 PM](#)

**CHAIR MICCICHE** announced the consideration of governor appointments to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He said the committee has a quorum present to conduct the confirmation hearings. No official voting business will occur.

**CHAIR MICCICHE** noted that the committee received 400 emails on the subject of the confirmations and thanked the public for participating.

CHAIR MICCICHE explained that the Senate Resources Committee did not have an opportunity to go through confirmations because of COVID-19. He advised that once the governor appoints someone, the constitution allows the individual to have full powers until the full legislature votes to confirm or reject them. He added that he did not know if the legislature is getting together to deal with confirmations in joint session.

[3:05:11 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE detailed that the Alaska Board of Fisheries consists of seven members serving three-year terms with the main role to conserve and develop the fishery resources of the state. The board sets seasons, bag limits, methods and means for the state's subsistence, commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use fisheries. The board is also involved with setting policy and direction for the management of the state's fisheries resources. The board makes allocated decisions and the department is responsible for management based on those decisions.

He disclosed that he is a member of three of the four user groups: Cook Inlet commercial fisherman, sportfisherman throughout the state, and personal use fisherman.

CHAIR MICCICHE invited Mr. Jensen to make an opening statement regarding his qualifications and interest in serving Alaska as a member of the board.

[3:07:07 PM](#)

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries, Petersburg, Alaska, testified as an appointee to the board. He said he is a lifelong Alaskan commercial fisherman and owner of a company that specializes in self-guided recreational boating in Petersburg.

He detailed that Governor Murkowski appointed him to the board in 2001 and he has served for 18 years. He said he is also a member of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission and presently sits on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that the legislature strives for balance between various user groups on the board, even though it is not in statute. He asked Mr. Jensen how he views his appointment regarding the current balance of the board and if he supports that balance.

[3:09:24 PM](#)

MR. JENSEN replied he thinks the goal of all board members is to provide a sustainable fishery for the citizens of Alaska, no matter where the board member is from. The job of the board is to give the fisheries back to the children of Alaska intact or better than when the state received them. Board members are doing well if they are fair in their decisions, read the materials, and know what they are talking about.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if he feels that the board meetings provide equal representation for the public versus special interest groups.

[3:10:59 PM](#)

MR. JENSEN answered that the beauty of the board process is that it is an outright public process, which differs from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. There are special interest groups that come to board meetings, but everybody gets a fair shot at being heard.

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that Alaska has gone through a season of several stressed fisheries and asked how the board process could be adjusted to lean more towards sustainability and less towards allocation decisions.

MR. JENSEN commented on the slumps in various fisheries that have been outside the norm and said more research is needed to figure out what is going on. Stressed fishery culprits include climate change, warm water events, and nonindigenous species preying on the fish.

[3:14:25 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE announced that Senator Kiehl has been in attendance online.

SENATOR KIEHL asked Mr. Jensen for the board's view on how the Pacific Salmon Treaty process is working and if the state is getting the results it needs.

MR. JENSEN said getting two countries and several states to agree is difficult, but they are doing the best they can with the fluctuation in the fish populations. The treaty is for 10 years and it takes 4 or 5 years to get a treaty. Things change so much over a 10-year period that staying on task is hard.

[3:16:48 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if the board has ever discussed taking a cradle-to-grave approach to managing fish. He noted that in Cook

Inlet neighbors fight neighbors over the remaining scraps of fish, but the board does not have meetings that deal with interception or allocation from the Bering Sea to the Susitna River.

MR. JENSEN replied the board does talk about bycatch and intercepted fisheries more and more as the different fisheries struggle.

CHAIR MICCICHE thanked Mr. Jensen for attending the committee meeting and for his honorable service on the board.

CHAIR MICCICHE invited Mr. Williams to make an opening statement regarding his qualifications and interest in serving Alaska as a member of the board.

3:19:34 PM

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries, Anchorage, Alaska, testified as an appointee to the board. He said he was born in King Salmon, is a fourth-generation commercial fisherman in Bristol Bay, and has resided in Anchorage since 2010.

He disclosed that he started working in 2010 as a consultant with the Pebble Partnership and currently holds a position with the organization as Director of Regional Affairs. He provided the committee with his private and public service background in the Bristol Bay region. He noted that he owns a service industry business for the Bristol Bay fleet. Additionally, he is an avid outdoorsman, sportfisherman, and partakes in personal use or subsistence use fisheries.

