

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

April 10, 2021

1:07 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Josiah Patkotak, Chair
Representative Calvin Schrage
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Ronald Gillham

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Representative Geran Tarr, Chair
Representative Louise Stutes, Vice Chair
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Andi Story
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Kevin McCabe

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Tom McKay

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council

Marilyn Charles - Emmonak
Renee Alward - Homer

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

Melvin Smith - Juneau

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Board Of Fisheries

John Jensen - Petersburg
McKenzie Mitchell - Fairbanks
Marit Carlson-Van Dort - Anchorage
Abe Williams - Anchorage
John Wood - Willow

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MARILYN CHARLES, Appointee
Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD)
Emmonak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council.

RENEE ALWARD, Appointee
Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council
Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD)
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council.

VELMA THOMAS
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of Marilyn Charles and Renee Alward, appointees to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council.

MELVIN SMITH, Appointee
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC)
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Petersburg, Alaska

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

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Fairbanks, Alaska

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

MARIT CARLSON-VAN DORT, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Anchorage, Alaska

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

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Anchorage, Alaska

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

JOHN WOOD, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
Willow, Alaska

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

HOWARD DELO
Big Lake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

CLIFTON IVANOFF
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

MARCI NELSON ORTH
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

GREG JOHNSON
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

CHUCK MCCALLUM
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

TIMOTHY GERVAIS
Ruby, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented in regard to the Board of Fisheries' decision regarding the 2020 Cape Igvak fishery, and testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

NORRIS JOHNSON
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

FRANCES LEACH, Executive Director
United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

SUSAN DOHERTY, Executive Director
Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS)
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: In regard to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission confirmation hearing, urged that the committees demand the appointment of a highly qualified candidate. In regard to the Board of Fisheries confirmation hearing, spoke in support of the confirmation of John Jensen and spoke in relation to Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

BEN MOHR, Executive Director
Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

LORENA SKONBERG, Acting Chair
Ouzinkie Native Corporation (ONC)
Ouzinkie, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

ERNIE WEISS
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of John Jensen, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

MOLLY MILLER
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

NATE ROSE, President
Kodiak Seiners Association (KSA)
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

ALEXUS KWACHKA
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmations of Marit Carlson-Van Dort and Abe Williams, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

GEORGE PIERCE
Kasilof, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmations of McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and Abe Williams, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

VIRGIL UMPHENOUR
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

GARY HOLLIER
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented in regard to McKenzie Mitchell and Marit Carlson-Van Dort and testified in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

DENISE MAY
Port Lions, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort.

CHELSEA HAISMAN, Executive Director
Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort and in support of the confirmation of John Jensen, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

JULIE KAVANAUGH
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of John Jensen, in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, and expressed concern about McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

RAYMOND MAY
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

BONNIE LILLEY
Houston, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

DYLAN BEAN
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

SPENCER ROBINSON
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

DUNCAN FIELDS, Chairman

Kodiak Salmon Work Group
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

GARY CLINE, Regional Fisheries Director
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC)
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

SYLVIA KAVANAUGH
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmation of John Jensen and expressed concern about the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

BRENT BORCHERD
(No city provided), Michigan

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to any employee of Pebble Mine being on the Board of Fisheries.

DANIEL MILLER
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

ERIN WILLAHAN
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

KIRIL BASARIGIM
K-Bay Fisheries Association
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmations of Marit Carlson-Van Dort and Abe Williams, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

RICK DELKITTIE
Nondalton, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

JEFFREY MOORE
Chignik Lagoon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

SUE MAUGER
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Abe Williams, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

BENJAMIN ALLEN
Chignik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

BRIAN MCWETHY
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

TOM MANOS
Girdwood, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort and in support of the confirmations of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

ED MARTIN
Cooper Landing, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the State of Alaska having boards and commissions.

RAEHEL ALLEN
Chignik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

PAUL A. SHADURA II
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmations of McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries. Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Melvin Smith, appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

DANIELLE RINGER

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the confirmation of Marit Carlson-Van Dort, appointee to the Board of Fisheries.

AXEL KOPUN

Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the confirmations of Marit Carlson-Van Dort and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:07:06 PM](#)

CHAIR GERAN TARR called the joint meeting of the House Resources Standing Committee and the House Special Committee on Fisheries to order at 1:07 p.m. Present at the call to order from the House Resources Standing Committee were Representatives Schrage, Gillham, Hannan, Rauscher, Cronk, and Patkotak. Present from the House Special Committee on Fisheries were Representatives McCabe, Vance, Story, Stutes, and Tarr. Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins and Ortiz, both from the House Special Committee on Fisheries, arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS(S) :
Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council
Board of Fisheries

[1:08:06 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR announced that the only order of business would be confirmation hearings for governor's appointees to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, and Board of Fisheries.

[1:09:31 PM](#)

MARILYN CHARLES, Appointee, Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), testified as appointee to the Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council. She stated that this is her third year on the council, and she enjoys serving because she gets to help local fishermen on the Yukon River. She said she represents about 500 fishermen in this area, and she would like to share with them that they have another resource to go to. Before she was appointed, she'd never heard of this program, so she wants her people to know that they have this available to them. Not

only is she part of the community, but that community comprises her family members and relatives. The people in these small communities don't have much information given to them due to the lack of information for resources. The fishermen fish for the local fish processing company, Kwik'Pak Fisheries LLC, which is 98 percent local. She added that she enjoys working with the people on the board and thinking of ideas for further helping the fishermen fishing in Alaska's waters.

[1:12:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked how many members are on the board.

MS. CHARLES replied six.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether there are other people on this council from Ms. Charles's community.

MS. CHARLES responded no, but [representing] the region next to her is Moses Toyukuk who is Yup'ik also, and then there are other people from the different regions.

[1:13:35 PM](#)

RENEE ALWARD, Appointee, Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), testified as appointee to the Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council. She stated she has finished her fifth year with the council. She related that her impetus for taking a position on the board was being a part of the fishing community and also having a history working in the medical field, so it was a natural to advocate for fishermen and something she was comfortable with. She and her husband are still in commercial fisheries and have raised three kids in the commercial fisheries, two of whom still participate. She does the books and the fleet mothering for seven tender vessels. The Fishermen's Fund is an amazing program. It is solely funded by proceeds from commercial fishing licenses and permits, so it is self-funded and dedicated to providing last resort payment for injured fisher people who might not otherwise be able to have the resources to heal. She is excited by what the council has done and what it will do in the future for an important plan for a huge part of the state.

[1:15:33 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR explained that the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council consists of six members, five of which are appointed by the governor from five specific districts listed in statute. [Ms. Alward] is the District 3 nominee and Ms. Charles is the District 5 nominee.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked what the districts relate to.

CHAIR TARR answered that each district is set out in Alaska statute: District 1 is Wrangell and areas south; District 2 is north of Wrangell to include Yakutat; District 3 is west of Yakutat to east coast of Alaska Peninsula, including Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, and Kodiak; District 4 is west of Alaska Peninsula to Cape Newenham, including Bristol Bay area; and District 5 is north of Cape Newenham, including Kuskokwim, Yukon, Kotzebue, and the Arctic.

[1:16:49 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR opened public testimony on the appointments of Marilyn Charles and Renee Alward to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council.

[1:17:08 PM](#)

VELMA THOMAS testified in support of the confirmation of Marilyn Charles and Renee Alward, appointees to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council. She noted she is the program coordinator with the Division of Workers' Compensation and also the Fishermen's Fund administrator. She said she is available for questions and to give public testimony for Ms. Charles and Ms. Alward. She stated that they are great assets and resources on the council and bring special knowledge so when reviewing the claims they know exactly what is happening in the community and how that affects the injured fisherman. She added that it is an honor to work with them.

MS. THOMAS, responding to Chair Tarr, explained that the division has two technicians who handle all the claims that come in from injured workers in Alaska. The number of claims averages about 300 a year. The claims are cyclical, with the most claims coming in between May and the end of September. A percentage of the license fees and permit fees provide the funding for the Fishermen's Fund and the administrative staff can pay benefits of up to \$10,000. For claims over \$10,000 the fisherman must file an appeal and the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council, which has the sole authority to approve

anything above \$10,000, looks at those claims. The council also reviews all of the claims that the administrative team could not approve. It's a really good process, she stated, and the team reaches out to fishermen to help them get through the process, which can be tedious because of the various documents that are needed to help them meet the requirements. But once they meet the requirements they are entitled to benefits. She's been with the fund for about 10 years, and it has been a pleasure to serve.

[1:20:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether the council meets on a case-by-case basis, or quarterly or biannually on a set schedule and addresses a lump of appeals at a time.

MS. THOMAS replied that the council typically meets twice a year. The council then reviews all the claims that need to be reviewed within that time period. But, she noted, the council can meet if there is a need for an emergency meeting as long as the council provides sufficient notice.

[1:20:54 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR closed public testimony for the Fishermen's Fund Advisory Board and Appeals Council after ascertaining no one else wished to testify.

[1:21:18 PM](#)

MS. ALWARD thanked Ms. Thomas for being at the helm of the council. She said Ms. Thomas keeps the meetings tight, is a great advocate, and always has the answers that members seek from her to perform their duties.

[1:22:22 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR passed the gavel to Chair Patkotak.

[1:22:50 PM](#)

MELVIN SMITH, Appointee, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC). He related that he was born and raised in the Aleutian village of False Pass and has been fishing since age six. At a young age he was taught by his father to operate the vessel, set gear,

navigate Alaska waters, and be a commercial fisherman. For more than 26 years he has owned several limited entry fishing permits and fishing vessels. As is customary in this industry, and like his father before him, he passed on his permits and fishing operations to his son. The passing of the torch is critical to address the greying of the fleet and to provide training and economic stability to the next generation of fishermen and fisherwomen. Once a fisherman, always a fisherman, and to this day he still has a thorough knowledge of the areas he fished. He operated his permits and gear along the Alaska Peninsula, in the Bering Sea, and in the Gulf of Alaska.

MR. SMITH stated that more recently he has been at his latest job with the Aleut Corporation for more than 23 years, where he has been a manager in the natural resource department and responsible for the corporation's land holdings, natural resources, and commercial real estate. He has many years working with various boards, committees, and their employees in his past positions as a corporate manager. The skills he has acquired working in a corporate environment will serve him well in his capacity as a commissioner of the CFEC. His goal is to use his many years of management and knowledge of the fishing industry to keep the CFEC running smoothly and continuing to ensure that commercial fishing remains a viable industry for all of Alaska.

MR. SMITH said he has been in contact with CFEC Commissioner Dale Kelley and staff to be briefed on current CFEC matters. He understands his duties but fully admits there is much to learn regarding the policy and procedures of the CFEC. His experience and team player skills will keep important matters from slipping through the cracks. He is ready to hit the deck running, and he will utilize his years of fishing, management experience, and knowledge of the fishing industry to keep CFEC running smoothly. He looks forward to giving back to an industry that helped form who he is and helped feed his family.

[1:26:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN noted that this is a paid, full-time job, and asked whether Mr. Smith is prepared to exit his current employment to assume this position. She further asked when Mr. Smith's start date would be.

MR. SMITH replied that he has already resigned from his position at the Aleut Corporation and his start date as a commissioner at CFEC was 3/1/21.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN inquired whether Mr. Smith would be relocating from Anchorage to Juneau where CFEC is headquartered.

MR. SMITH responded that he understands the job is to be in Juneau and he is currently in Juneau.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN observed that Mr. Smith has a number of letters of support, mostly from the westward region of Alaskan fisheries. She asked where Mr. Smith, after five weeks of being on the job, sees the bulk of the issues that CFEC will be addressing statewide over the next year or two, such as fleet consolidation and permit buyback.

MR. SMITH answered that right now the Cook Inlet is a hotspot for setnet with optimum numbers and the buyback, and there might be issues in Kodiak. He stated he has been on the job for five weeks and is still learning the policies and procedures of CFEC.

[1:29:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ noted Mr. Smith's position at the Aleut Corporation wasn't related to the fishing industry. He asked what skills Mr. Smith would bring specific to this job of CFEC commissioner other than previously being a commercial fisherman.

MR. SMITH replied that he was a manager at the Aleut Corporation for many years, so his managerial skills will help along with his knowledge and skills from previously being a fisherman.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ requested Mr. Smith to elaborate on his duties while with the Aleut Corporation and how they would connect directly to his duties as CFEC commissioner.

MR. SMITH responded that he began at the Aleut Corporation as a resource and fisheries specialist and then he switched up to manager. When the Aleut Corporation developed a real estate organization, he was basically the land manager and natural resource manager, and then he took over the commercial real estate along with those other duties.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked what other jobs Mr. Smith has had, besides his work [with the Aleut Corporation] and being a commercial fisherman, that would provide him the experience for doing the job of CFEC commissioner.

MR. SMITH answered that he went right from fishing to the Aleut Corporation, and given that once a fisherman always a fisherman he feels he can help all the fishermen throughout the state.

[1:33:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS stated it is normally customary that nominees deliver autonomous and independent testimony, and he heard some whispering on the line during Mr. Smith's answers to previous questions. He asked whether Mr. Smith is delivering testimony by himself to the questions being presented today.

MR. SMITH replied yes, he is giving his own answers.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether there are currently any fisheries in Alaska for which Mr. Smith believes an optimum number study needs to be conducted.

MR. SMITH responded that right now CFEC is dealing with the setnet in Cook Inlet and a possible buyback, and it depends on where that goes. He stated his understanding that there are 66 limited entry fisheries in Alaska and only three optimum number studies have been done. So, he said, at some point it may be necessary to do an optimum number study for the other fisheries.

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS inquired whether he is correct in understanding that Mr. Smith is saying he is not aware of any other fisheries in Alaska outside of fisheries within the Cook Inlet region that Mr. Smith believes might merit an optimum number study given his present knowledge.

MR. SMITH answered that that will come with time as he learns more of the CFEC. The economics of each fishery needs to be looked at. If he is confirmed, and as he gets more involved, he and the CFEC will look at those things in the future.

[1:36:09 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR related that in the past some of the commissioners with CFEC have been attorneys. Given the decision-making and adjudicatory role that Mr. Smith will have, she inquired about his preparation in that regard and whether he has worked on that with his CFEC counterpart, Ms. Kelley.

MR. SMITH replied that the CFEC has attorneys in-house. He reiterated that he is still getting to know his co-commissioner and the rest of the CFEC staff.

1:37:40 PM

CHAIR PATKOTAK opened public testimony on the appointment of Melvin Smith to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. He closed public testimony after ascertaining no one wished to testify.

1:38:17 PM

CHAIR PATKOTAK returned the gavel to Chair Tarr.

CHAIR TARR opened the confirmation hearing for John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries (BOF).

1:39:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES, at the invitation of Chair Tarr and in light of the upcoming Board of Fisheries appointees testifying, spoke to the balance of the Board of Fisheries. She stated that while it's true there are no designated seats in statute for the Board of Fisheries, the history of appointment and the confirmation process is one of achieving a delicate balance between the commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence interests. Regional balance has long been established precedent as well, she continued, and that process and that balance have been lost, depriving coastal communities everywhere of a voice. Currently the board has only one coastal member, John Jensen from Petersburg. The other six members are from Anchorage, Willow, Eagle, and Fairbanks. The balance is not acceptable to any community that relies on commercial fishing, one of Alaska's greatest industries. Operating with four of seven board members unconfirmed by the legislature, the board has had its share of controversy too. She can personally attest to that this last year when they arrived in Kodiak with a predetermined course of action and a disregard clearly for local input on some extremely impactful proposals. Further, current chair Marit Carlson-Van Dort had a very questionable conflict of interest at that meeting. Another board member John Wood was on a state contract reporting directly to the governor at that time.