3:21:44 PM

CHAIR MICCICHE noted Mr. Williams' extensive resume and expressed appreciation for his willingness to serve on the board.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked Mr. Williams to summarize why he is interested in serving on the board.

MR. WILLIAMS replied that his interest is to be an active participant and to work with other members to assure a sustainable fishery throughout Alaska, while achieving a consensus on regulation and conservation that makes sense for generations to come.

SENATOR GIESSEL asked what important changes he would like to see to the board process.

[3:23:56 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS answered that he does not have any recommendations for changes. He said he likes that the board process is open to the public.

SENATOR KIEHL asked for an explanation of his answer on the application form about possible conflicts. The specific question read, "Is it possible that you or any member of your family might benefit financially by decisions?" He pointed out that Mr. Williams answered "no" even though he owns fishing permits and a commercial fishing service business.

[3:26:06 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS answered that anything that pertains to the Bristol Bay fishery would conflict him out and that is the reason for answering "no" to the question. He said he recognizes conflicts rather quickly and has always noted them. It is a matter of personal integrity. He added that he has always made sure that he was not part of a bigger issue and was more of a solution to any problem.

SENATOR KIEHL said recusal is important.

He asked Mr. Williams to clarify an op-ed piece that he wrote a year-and-a-half ago where he seemed to suggest that seasonal jobs were not valuable. The op-ed was specifically about public process and his day-job employer and the quote was, "Jobs mean year-round jobs."

MR. WILLIAMS answered that he did not think that he ever meant to take away from the valuable nature of seasonal jobs. Alaska is full of seasonal jobs, but the Pebble Partnership is about year-round jobs. Southwest Alaska is a region that struggles to have anything other than seasonal jobs. While fishing and seasonal industries are extremely important economically, residents are going to require year-round jobs to succeed.

[3:29:30 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI said the information that the committee received showed the Pebble Partnership is paying Mr. Williams between \$100,000 and \$200,000 for fulltime work between the months of April and July. He referred to the exchange about conflicts of interest and asked how he would resolve his conflict when voting on fisheries issues, especially for the Bristol Bay region.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked Senator Kawasaki to clarify the compensation numbers that the Pebble Partnership pays Mr. Williams.

SENATOR KAWASAKI restated that committee members have the financial disclosure form that says Mr. Williams has a fulltime position between April 15 and July 28 as Director of Regional Affairs for the Pebble Partnership that pays between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

[3:31:21 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS replied he is often targeted with that conflict due to his position with the Pebble Partnership. He noted that when he was a board member and the president of the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association, he bowed out whenever a conflict arose. He reiterated that he holds himself to the highest standard of integrity and will continue to do so. He said he did not know if the board will take up issues regarding the Pebble Partnership. However, he will always point out a conflict and make sure that it is apparent.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked if he will be conflicted out of a vote on the fishery if an issue [regarding the Pebble Partnership] were come up.

MR. WILLIAMS replied he would be conflicted out if a Bristol Bay fishery issue came up that might benefit himself or his family. He added, "I would certainly refer to the Department of Law or the resources or the policies that we have in order to clarify that."

[3:33:50 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE said nearly 400 letters from the public addressed Mr. Williams' involvement with the Pebble Partnership, which is something that is just going to happen. He noted that he was in the oil and gas industry for a long time and dealt with the same thing.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked Mr. Williams how he feels about the fact that the people who are the most knowledgeable about a fishery are often conflicted out in the board process, regardless of whether they are financially affected.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that being conflicted out of a fishery is something that board members must deal with. Conflicted-out members share their knowledge and that is something he intends to do.

CHAIR MICCICHE pointed out that Mr. Williams previously stated that he did not see a reason for changing the board process. He asked if he would consider the cradle-to-grave approach with distant, intercept fisheries that affect home-river returns instead of the regional fin fish meetings that often do not deal with the distant effects on many fisheries.

3:36:05 PM

MR. WILLIAMS replied that he thinks the intercept fishery has been a topic of discussion for quite some time. He said the board could be more efficient in looking at diminished runs via interceptions or other issues; however, discussing those issues takes a lot of the air out of the room while knowing there are alternatives to take care of.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if he had any closing comments.

MR. WILLIAMS said he appreciates the opportunity and looks forward to serving the state.

CHAIR MICCICHE invited Ms. Mitchell to make an opening statement regarding her qualifications and interest in serving Alaska as a member of the board.

3:38:16 PM

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified as an appointee to the board. She said she grew up in California and moved to Alaska where she initially worked at a lodge in Kodiak and ultimately obtained her captain's license, sportfishing guide license, and assistant big game hunting guide license. She detailed that she attended the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, received her master's degree in resource and applied economics, and currently teaches economics and recreation management courses at the university. She added that she assists at a local flight school in the winter months and continues to work seasonally as a sportfishing and hunting guide.

She emphasized that she sought out a lifestyle and made it her life. She said she feels honored to have an opportunity to potentially serve on the board. She noted that she loves the economic way of thinking that supports natural resource management. She said serving on the board is her way of giving back to a state that helped her create the life that she has.

3:41:46 PM

SENATOR BISHOP thanked her for applying and commented on her background in economics. He asked if she had attended any board meetings and to also provide more information on why she applied to serve on the board.

MS. MITCHELL answered that once she started the board application process in November 2019, she became more involved with the board. She noted that she attended several days of board and advisory meetings in Anchorage during the spring of 2020. She said she has tried to educate herself about the different fisheries.

She noted that her guiding activities for sportfishing and hunting takes her to different areas in the state. For example, she was in Copper Center during the spring and Valdez during the summer. She said while in Valdez she had an opportunity to visit the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) offices as well as talk with stakeholders and different user groups. She said that started her education process as an appointee to the board.

MS. MITCHELL said regarding why she was interested in serving on the board, there was no initial intent until the idea presented itself in November 2019. She reiterated that serving on the board is an opportunity to serve and give back to a state that gave her the life she lives.

[3:44:34 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked why she had only attended a couple of board meetings in the last year, when legislators find time to attend most of the meetings. He also inquired about her interest in the board seat, noting that she did not apply until someone asked her to do so.

MS. MITCHELL answered that she had not pursued the board position until after a conversation with Mr. Reed Morisky [former board member]. She reiterated that she is interested in serving on the board to give back to the state. She detailed her background in fisheries, noting her contract work with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries on market demand modeling for various fisheries.

SENATOR KAWASAKI said he is a big fan of Mr. Morisky.

[3:47:35 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP asked Ms. Mitchell how familiar she is with the Yukon River fish runs, escapement goals, and subsistence users.

MS. MITCHELL answered that she went into the ADFG office in Fairbanks to get background information on the Yukon area. She emphasized that her intent is to familiarize herself with all fisheries.

She said her feelings toward the subsistence fishery is the same for personal use, sportfish, and commercial fisheries; each one is valuable and deserves the attention and dedication of a board member to understand and make the best decision for the resource and the users of the resource.

SENATOR BISHOP asked her to clarify her educational background.

[3:49:58 PM](#)

MS. MITCHELL answered that she did her graduate research related to fisheries with a specific focus on the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) program. She explained that she set out to get a consensus on how the sportfish industry would take on and fund the RQE program.

SENATOR KIEHL said he read Ms. Mitchell's master's thesis and referenced the sentence, "Fishing is an expensive leisure activity" in reference to halibut charters. He admitted that he was taking something out of context but asked her to provide more information regarding her thoughts on the various types of fisheries in Alaska.

[3:52:48 PM](#)

MS. MITCHELL agreed that the quote was a little out of context. She specified that her answer would not relate back to her thesis because that was a very specific study that focused on a newly adopted program in fisheries management.

MS. MITCHELL explained that when she looks at different fisheries and their economic importance, she tries to focus on things that do not necessarily have monetary funds. For example, sportfishing and commercial fisheries have monetary flows, but subsistence fisheries are challenging because they do not have monetary flows to determine economic importance, especially when making allocation decisions.

She pointed out that the Alaska Constitution requires the utilization, conservation, and development of resources for the use of the people of the state. There is value in the subsistence fisheries, not to mention the psychological value of unity within the state by having people be able to carry on their traditions and maintain their values.

MS. MITCHELL said trying to compare a commercial fishery to a sport fishery based solely on monetary flows is like comparing apples to oranges. The commercial fishery does have monetary flows, but it also has great value in the fact that many involve coastal communities with generational heritage of people standing together for fisheries.

[3:56:35 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE reiterated that he is a member of three of the four user groups but is not a subsistence fisherman. He added that he represents a community that has active sport and personal use fisheries.