1:40:45 PM

The committee took an at-ease from 1:40 p.m. to 1:42 p.m.

1:42:27 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES continued speaking to the balance of the Board of Fisheries. She stated she is trying to bring into light that it's important that all of Alaska, whether coastal or any waterway, have appropriate representation on the board.

[1:43:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked the appointees for coming forward in this process again. She stated that it's one of the highly contentious appointments and boards. She further thanked the appointees for their participation in a Zoom meeting with her district so she could have a more hands-on approach because there's so much involved with this with the allocations. The appointees have already been through this and didn't get confirmed and they're going through it again. All of the governor's appointees have been asked to go through this difficult process twice. She said she wants to thank them ahead of the public testimony for doing that even though it is challenging. Their service means a lot to Alaska's fishermen and she hopes legislators can keep their respect going forward and be able to bring some things to light that would be helpful to all the fishermen.

[1:44:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER offered his appreciation for the learning experience and the chance to hear from each one of the appointees. He said he is an open book and here to listen.

[1:44:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ offered his thanks to the nominees for their willingness to come forward and put up their names for this important organization, the Board of Fisheries. He stated that he shares in the concerns brought forward by Representative Stutes in relation to the history of the Board of Fisheries being one that represented a balance between commercial fishery interests versus sports fish interests and also represented somewhat of a geographic balance as well. He added that he is here with an open mind to all the nominees, but in the end if he would choose not to vote for a particular nominee it wouldn't necessarily be a reflection on that particular person's name in any way, it would be more about the concerns that have been there and continue to be there with the need for there to be a balance on the [board], one that has historically been there, and it's important going forward that it continues to be there.

1:46:32 PM

CHAIR TARR, in response to Representative Rauscher, clarified that voting on confirmation of the appointees will not happen today [during the joint meeting], but in the future [before a joint session of the full legislature]. This situation is unusual, she explained, in that the legislature didn't get through its confirmations last year so things got out of sync. As well, the board meetings have been out of sync given the COVID-19 pandemic. There is much anticipation, she added, of what's happening with the new members on the Board of Fisheries.

1:47:08 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated he is here to learn and, like some of the board nominees, has had "a foot in both camps." He said he has an open mind, doesn't know the history, and his request is that the nominees convince him.

1:48:04 PM

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He said it is an honor to be reappointed to the board to serve a seventh term, which would run from 2021-2024. He stated he has over 50 years of professional mariner's experience in Alaska as a commercial fisherman, fishing vessel and permit owner, and hired captain of larger fishing vessels. He has participated in multiple individual commercial fisheries, gear types, and species prosecuted in all coastal regions of Alaska. Since 2010 he has owned a seasonal self-guided recreational skiff rental business in Petersburg, providing boating adventures for sport fishing, hunting, camping, whale watching, glacier viewing, and local exploration.

MR. JENSEN addressed why he wants to serve on the Board of Fisheries. He explained that as a lifelong resident of a coastal community he has experienced all aspects of the historic dependence on fisheries resources, which includes personal, subsistence, recreational, sport, and commercial fishing. He has been a lifelong commercial fisherman, and this has instilled in him a keen interest in the regulatory process. In the Board of Fisheries process, he supports all efforts to maintain the customary and traditional lifestyles for all users in Alaska and to continually strengthen the economic stability of coastal

communities and ports of call for the fishers and fishing fleets.

MR. JENSEN stated that throughout his 50 years as a commercial fisherman he has endeavored to work alongside those who are in position to make the best decisions possible for Alaska's fishing resources. His enthusiasm for this work never waivers. The overarching goal is to work to provide sustainable fisheries for all user groups in Alaska. What he brings to the process is the privilege of serving on the Board of Fisheries for 21 years. He has an in-depth understanding of the regulatory process for Alaska-managed fisheries. As an Alaska fisherman he can contribute a well-informed working knowledge of the fishing industry from all around the state. He is a strong advocate for fair, equitable allocation of the resource to the user groups based on the best science available.

MR. JENSEN addressed the topic of public input to the Board of Fisheries. He stressed that proposals for change, verbal and written testimony, and meeting attendance are all vital to the system for making better decisions. The takeaway from these participants is an increased awareness of accountability and stewardship of the fisheries and fresh perspective from all sides of the issues. This process belongs to the people and he will always let the voices of participants be heard, he added.

MR. JENSEN concluded by recognizing that there are significant challenges on the horizon. He said he is prepared and committed to playing a positive role in addressing them while upholding the goals of sustainability, fair allocation, conservation, preservation of lifestyle, and economic resilience of Alaska's communities for all participants.

[1:51:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN noted Mr. Jensen's long tenure on the Board of Fisheries. She asked how frequently Mr. Jensen has found himself as a board member needing to be conflicted out from the board's decision making.

MR. JENSEN replied that in Southeast specifically he has sons and brothers who all participate, as well as himself. He said Southeast Alaska meetings are usually 15 days long and there are usually 200-250 proposals. Sometimes he is conflicted out of between 40 and 50 proposals because of his relationship to his brothers and sons.

1:52:43 PM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE related that Mr. Jensen is one of the members she has heard people speak of with deep respect during his tenure of serving. She has not heard any negative comments about Mr. Jensen's service as a board member, she continued, but she has had one person tell her that Mr. Jensen has been on the board so long that there should be someone new for that merit alone. She requested Mr. Jensen's response to that statement.

MR. JENSEN responded that he understands the question and why that question comes. He said that given the current board being relatively new, it is nice to have somebody with a bit of background. He stated that if confirmed, this will be his last term and he will make way for new blood. He noted that it is really hard to find somebody to commit to this process, as a board member is totally engulfed in this process. While board members may only be in meetings for 45 days a year, members are on call 365 days a year.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked Mr. Jensen for the historical value, expertise, and experience that he brings to the board. She expressed her hope that Mr. Jensen will continue to share that wisdom with the other board members to carry on the knowledge that is needed for the history of the fishery itself.

1:54:41 PM

CHAIR TARR announced that sign-up for public testimony today would be cut off at 2:15 p.m. because 56 individuals are already signed up and she wants to ensure there is time to get through all the people who are signed up.

1:55:04 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked how the process of conflicting out works. For example, whether the board member conflicts himself or herself out, the board conflicts the member out, or the member goes to the board and asks for the board to vote on conflicting out.

MR. JENSEN answered that it is a process. He explained that before the start of a meeting, he goes through all the proposals with the board's legal advisor and usually the director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries. It's first degree of kinship, so a member would be conflicted out if a brother, son, or father fishes and for any fishery that they are involved with the board

member is considered to have a conflict because the member could influence the vote to monetarily increase their income. He pointed out that for sport fish a board member doesn't have to conflict out because everybody is able to do sport fish.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE posed a scenario of a father that was retired from commercial fishing and asked whether that would be considered a conflict.

MR. JENSEN replied no, it would not be a conflict; it has to be an active fisher that has a permit in one of the fisheries being dealt with at the time.

[1:57:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER noted there is a bill in the House for term limits that can't get a hearing, so he would say Mr. Jensen is safe on the merits of what Representative Vance brought up.

[1:57:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ thanked Mr. Jensen for his years of service. He requested Mr. Jensen to speak to the constitutional language that it's the job of ADF&G and other groups that have a handle on the question to manage Alaska's resources to the maximum sustainable yield. He asked what role the Board of Fisheries plays in relationship to that mandate. He further asked whether the current model is the best possible to fulfill that mandate.