He remarked that Ms. Mitchell is an unusual appointee and noted his slight concern with her isolated experience with the sport fishery. Most board applicants have been around Alaska for a long time and have more experience and knowledge with all user groups.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked her to convince him that she will have a balanced approach even though she does not have the personal experience. He said what would make him more comfortable is not to do "A pound of fish is worth more" for allocation decisions as opposed to a balance that supports thousands of commercial fishing families, sportfishermen, personal use, and subsistence fisheries.

[3:58:31 PM](#)

MS. MITCHELL replied that she sees her duty and responsibility on the board to work hard to familiarize herself, listen, read, and respond to people to have the best understanding she can of each fishery before making a decision. She said she works hard at everything that she applies herself to and her service on the board would be no exception.

[4:00:28 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if she plans to visit coastal areas where commercial fishing occurs in order to familiarize herself with the more personal aspects of other fisheries. He said without the balancing experience, one might tend to look at the economics of one user group as opposed to the overall impact.

MS. MITCHELL answered that she has already started the process and has taken advantage of her extensive work-related travels throughout the state. She detailed that she visited or plans on visiting: Copper Center, Valdez, Kongakut River, Holy Cross, and

Kodiak. She noted that in Valdez she met with some commercial fishermen, the fleet manager, the executive director of the Valdez Fisheries Development Association, and toured the hatchery. She added that she visited some ADFG offices outside of the Fairbanks area. She reiterated that she plans on familiarizing herself with each fishery.

[4:02:56 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if she continues to captain for Jamie Lynn Charters.

MS. MITCHELL answered yes; she worked for Jamie Lynn Charters in July 2020.

CHAIR MICCICHE stated that he appreciates Ms. Mitchell's story, noting that he had a similar one where he traveled to Alaska for the summer when he was 19 and that summer has lasted for 40 years. He encouraged her to reach out to different areas, particularly in areas where the most conflict exists to try and understand all sides of the issues.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if she had closing comments.

[4:04:34 PM](#)

MS. MITCHELL said she appreciates being in the position of board appointee and thanked the committee for taking the time to allow her to speak and answer questions.

CHAIR MICCICHE thanked Ms. Mitchell for applying and being willing to serve. He admitted that he wonders why anyone would apply for the position. It is similar to the job that legislators have and the only group more difficult to please than Alaskans is fishing Alaskans.

CHAIR MICCICHE invited Mr. Wood to make an opening statement regarding his qualifications and interest in serving Alaska as a member of the board.

[4:05:17 PM](#)

JOHN WOOD, Appointee, Alaska Board of Fisheries, Willow, Alaska, testified as an appointee to the board. He detailed that he came to Alaska in 1971 and worked within the Anchorage judicial district until discontinuing his private law practice in 1995. He said he became involved with then Senator Dunleavy to address sportfishing in the Susitna Valley. He noted that he actively participated in board meetings from 2013-2014, but left Senator

Dunleavy's staff in 2016. He said he has served on the board in 2020 as a voting member and participated in all meetings.

He said he brings his ability to find solutions to the board. He noted that he has met with stakeholders throughout the Cook Inlet to address lower salmon returns. He is accustomed to listening and making judgements on presentations. He added that he has heard from some that he has more credibility than others to serve on the board.

[4:11:42 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP noted the low salmon returns in the Fairbanks area and said he hopes that Mr. Wood brings all assets to bear to help the region.

MR. WOOD agreed that the insufficient fish numbers in Fairbanks is a sad situation.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked him to confirm that he works for the Dunleavy Administration.

MR. WOOD replied he is on contract but is not a state employee.

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked if his current situation with the administration would be a conflict in working for the board and in how he makes decisions. He noted that the administration pays Mr. Wood between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

[4:14:30 PM](#)

MR. WOOD answered that there is no conflict because his administrative contract has nothing to do with the fisheries. The board follows a process where each individual member prepares a statement of any possible conflict of interest that an attorney reviews to make recommendations to the chair for a ruling; during any part of that process there has never been a determination of a conflict existing.

SENATOR KIEHL asked him to provide a broader scope of his contract with the governor's office.

[4:15:59 PM](#)

MR. WOOD answered that in 2019 his contract was between himself, the Alaska Department of Administration, and the governor's office. He explained that 95 to 98 percent of his duties dealt with labor matters as well as anything that the governor requested. He said the administration renewed his contract in

spring 2020 and he reports directly to the governor on ongoing labor negotiations and recommendations.

SENATOR KIEHL observed that he deals directly with the governor.

MR. WOOD answered yes.

SENATOR KIEHL said the current statute calls for a balancing of interests on the board and his concern is that 5 of the 7 board members would live within a 50-mile radius of the Anchorage JC Penny store. He asked Mr. Wood to talk about where he fits within a diversity of interests for the board.

MR. WOOD replied he lives in Willow, approximately 77 miles from Anchorage, but he understands the gist of the question. He said he understands the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage, and the terms for two Anchorage area board members will expire in a year or two.

SENATOR KIEHL commented that he might have a different take on some of the backgrounds and current alignments on the board.

[4:19:44 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that the state has fisheries concerns in Southeast, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Yukon, and Norton Sound. He admitted that Mr. Wood seems rather focused on Cook Inlet and returning larger amounts to the rivers of the Mat-Su Valley, which is an important goal. However, Mr. Wood is more or less an engineer of a system that ended up passing through the board and became law. He said his view is that the law over escaped fish to the river systems where he lives and that has concerned many in his district. He pointed out that the sportfishermen would have normally harvested 500,000 extra fish that have instead gone up river.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if he believes in maximum sustainable yield and is willing to look at a better balance as opposed to impacting a neighboring user group in the goal of simply returning fish. He reiterated that the board is not managing in a cradle-to-grave manner and that results in neighbors fighting over scraps at the end. He inquired if Mr. Wood is willing to look wider to find out why the state is having problems; for example, repairing habitat, ocean conditions, and distance intercepted fish as opposed to settling at the end very close to the mouths of the rivers where the fish ultimately return.

[4:22:25 PM](#)

MR. WOOD answered that his focus is on the Cook Inlet which includes Susitna, Kenai, Kasilof, and all waterways in the region. He said he is obviously more familiar with the Susitna because he lives within the system; however, his concern is areawide.

He said he wishes more people would look at the global or cradle-to-grave approach. He detailed that his approach is to first look at the impact the board's action has on fish coming into the stream for breeding. Only then does he start concerning himself with allocation questions as to who is going to be harvesting the excess.

MR. WOOD detailed that his determination for Kodiak was based on studies for fish bound for the Cook Inlet. The board acted with the goal to pass more fish through that in turn would go to the Susitna, Kenai, and Kasilof.

He suggested that the state enlist NOAA to provide additional information for the state to use to determine returning fish sizes and numbers. This would allow the board to make better allocation decisions.

[4:24:52 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE reiterated his interest in focusing on other fisheries such as Southeast, Yukon, and Norton Sound, not just Cook Inlet. He asked how he will balance his approach in the future to eliminate concerns all over the state. He agreed with Senator Kiehl that the board membership is becoming Southcentral focused.

MR. WOOD said he knows his backyard the best, but he has reached out to Mr. Jensen to go to Southeast to meet with stakeholders to get their perspectives. He emphasized that he does not make up his mind based strictly on his knowledge until he gets input from stakeholders. He said a person gets more information with an open mind.

CHAIR MICCICHE asked if he had closing remarks.

[4:27:22 PM](#)

MR. WOOD referenced previous committee member questions to board appointees and provided his answers as follows:

- Chair Micciche asked about sportfishing versus commercial fishing.

- o He answered that with his appointment, the board would remain or become more balanced.
- Chair Micciche asked about equality representation on the board.
  - o He explained that the problem is inherent in any body that makes decisions, whether it is a court or administrative agency. However, the big difference is the board process is never one with a closed door.
- Chair Micciche raised a question on stressed fisheries.
  - o He specified that genetics will be the key that requires research dollars for a mixed stock fishery.
  - o He suggested that the state reach out to the federal government and work with NOAA to determine what is going on in the "blue water."
  - o He recommended permit buyouts; an approach advocated by Chair Micciche.
  - o He explained that the board needs additional staff to administer meetings, specifically an economist, to provide an independent source to develop economic analysis.
- Senator Kiehl addressed treaty rebuilding.
  - o He remarked that the rebuilding efforts for the Pacific Salmon Treaty are wonderful and the state needs a similar multiyear approach to get back to the historical levels in size and numbers of fish.
- Senator Giessel asked about changes to the board process.
  - o He reiterated that staffing is the key to provide data to make sound decisions. Judging success depends on data.
- Senator Kiehl asked about the value of the fisheries.
  - o He emphasized that he tries to always use a balanced approach to answer questions.