MR. JENSEN used the Stikine River as an example to explain maximum sustained yield. He said there is a problem with the king salmon run on the Stikine and consequently all the fisheries around that river get shut down to conserve on king salmon. At the same time, that sometimes results in over-escapes of the sockeye run going up the Stikine because they aren't being caught while it's closed for king salmon. So, it's a balance and the department does a very good job in that. The board's primary goal is allocation after escapement goals have been met, at which point the board allocates to the various user groups in all the fisheries. It's a balancing act; for instance in Behm Canal there are several king salmon runs that are distressed and considered a stock of management concern. Consequently [the board] has to really limit fishing time in the lower Clarence Straits area where the fish pass through, as well as from above where they pass through coming from the north. It's always a balancing act in that to maintain maximum

sustained yield of one fishery, a fishery must be closed to save another fishery, so many times there are different systems that over-escape because of that.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ said he understands it's a complex issue when trying to go about fulfilling that mandate. He recalled Mr. Jensen talking about the importance of sustaining economies and sustaining the fishery industry as a whole as a primary goal. He inquired whether, ultimately, the bottom line comes down to sustainability, both in theory and in reality, on the decisions that are being made.

MR. JENSEN confirmed the bottom line is that it is both.

[2:01:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked what kind of procedure or vote the Board of Fisheries would undertake to affect sustainability when a salmon run has totally collapsed, such as the Chignik collapse in 2018 and 2019.

MR. JENSEN answered that it's all contained in management plans and there are a lot of what-ifs. He explained that if the run in Chignik isn't doing a certain number of fish by a certain date the fisheries either east or west of it get cut back. All fisheries along the coast are intercepted fisheries in some form. Below Kodiak, for example, a fishery was limited to the Kodiak fishermen to help provide more fish westward bound to Chignik. Likewise, on the other side, the peninsula fishery, there are always concerns about the intercepted fisheries to Chignik. Chignik does have some problems, he continued, and he doesn't know of anybody who is really sure what the problem is. It is not necessarily overfishing or interception for other groups, but when it looks like that fishery is going to fail other groups are held way back and the closer to the fishery the more restrictive it gets.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE surmised that when trying to protect the Chignik fishery by making cutbacks on the larger Kodiak fishery and on fisheries west of the Chignik, tension would be created between the major fisheries that have a lot of participants and the Chignik fishery that is minor and has fewer participants.

MR. JENSEN replied that the crux of the whole Board of Fisheries job is allocation and creating management plans that will sustain fisheries. He said one of his biggest worries right now is that the Chignik fishery, for whatever reason, is definitely

having very serious issues and "we definitely have to take all measures we can to ... make that fishery sustainable again."

2:04:31 PM

CHAIR TARR referenced Mr. Jensen's length of time on the board, the state's budget cuts, and the board's reliance on ADF&G to provide science information, and cuts to multi-year salmon studies. She requested Mr. Jensen to reflect on what he is seeing at the department and whether the point has been reached of being unable to keep up with everything that needs to be done to keep up with the science and, in turn, how that impacts the allocation decisions.

MR. JENSEN responded that he is amazed how well the department does with what it has. The department is doing an excellent job, he said, but some of the studies have been cut back or removed. The department is operating under a strict budget and everything gets more expensive each year. It's a hard situation with the state's finances and having to cut the budgets of all departments, not just ADF&G's budget.

CHAIR TARR asked whether the Board of Fisheries is still getting the information it needs.

MR. JENSEN answered that the board realizes ADF&G is getting cut back. He said board travel has also been reduced and it is no longer able to go out for the side trips that are so helpful, such as trips to the Yukon or Cook Inlet to observe fisheries. That makes it more difficult for the board to make decisions, as it is important for board members to have hands-on or eyeballs-on to understand what people are talking about with fisheries. So, the board's best source of information is the department and the public when they come testify or talk to the board. He added that he has high accolades for how ADF&G is operating under these hard financial times.

2:07:38 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK thanked Mr. Jensen for his service. He expressed his belief that the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game represent the best system for Alaska and in the country in how Alaska manages its fish and game.

2:08:30 PM

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. She stated that she was born and raised in northern California and her outdoor-loving parents exposed her to camping, hiking, and a bit of hunting and fishing. The minimal exposure to hunting and fishing influenced her decision at the age of 20 to buy a one-way ticket to Alaska. Upon arriving in Anchorage she took the city bus from the hostel she was staying at to the city library where she researched hunting and fishing operations in Alaska. She called various operations and told them she would work for room, board, and industry experience. A lodge in Kodiak accepted her offer on the condition that she not have green hair given she was from California. She flew to Kodiak the next day and then to the remote hunting and fishing lodge where she worked for several years.

MS. MITCHELL related that she acquired her captain's license, sport fish guide license, and assistant hunting guide license, and she started to make a wage as well. She worked full-length seasons, beginning in April with spring bear hunting, then summer fishing, and then fall bear and deer hunting seasons that ended in November and December, at which time she would travel to the [Lower 48] to work hunting and fishing shows, such as Safari Club International. While her calling was working in the hunting and fishing industry, she still wanted a college degree, so she enrolled at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She majored in economics and eventually received a graduate degree in resource and applied economics.

MS. MITCHELL said her definition of resource economics is the supply, demand, and allocation of earth's natural resources. A graduate degree in resource economics, she continued, prepares students to use economic tools to evaluate the allocation and the utilization of resources to achieve optimal environmental and social benefits. It also helps in understanding the market and values associated with the environment and resource use, as well as resource management decisions. She is fascinated by this economic way of thinking and its application to natural resources. With its incredible resource endowment, Alaska is largely resource dependent and that makes for great economics and a great lifestyle.

MS. MITCHELL stated that a large part of her education centered on economic methods for valuing nonmarket goods. She said this is important when applied to resources because many resources provide utility but do not necessarily have direct or observable

market prices. Simply following monetary flows to determine the economic importance of a natural resource will understate its true value every time. Of equal importance in her opinion is the process at which natural resources are allocated for consumptive purposes. The allocative decisions intended to optimize social and environmental welfare over time require evaluating the resource and the user groups by assigning values that may not be directly observable. Alaska's commercial fishery is incredibly important and has incredible economic opportunity for maintaining generational heritage of families and communities across the state, as well as maintaining an incredibly powerful position as a leading supplier of fish to the world market. Alaska's subsistence and personal use fisheries are incredibly important because the health of an economy and the strength of state are greatly supported by the wellbeing of its people and the ability of people to feel unified under tradition and belief system. Alaska's sport fishery is incredibly important for reasons spanning from significant growth over the past two decades to its influence in maintaining Alaska's status as a premier travel destination.

MS. MITCHELL noted that she currently teaches economics and recreation management courses at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She also works part-time in the winter months at a flight school as a ground instructor and advance instrument ground instructor. She continues to work seasonally as a hunting and fishing guide. She concluded by stating that she is incredibly passionate about Alaska, Alaska's resources, and her Alaskan lifestyle, and would be honored to participate at the Board of Fisheries level.

[2:13:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN stated her belief that Ms. Mitchell has served on the Board of Fisheries for two years. She asked whether Ms. Mitchell has had to conflict out during her time on the board or foresees proposals in which she would be conflicted out. She allowed this would be unusual given Ms. Mitchell works sometimes as a sport fishing boat captain.

MS. MITCHELL replied that [board members] prepare an ethics statement disclosing any information at which they think would be a conflict for them. She said [board members] also consult with the Department of Law (DOL) and the chair member who helps to determine whether a board member is in a position of conflict. She stated she has not had a reason thus far in her participation at the board level, however she has made it open

in her ethics statement that at some point she intends to have her own fishing operation. At this time and over the past decade, she continued, she has worked for other fishing outfitters as a boat captain and sport fishing guide.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN pointed out that people understand the direct connection for a commercial fisherman's conflict of interest in a specific fishery. However, she continued, by law none of Alaska's sport fisheries are called commercial fisheries even when guided and lodge-based; rather they are called sport fishing. She surmised that as an economist Ms. Mitchell would understand that it is an economic benefit to Ms. Mitchell personally and to the industry to have lodges with those. She therefore asked whether Ms. Mitchell could foresee that there would be conflicts that Ms. Mitchell would have the inability to act on under current policy because of her present position as a licensed boat skipper for Raspberry Island Remote Lodge.