MR. WOOD concluded that "fish is first." If getting fish back in both sizes and numbers requires dramatic action on everyone's part, then that is where he is heading. He said he wants to see the state back to healthy fish runs.

[4:33:50 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE opened public testimony.

[4:35:17 PM](#)

BEN MOHR, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support of the appointments of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He summarized that Mr. Jensen has served on the board for many

years with distinction, Mr. Wood brings a collaborative approach to the board, Ms. Mitchell brings a new perspective to the board, and Mr. Williams is an active and successful participant in the Bristol Bay fishery.

[4:38:59 PM](#)

ROLAND MAW, Executive Director, United Cook Inlet Drift Association, Soldotna, Alaska, stated that he would submit his comments in writing, but his concern is that coastal Alaska is under represented on the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

[4:41:00 PM](#)

SERENA FITKA, Executive Director, Yukon River Drainage Fishing Association, Valdez, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said the appointees do not represent the Yukon area and the board needs adequate representation for subsistence interests.

[4:42:32 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE noted that Senator Coghill joined the committee meeting online at 3:32 p.m.

[4:43:04 PM](#)

REBECCA KNIGHT, representing self, Petersburg, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She detailed that her family invests heavily and derives a large part of its income from the Bristol Bay fishery. She said she supported Mr. Jensen's comments on the importance of the board's decision-making process and its impact on future generations. She stated that the legislature should disqualify Mr. Williams as a board appointee due to his association with the Pebble Partnership. She added that the board needs more representation in the coastal communities.

[4:44:55 PM](#)

RACHEL ALLEN, representing self, Chignik, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Wood, Ms. Mitchell, and Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Jensen testified on issues that are in opposition to change for Chignik.

[4:47:44 PM](#)

SUSAN DOHERTY, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Seiners Association, Ketchikan, Alaska, testified in support of the

appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment of Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Wood to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said there is a geographical imbalance on the board and the legislature should consider other candidates.

[4:52:41 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE referenced the Alaska Constitution, Article 3, Section 26: Boards and Commissions, that reads as follows:

When a board or commission is at the head of a principal department or a regulatory or quasi-judicial agency, its members shall be appointed by the governor, subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the legislature in joint session, and may be removed as provided by law. They shall be citizens of the United States. The board or commission may appoint a principal executive officer when authorized by law, but the appointment shall be subject to the approval of the governor.

CHAIR MICCICHE referenced the Alaska Constitution, Article 3, Section 27: Recess Appointments, that reads as follows:

The governor may make appointments to fill vacancies occurring during a recess of the legislature, in offices requiring confirmation by the legislature. The duration of such appointments shall be prescribed by law.

He explained that the noted sections prevent the legislature from stalling confirmations and encourages it to act. He said that is the same as with higher levels of confirmations within the government. Appointees serve with full capacity until they are either confirmed or rejected. He said changing the process would require a constitutional change and that is a high bar.

[4:53:46 PM](#)

BROOKE WOODS, representing self, Rampart, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of all appointees to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said the board needs someone who represents rural Alaska and subsistence fishing interests.

[4:56:17 PM](#)

DOROTHY SHOCKLEY, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and in opposition to the appointment

of Mr. Williams, Ms. Mitchell, and Mr. Wood to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said the board needs at least one member with extensive knowledge of the Yukon River fisheries.

[4:59:54 PM](#)

KAREN MCGAHAN, representing self, Nikiski, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Jensen to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She pointed out that Southcentral appointees dominate board membership to the detriment of coastal communities. She added that an appointee who works for the Pebble Partnership should not serve on the board.

[5:04:14 PM](#)

NORMAN VAN VACTOR, President/CEO, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), Dillingham, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He said the legislature should not confirm anyone aligned with the Pebble Partnership. He also highlighted that there is dramatically reduced representation on the board from rural and coastal Alaska.

[5:06:21 PM](#)

ROY SMITH, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He said Mr. Williams cannot make unbiased decisions because he is an advocate for the Pebble Mine.

[5:08:19 PM](#)

BROOKE DELKITTIE, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams should not serve on the board due to his ties to the Pebble Partnership.

[5:09:02 PM](#)

MARGIE OLYMPIC, representing self, Newhalen, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams is a man who considers everyone's opinion, understands a subsistence way of life, and his involvement in a controversial project puts him in a position to understand both sides.

[5:11:09 PM](#)

LINDSAY LAYMAND, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams has a clear conflict due to his association with the Pebble Partnership. She

stated that Mr. Williams does not share the goal of the board to conserve and develop Alaska's fisheries.

[5:13:25 PM](#)

EMME WILLIAMSON, representing self, Olympia, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams' employment with the Pebble Mine creates an extreme conflict of interest. She added that in-region voices should represent Alaska's fisheries and the board needs more representation from coastal regions.

[5:14:56 PM](#)

HOLLY WISOCKI, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams is on the Pebble Partnership payroll and he cannot represent or make decisions for fisheries.

[5:16:28 PM](#)

THOREY MUNRO, representing self, Homer, Alaska, testified in opposition of the appointment to Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams has a blatant conflict of interest due to his employment with the Pebble Partnership. She added that the board needs a candidate that accurately represents rural and coastal Alaska.

CHAIR MICCICHE explained that the committee forwards all the names of the appointees to a confirmation hearing before both bodies of the legislature. The committee's job is to review appointees and hear from the public, but the names are forwarded regardless of the committee action.

[5:18:12 PM](#)

JORDAN DYER, representing self, Homer, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He said Mr. Williams has a conflict of interest due to his employment with the Pebble Partnership. He said he supports representation from fishermen who depend on salmon in rural Alaska, specifically in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region.

[5:18:58 PM](#)

TAYLOR LAYLAND, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. He said a board appointee should be from the region and not employed by the Pebble Partnership.

[5:20:02 PM](#)

JAN CONITZ, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. William's employment with the Pebble Partnership is an obvious conflict of interest.

[5:22:56 PM](#)

KATHERINE CARSCALLES, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams has a direct conflict due to his association with the proposed Pebble Mine. She noted that Mr. Williams has been one of the most prominent voices pushing the project, an action that directly conflicts with the sustainability of the Bristol Bay fishery. She added that board appointments have migrated away from coastal communities to a tight geographic area. She emphasized that nothing could replace a lifelong, generational, and direct regional knowledge to understand the state's diverse fisheries.

[5:25:43 PM](#)

CATHERINE RILEY, representing self, Sitka, Alaska, testified in opposition of the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams is not a suitable candidate for the board because he represents a company that poses significant risks to the Bristol Bay fishery. She also pointed out that the board underrepresents coastal and rural communities.

[5:28:21 PM](#)

BILLIE HOFFMAN, representing self, Sitka, Alaska, testified in opposition of the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Mr. Williams' employment with the Pebble Mine represents a strong conflict of interest. She also pointed out that the board underrepresents coastal and rural communities.

[5:29:54 PM](#)

CATHERINE BURSCH, representing self, Homer, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She questioned why the governor selected someone so contentious to serve on the board. She remarked that the board needs to focus on the complex fishery management issues.

[5:32:08 PM](#)

ALANAH HURLEY, Executive Director, United Tribes of Bristol Bay (UTBB), Clark's Point, Alaska, testified in opposition to the

appointment of Mr. Williams to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said rural Alaska does not have adequate representation reflected in the current board appointees. She remarked that Mr. Williams has a conflict due to his employment with the Pebble Partnership and his appointment exasperates the issue of inadequate representation for rural Alaska. She asked where the legislature is going to draw the line with government appointments for current and former Pebble Partnership employees.

[5:35:30 PM](#)

GALE VICK, representing self, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Ms. Mitchell to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. She said Ms. Mitchell will bring a unique combination of fishing, science, and economic experience to the board. She added that Ms. Mitchell has shown a specific concern over the resource itself and will take seriously all petitions with equity. In conclusion, she said the board needs specific representation for the Yukon River.

[5:36:52 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE closed public testimony.

[5:37:35 PM](#)

CHAIR MICCICHE stated that in accordance with Uniform Rule 46 and AS 39.05.080, the Senate Resources Committee held a hearing on the following appointees and recommends consideration of their confirmation in joint session:

Alaska Board of Fisheries

John Jensen - Petersburg

McKenzie Mitchell - Fairbanks

Abe Williams - Anchorage

John Wood - Willow

A signature or lack thereof on this report does not reflect an intent of committee members to vote for or against the individuals in any future joint session.

[5:38:28 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Micciche adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 5:38 p.m.