[2:16:00 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR interjected that it is 2:15 p.m. and the cutoff to sign up for public testimony has been reached. She noted that about 66 people are now signed up to testify and testimony would be taken in the order in which people had signed up.

MS. MITCHELL responded to Representative Hannan that she provided an updated resume that hasn't been distributed and she doesn't currently work for Kodiak Raspberry Island Remote Lodge. She stated she does not currently see herself as having any conflicts with any of the things that have been presented to the board thus far. She will continue to monitor that in the event that at some point she may be operating in an area where the board is currently looking at proposals. As she progresses her personal career and, at some point, opens her own sport fishing business, she will continue to consult with the Department of Law to make sure that she is not in conflict with anything that is being taken up by the board.

[2:17:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES inquired whether Ms. Mitchell has been on the Board of Fisheries for one year or two years.

MS. MITCHELL answered she was appointed to the board in spring [2020]. However, the COVID situation caused challenges in the confirmation process and so she has maintained a board position until this confirmation process.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked what percentage of time Ms. Mitchell spends as a fishing guide versus a hunting guide.

MS. MITCHELL replied that her time is split within the seasons, but her fishing season is typically cut a little bit short. Depending on the year, she continued, she will typically run a sport fishing boat from mid- to end-May through July, sometimes August, and sometimes through the middle of September, which typically is when the sport fishing season closes for the year. Year-to-year that changes. She works for about a half dozen different outfitters across the state, and she fluctuates depending on the work opportunity. Over the past decade, it probably averages right at 50-50.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES inquired whether she is correct in recalling from last year's confirmation hearing that when asked why she didn't apply for the Board of Game, Ms. Mitchell replied that someone had called her and asked her to put forth her name to the Board of Fisheries.

MS. MITCHELL responded that she had a conversation with Reed Morisky where the idea of potentially putting her name in for the Board of Fisheries came about. She said she thought what an honor it would be to serve because she had been passionate about fisheries in the state since the day she moved to Alaska and she continued to work within fisheries both academically and within the industry. She therefore put her name in and is honored to be before the committees today.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked Ms. Mitchell how much exposure she has had to the commercial fishing industry.

MS. MITCHELL answered that this is going to be a very large learning curve for her, and that it's pretty well known at this point. Her background is in academia, she continued, and her academic experience is in having read hundreds of academic journals on property rights, fishing quotas, economic principles in sustaining multi-use fisheries, appropriate economic measures for valuation, and allocating harvest between competing user groups. Her industry experience is more on the sport fish side. If confirmed for this position, she stated, it would be only appropriate that she would seek out significant education within the commercial fisheries and all fisheries so that she can do the best job she can in serving the board.

[2:21:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that economics is the study of scarce resources. He asked whether Ms. Mitchell, given her knowledge of economics and knowledge of the study of scarce resources, could be fair in evaluating the need for decent allocation between sport fish and commercial fish when required to vote, despite her being a sport fish kind of person.

MS. MITCHELL replied that her industry experience is in sport fish, but as a board member she wouldn't say that she is sport fish or any other kind of proponent of a specific user group. She said she believes all the user groups in the state need to find a way to co-exist and, in that, is the very challenging process of allocation. As a board member everything is going to be based on the situation and it's really not fair to direct attention towards one user group over another because of the vast geographic differences and the importance of the resource to different user groups in different areas of the state. To be able to make decisions, it is a reliance on looking at the data, talking to the stakeholders, and understanding the resource and its importance to the people who are utilizing in that area.

[2:24:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM recalled that in the early 1960s, the first commissioner Andy Anderson told the board that if they over-escaped the fishery, then they would be reprimanded, and if they under-escaped it, they would be fired. He further recalled that Andy Anderson said regardless of the pain inflicted on people he was managing for the fisheries, not for politics. It was a harsh way to manage, but by the early 1980s Cook Inlet had record fish runs. Representative Gillham asked whether Ms. Mitchell would be willing to follow that example and manage in that harsh of a situation.

MS. MITCHELL responded that she believes certain situations call for more drastic measures. She said she also believes that that's all situational based, and without the information in front of her, she can't blatantly say something across the board like that. She stressed that Article VIII [of Alaska's constitution] is a guideline that the Board of Fisheries follows, which is to utilize, develop, and conserve the natural resource for the maximum benefit of the people. Sometimes to benefit the people the most, drastic measures need to be taken to rebuild fish stocks, but she would not feel comfortable stating that she would just blatantly take that drastic measure.

She would make decisions that matched the situation given the information provided.

2:26:39 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES requested Ms. Mitchell to comment on how an unlimited potential demand on resources, as in the personal use fishery or sport fisheries in urban areas, would play into allocative decisions.

MS. MITCHELL answered that in the first week of every economics course she teaches, an assumption is made that people have unlimited wants and there is a limitation on resources. She said she understands that that situation exists within sport and personal use fisheries. However, she continued, she believes that that situation exists in everything that [people] do, and so that conversation is had within every decision, not just within those two user groups.

2:27:49 PM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE recounted that when Ms. Mitchell was first appointed there was a lot of consternation about her lack of experience with the Board of Fisheries. However, she related, she has received a lot of good feedback that Ms. Mitchell is willing to roll up her sleeves, dig in, and bring her education to the table. She further related that a previous board member spoke to her about the need to have an economist on the Board of Fisheries because it deals with livelihoods and the economy of Alaska. She said she is hearing from Ms. Mitchell's testimony that Ms. Mitchell cares deeply about sustaining the fishery and making sure there is a balance. She asked what metric Ms. Mitchell uses to weigh the balance of sustaining the fishery and providing for the maximum benefit to the economy.

MS. MITCHELL responded that there is a lot of science that supports what needs to happen and helps to set [the board's] total allowable catch and helps [the board] to determine escapement goals to sustain the fishery, which is so valuable and so important. However, she said, the Board of Fisheries deals almost primarily and exclusively with allocative decisions. The board is not just looking at the biology and the science of the resource itself anymore. The board is looking at the way that humans interact with the resource, and economics is typically the study of human decision making under scarcity. It is that interaction, she continued, where she could potentially bring something forth to the board in helping to look at the

human interaction with the resource because sustaining it based on the science and the need of the resource itself doesn't allow [the board] to necessarily produce the benefit to the people by continuing to utilize the resource. Putting those two together is an important component in making the allocative decision.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE stated she appreciates those elements in a board member. She asked what Ms. Mitchell, at the end of her term if appointed, would deem as one of her greatest successes of the value that she brought to the board.

MS. MITCHELL replied that if confirmed and given the opportunity to serve, she would consider her greatest contribution to be having listened to the stakeholders, and to having read and applied her knowledge and education to making calculated decisions in an effort to support the resource and the people who utilize the resource. That would be her goal in serving.

[2:31:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY stated she thinks it's important that the Board of Fisheries have some regional and sector preference balance. She said she also thinks it's important that all board members can make decisions based upon scientific recommendations and not just a regional or sector preference. She inquired whether Ms. Mitchell feels she can do that, and requested Ms. Mitchell to provide an example of the time on the board where she has done something like that.

MS. MITCHELL stated she was unable to hear the question.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY rephrased her question. She asked whether Ms. Mitchell feels she can make decisions based on scientific recommendations and not regional or sector preference and, if so, to provide an example of when Ms. Mitchell has done that.

MS. MITCHELL answered that every decision she has made on the board so far has been based on the information provided by the department, her conversations with stakeholders and fishery managers, and the information that has been provided to her. She stated she would continue to make decisions based on evaluation of all the information and conversation with stakeholders, and not influenced in any other way.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY understood Ms. Mitchell to be saying that she doesn't have a particular example but that is how she tries to make every decision.

MS. MITCHELL replied correct, she has talked to stakeholders regarding every decision that she has made on the board at this point, along with the information provided to her.

2:34:53 PM

MARIT CARLSON-VAN DORT, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. She said she is a born and raised Alutiiq Alaskan from the southern Alaska Peninsula. She attended school in Juneau during the winters and spent her summers in Chignik Bay with her extended family and many generational fishermen. She has resided in Anchorage since 2015 and prior to that her entire life experience was living in coastal Alaska.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT related that Chignik is a small village with a long history in fisheries. She noted that while various fisheries have come and gone over the years, the village is supported almost entirely by sockeye salmon. In the early 1990s, when she was about 13 or 14, she was offered a job on her grandfather's seine boat. She spent the next 13 or so summers seining for salmon in that fishery, as did her mother for 24 years, as did her grandfather for well over 60 years, and as did both of her great grandfathers before him. These early experiences and being a lifelong subsistence user inspired her interest in ecology and natural science.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT said that after graduating from Juneau-Douglas High School she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Conservation Biology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She allowed that Wisconsin may not be known as a hotbed for salmon research, but pointed out that the university pioneered the science of limnology and fish ecology in fresh water systems in North America especially, and it was in that course work where she concentrated most of her studies. She continued her education at the University of Alaska Southeast in Fishery Science where she was particularly interested in large population dynamics in salmonid species, and also in the Master of Arts teaching program where she studied secondary education with a math/science emphasis.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT stated that how Alaska protects, manages, and uses its many resources has remained central to both her personal and professional interests. As a former legislative staffer, she spent many hours assigned to the Senate Resources Standing Committee. She served as a former legislative liaison

to the Department of Environmental Conservation. More recently she shifted to the private sector and moved to Anchorage where she continued working in public affairs and government affairs in areas that were associated with state and federal regulation, environmental policy, permitting, development, and community outreach and engagement.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT specified that she is currently employed as the President and CEO of Far West Incorporated, the Alaska Native village corporation for Chignik Bay formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). She related that the Far West board of directors recognizes that managing Far West lands for subsistence and cultural resources remains the highest priority and best use of the corporation's lands. As such, aside from the lease to permit guided bear hunting on Far West lands, and very limited rentals of a couple apartments in the village, the corporation derives no revenue from fisheries or any other business interest in the village. Far West shareholders primarily reside in Southcentral Alaska and in Kodiak, the two locations between which the corporation alternates hosting its annual shareholders meetings.

[2:38:54 PM](#)

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT explained that her interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries came about because of what seemed to her to be very significant changes and dramatic shifts in many of Alaska's fish populations and their behaviors in recent years. She said she is very interested in trying to understand what is causing these changes and ensuring that fisheries management policies are appropriately responsive to what is being observed locally and reflected in the scientific data. Most important, management needs to be for long-term sustainability and to her that means first and foremost that sufficient numbers of fish are returning and reproducing to renew wild populations. Second, there must be management for a sustainable surplus, primarily based on maximum sustained yield principles. Third, Alaska has a subsistence use priority, and it is important to her that fish resources are available to Alaskans as a reliable, affordable, and accessible source of healthy protein to support Alaskan's bodies and feed Alaskan families. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort further stated that Alaska's commercial fishing industry is an incredibly important industry for the state's economy, and it is also an important part of bolstering Alaska's food security and making fish available to Alaskans who for whatever reason may or may not be able or willing to access the resource for themselves. She said she fully recognizes the importance and

value of Alaska's subsistence, commercial, sport fishing, and personal use fisheries to the culture and economies of Alaskan communities, most especially rural communities.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT addressed some recently distributed talking points that have come to her attention, and that in her view contain a variety of falsehoods and inaccuracies. In regard to the assertion that she currently occupies a commercial fishing seat, she noted that she was appointed in spring 2019 to fill the seat that was occupied by Orville Huntington when he made the move to the Board of Game. At that time she was unanimously confirmed by the legislature to complete the remaining two years of his three-year term. As discussed today, she continued, there are no designated seats on the Board of Fisheries, but informally Mr. Huntington was seated in a subsistence seat. John Jensen, Fritz Johnson, and Gerad Godfrey occupied the commercial fishing seats. Reed Morisky, Israel Payton, and John Wood occupied the sport fishing seats. She would maintain her position as a so-called subsistence seat on the Board of Fisheries that the committees are presently considering.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT spoke to the Upper Cook Inlet meeting where she provided plenty of justification for the proposals that she supported and didn't support. She noted that the record and her voting record are available for everyone to look at. She said it is inaccurate to claim that her only support is sport fish proposals over commercial fish. She did not come to that meeting with her mind made up. She asked questions of the department and staff and the public, and worked hard on brokering compromise between commercial and sport fish interests on addressing a late run Kenai king salmon conservation management plan; precisely the process and type of communication in board members that is valued by stakeholders.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT said she was surprised by the assertion from commercial fishermen that she doesn't engage. She pointed out that she has on multiple occasions been invited and met with United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) leadership and members. She participated in a panel hosted by UFA last fall during its virtual fish expo. She has met in person with members of the Kodiak Salmon Working Group. She has met in person with Cook Inlet drift permit fishermen and setnetters. She has met with sport fish guides and conservation groups from the Lower Cook Inlet to the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. She has met with Chignik area stakeholders, with hatchery representatives, and folks from Alaska Native regional and village corporations and tribes. She has spoken on the phone with stakeholders, and she has

communicated by email. She has done her very best to be available to Alaskans because they deserve no less.

2:43:07 PM

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT discussed another assertion she was made aware of. She stated there was no vote strictly for Chignik fishermen that are also shareholders and directors of the Chignik village corporation that she works for. The corporation has shareholders that are Chignik permit holders as well as shareholders that are Kodiak seine permit holders. The two communities have a history that is decades long, if not centuries long, of transportation back and forth between them. She said the board made a very difficult and unpopular allocation decision to decrease the time and percent allocation allowed to the Kodiak fleet to prosecute a very specific intercept fishery on a struggling Chignik run that has failed to meet minimum escapement goals for the last three years.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT refuted the last assertion, stating she did not work with a cousin to submit proposals to the board. She pointed out that the proposals were submitted long before she had an interest in being appointed to the Board of Fisheries and had never worked with her cousin in crafting any proposals. She said she also had no knowledge of her uncle's transfer of his seine permit prior to the Kodiak meeting, and he has submitted to the committees a sworn affidavit affirming these facts. She related that when drafting her ethics disclosures she has always checked the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission website to ensure that her disclosures were accurate. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort said she disclosed that [her uncle] held a permit in the two prior meetings in which she had participated at the work group and in Lower Cook Inlet; as well she disclosed at the Kodiak meeting that [her uncle] had held a Chignik permit. Prior to deliberations, she continued, she also disclosed on the record that she had a first cousin who had submitted some of the proposals that were before the board. She consulted with the Department of Law and the board chair as the ethics supervisor on all of these disclosures, she said, and she was advised that there was no conflict of interest under the Alaska Branch Ethics Act ("Ethics Act"). Lastly, she continued, during board discussion she did use the word "we" in referring to the loss of two processing plants that occurred in the community of Chignik in the last few years, and she admits it was a mistake. She did, however, work very hard and late on drafting her comments and reviewing department data related to proposals about the Cape Igvak Salmon Management Plan. She stated that she did work

with Chignik stakeholder groups to make sure that the intent and the effect of the proposed policy change was accurate. "Isn't that the job of a board member?" she asked. She pointed out that she is but one vote on the board and that that particular proposal, which was not submitted by her cousin, passed 4-1.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT concluded by stating that everyone has deep and meaningful ties throughout Alaska. She said she believes that all the appointees care very deeply about Alaska's fisheries. She expressed her honor and pride to be the first woman and the first Alaska Native woman to ever be elected as chair of the Board of Fisheries. Alaska's fish resources mean a great deal to her and they have given her a lot, she continued. Alaska's fish have afforded her a great education and now she wants to give back, and that is the reason she is before the committees today asking for re-confirmation.

[2:46:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE offered his appreciation for Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's testimony and speaking to the accusations leveled against her by some fairly big groups. He posed a scenario in which a Kodiak fishery failed in the same way as has the Chignik fishery, and asked whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort would vote in the same way to support that fishery by decreasing the intercept catch in one of the other sectors.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied yes. She said her first focus is on the biological needs of the resource and then on bolstering and maintaining a surplus that is harvestable. She has often questioned whether or not that same vote would have occurred with respect to the Cape Igvak Salmon Management Plan if Chignik had not experienced the last three years, and she would venture to guess no. She said she looks at the conservation principles irrespective of whether the conservation issue is in her hometown or anywhere else in the state of Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE remarked that he understands from Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's testimony that she is filling the unofficial subsistence position. He noted that a lot is heard about commercial fish and sport fish, but not a lot about subsistence fish; it always seems to be a tension between commercial fish and sport fish. He requested Ms. Carlson-Van Dort to relate her experience as a subsistence fisher and how important she thinks that is to her job for Alaskans, and to Native Alaskans who seem to have a vested interest in her position on the board.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded that being able to practice the same activities accessing the same food sources that your ancestors did is a huge part of personal and cultural identity, and whether that is for Alaska Native peoples or for anyone who has an intimate relationship with the land and water resources. Personally, her family has grown up subsisting on salmon primarily, but many other sources as well such as berries, halibut, crab, moose, and caribou. "Salmon is a cornerstone of so much of who we are," she added, "what we do with the fish - pickle it, smoke it, can it, jar it ... make it fish pies, the works, and so ... it is an intrinsic part of my personal identity."

[2:50:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked Ms. Carlson-Van Dort for her service, but said she cannot ignore the overwhelming testimony against the appointee's confirmation. She related that people have said in emailed testimony that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's claim of being the subsistence representative on the [board] makes them defensive. There are statements that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has never relied on subsistence for her food. Another statement was that tribal people should not take from one another, especially when the allocation has been set in place for so long. A lot of the testimony has very strong feelings about it, Representative Vance continued. She asked Ms. Carlson-Van Dort what she has to say to the people who feel that she has not represented subsistence given her board seat is considered the traditional, although not statutory, subsistence seat.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered that she thinks she has been very consistent in supporting the subsistence proposals that have come before the board since she became a part of the board. However, the board's job is to represent the interests of the fish and of all Alaskans, she stated. Her perspective is most strong in subsistence and commercial fishing and she has less experience in sport fish and personal use. Her experience is her own, which is what she is sharing with the committees today.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE stated that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort just said her experience is in subsistence and commercial fishing, and yet the overwhelming testimony is that the appointee's vote lean more to sport fish decisions than they do subsistence and commercial. She requested the appointee's response to that.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied that her response is to review her votes. She would say that her votes are very consistent on

subsistence interests, and her votes go back and forth on the sport and commercial fishing interests.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE offered her appreciation for Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's honesty. She stated that there is much deep emotion because this deals with people's livelihoods, culture, and way of life with a very scarce resource. She related that [as a legislator] she must weigh and balance the needs of all Alaskans in her decision. The opposition cannot be ignored, she continued, because there has been much more than just "hey we don't like her because of her votes," there have been accusations that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort hasn't taken consideration to get perspective of all groups. Legislators must weigh how the appointee has conducted herself as a board member in light of the people's perspective since it is those people who legislators must represent. Legislators are filtering through the truth, she continued, so as much as Ms. Carlson-Van Dort can speak to putting her perspective on the record, and what has actually taken place on the record, will help legislators in their decision making.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded with examples relative to the subsistence issues. She said she believes she voted in favor of creating an amount necessary for subsistence for Seldovia subsistence users and also creating additional opportunity for those subsistence users. She voted in favor of a very good conservation proposal put forth by the Tyonek Native Association to substitute sockeye or other species of salmon for king salmon. She also voted in favor of increasing subsistence opportunity in the upper Yentna River. There were only several subsistence related votes in her limited tenure of about one year on the board, she noted, and she thinks those subsistence interests were represented and she voted in favor of them.

[2:56:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES offered her understanding that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is still the CEO of Far West Incorporated.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered correct.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES offered her understanding that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort checked with [the Department of Law] on her conflicts of interest in relation to her votes. She noted that personal interests are defined as "an interest held or involved by a public officer or the officer's immediate family member or parent, including membership in any organization, whether

fraternal, nonprofit, for profit, charitable, or politic, from which or as a result of a person or an organization receives a benefit. Representative Stutes asked whether it is a fact that many of the shareholders are indeed permit holders in the Chignik area.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied she is not sure how many permit holders are left in Chignik that actually participate in the fishery; she does know of a few. She said she doesn't know how many there are that are actually fishing any longer, although that is neither here nor there because if they hold a permit that is the asset in question. But, she continued, there are also permit holders around the state, including some from the community of Representative Stutes.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES agreed, but maintained that there is going to be a conflict somewhere when someone is sitting on the Board of Fisheries and making a decision while also sitting as the head of Far West Incorporated. She recalled Ms. Carlson-Van Dort saying that she is only one vote and the vote passed for the Igvak area 4-1. Representative Stutes asked whether it is correct that it takes four votes to pass anything and that if it had been a vote of 3-1 it wouldn't have passed.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded, "I don't know," and said it would depend upon if a quorum were represented.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES offered her understanding that a quorum on a vote or for a pass on the Board of Fisheries is four votes.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered, "If it was a 3-1 vote, yeah, it probably wouldn't have ... passed because ... there would have been I think a failure to meet a quorum - no, no there would have been a quorum." In regard to the earlier question of whether there was a conflict, she stated that a conflict as she understands it is defined as a financial interest of an immediate family member. She said Far West has over 500 shareholders and she thinks it is a minority of those shareholders that currently hold permits.

[2:58:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES pointed out that there are [Far West] members that hold permits and that it takes four votes to pass anything, and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort was the fourth vote because she didn't declare a conflict.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied that she didn't declare a conflict, but she did put all of that on the record. When preparing her ethics statement she consulted with the ethics chair and the Department of Law, and it was determined by them that there was no conflict. "There is a process at the board level for addressing conflicts amongst the members," she continued. "The chair asks if any members have questions, comments, and at that time any member can raise an issue that the board would then vote on; that didn't happen."

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES stated, "I think we're getting crosswise here with a perceived conflict and a by-the-book conflict." She related that she attended that board meeting, and someone directly tied to the Board of Fisheries told her during a conversation that he/she couldn't understand why they were in Kodiak because the decisions had already been made and it was just a trip over.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES requested Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's opinion on whether shifting the management of the Chignik area to a mixed stock fishery would allow a more accurate accounting of the brood table for sockeye in the Chignik system, and thereby help management rebuild the Chignik runs.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded:

No, probably not, at least not initially, it depends. The two sockeye runs that are of primary concern are the two sockeye runs that go into Chignik Lake and into Black Lake. Both of those genetically distinct populations have been really struggling. ... There are coho that come through there as well, and then there are surrounding humpy streams that supply pink opportunities, pink and chum opportunities to that fishery as well, I believe. I'm not sure that ... switching it over to a mixed stock fishery would help address the sockeye issue. But I'd certainly be interested in having that conversation evaluating ... any recommendations from the department on that front.

[3:03:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort recalls seeing a letter from the Area M Seiners Association out of Sand Point, Alaska.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered she has not had the opportunity to review all of the significant numbers of public comment that have come through since last night and this morning. She said she was focused on preparing her comments and making sure she was prepared to address questions.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ read three lines from the Area M Seiners Association letter signed by Kiley Thompson, President, which state: "During her time on the Board, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has significantly leaned towards the sport fish sector. She has voted against proposals that could benefit commercial fisherman. In 2019, she voted to support proposals that solely benefitted Chignik commercial fishermen." He asked whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort would say this is accurate or false.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied that it is not accurate. She agreed she did vote for a proposal related to the Cape Igvak Salmon Management Plan, as was previously discussed. It did absolutely benefit Chignik fishermen, she continued, and was an allocative decision. However, she noted, she did vote against a Chignik plan that was submitted in what she believes was the statewide crab meeting. So, it is not entirely accurate, she stated. In terms of the sport fishing interests, she said she is interested in making sure that struggling fish populations are appropriately conserved. By and large in the state, it is king/Chinook salmon issues that are going to be looked at. So no, that statement is not entirely accurate, she said.

[3:05:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort knows how many of the Far West people have sport fishing licenses.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded she could not venture a guess, probably not too many, but she has no idea.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE recalled the earlier discussion about perhaps a conflict of interest because some Far West corporation [people] have commercial fishing permits. He said he assumes some of those Far West corporation people also have subsistence permits from ADF&G, and some probably also have sport fishing licenses. He inquired whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort would say that she should recuse herself from any board decisions or board deliberations because, or based on, the possible financial implications of having a sport fishing license or subsistence permit as well.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered that each of those ethics determinations, and determinations of whether there is or is not a conflict, is done on a case-by-case basis and on the situational information. She said it gets really complicated, and the Ethics Act is crafted the way it is because Alaskans have so many ties to each other. Certainly, a determination must be made about whether or not a conflict exists and how big the pool is. For example, to deem it a financial interest, is the threshold 100 shareholders, or 500, or 1,000? All of those things with all of the information come to bear when making that decision. It really is done on a case-by-case basis, she reiterated, so she would be hard pressed to answer that.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE recalled that the Chignik fishery that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort voted on had a vote of 4-1. He surmised that if she changed her vote, then it would have been 3-2, not 3-1.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES interjected no, not if [Ms. Carlson-Van Dort] had recused herself.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE responded that now he understands. He noted that Chignik has suffered a huge failure. He inquired whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort thinks her vote was right and would she make the same vote today to protect the fish knowing the opposition she was going to get from the Kodiak fisherman, UFA, and others.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered yes.

[3:09:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked what Ms. Carlson-Van Dort believes is a solution to addressing the king salmon returns.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied that king salmon return is going to be one of the greatest challenges that will come before the board and the department in the future. It is something with which the Kenai is very familiar, she stated, but she sees evidence of struggling Chinook salmon runs all over the state. The challenge particularly is how to conserve those king salmon but also allow opportunity to harvest on the other mixed stocks that may be passing through at the same time. It is incredibly challenging and very difficult, and the board is in a tight spot to balance those king runs and providing that opportunity. It is going to be a collective effort between the department, between the board, and also between the fishermen. She said she appreciates the proactivity of some of the fishermen,

particularly those on the Kenai who are innovating with their gear and harvest method to reduce their take of king salmon and be more targeted in their efforts to prosecute on the sockeye salmon that are passing through. It is an opportunity missed, she continued, but it's a very difficult decision to restrict that opportunity on the sockeye in the interest of king conservation. That is a place she would like to focus some of her interests if she is reconfirmed to the board, she stated.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE noted some people feel the hatcheries have something to do with the aforementioned. She requested the appointee's thoughts on the sustainability and longevity of Alaska's hatcheries in regard to king salmon as well as salmon hatcheries overall.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded that she thinks the hatcheries are really important and have done incredible work in providing additional opportunity for mostly commercial fishermen, but also sport fishermen since there are sport fish hatcheries too. However, she cautiously said, the environment is changing so much, and a lot of fish are being released into the environment, and she doesn't think the science has been done or it isn't yet understood what the implications are of doing that. She has read arguments on both sides regarding the potential impacts of the large volumes of hatchery fish that are being released into the North Pacific. So, she continued, she cannot answer the question, but she can say it's important and she would like to see some type of partnership with either academia or federal fisheries managers to try to get a better sense of what the scientific data might show with relationship to the hatchery productions and their effects on wild stocks.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE expressed appreciation for the appointee's thoughtful response, and said there's a lot of inconclusive data, but that is one of the top issues.

[3:13:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether there has been any change in the Chignik fishery since the changes were implemented.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered she doesn't know, but she can say they struggled again last year, and she doesn't believe the minimum escapement goals were met last year either.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES inquired whether there has been any effort to determine what the etiology problem really is in that area.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied she sure hopes so.

3:13:58 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN related that a saying she heard when first running for office was that it is always more challenging to get elected for a second term because there are now specific votes or issues to which people turn. With that said, there has been criticism of very specific actions. She requested Ms. Carlson-Van Dort to reprise the part of her opening statement of why she is interested in continuing to serve on the Board of Fisheries.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded she is interested in continuing to serve primarily for many of the reasons discussed during this meeting today. The environment and the ocean are changing, she said. Those changes aren't fully understood, and the science is not yet had to support explanations for all of those changes. However, she continued, it is known that things are changing and so [the board] needs to conservatively manage and make sure that its management policies are responding to those changes as best they can with the data available. Data is incomplete, and in a perfect scenario there would be lots of funding to conduct all the scientific studies needed to inform board decisions. As Mr. Jensen said, the board would be able to fly out and visit those fisheries, get to know them more intimately, see how they are prosecuted, and get to know the nuances; but it is impossible at this point. So, she stated, the board is tasked with making very difficult allocative decisions based on the best available information and best available science before it at the time. She expressed her hope that that will change. The board does its best, she added, and she does her best to bring fairness, balance, and integrity to her decisions on the board.

3:16:26 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK thanked Ms. Carlson-Van Dort for her openness at the beginning in addressing some of the issues and bringing them to the forefront. He noted that the Copper River and Yukon River are in his district, and for his district that is primarily food. There is commercial fishing on the Copper River, but some of the lower villages haven't really been able to participate much in that. These two rivers interest him a lot because it comes down to the question of putting food in people's freezers, so if Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is confirmed he looks forward to working with her in addressing the issues at hand on those two rivers.

3:17:19 PM

CHAIR PATKOTAK stated that a couple things come to mind after listening to the back and forth and his not having any real exposure to the commercial fishing industry. He said he has been a part of village politics, and folks call into question [his] decision-making, and sometimes [he] has to explain [his] frame of thought. He has always relied on being transparent and honest and not looking after some personal gain in any way. Based on today's discussion and back-and-forth it seems there has been a question of integrity and transparency. From what he understands, he continued, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has disclosed any potential conflicts through the Department of Law and the board chairman, yet she still needs to represent the voice that she was assigned to represent on the Board of Fisheries. He asked whether Ms. Carlson-Van Dort can honestly tell the committees today that she has maintained those thresholds of integrity while going down all the rabbit holes and trails.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered she has done all that she knows to do to make sure she has been honest and transparent with the public. Everybody knows the Board of Fisheries process is a very public and very involved process, she stated, and that is what makes it so unique and effective in terms of how Alaska's common property resources are managed. She said she relies on the advice of the Department of Law and the ethics chair, and she did everything she knew to do to make sure she was being fully transparent with the public in disclosing any and all financial interests required under the law.

CHAIR PATKOTAK thanked the appointee. He noted this is his first time in being involved with the governor's appointees, but he would like to give Ms. Carlson-Van Dort kudos as an Alaska Native woman applying herself and "facing the fire."

3:20:48 PM

The committees took an at-ease from 3:20 p.m. to 3:28 p.m.

3:29:24 PM

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He testified he is a lifelong Alaskan born and raised in King Salmon where he lived for 39 years, and has now been a resident of Anchorage for 11 years. He said his past

experiences include: fifteen years as president of Afognak Native Corporation; three years' service on the Bristol Bay Borough Assembly; six years' service on the Bristol Bay Borough School Board; nine years' service on the Naknek/Kvichak Fish & Game Advisory Committee, six of which he served as the co-chair; and three years' service on the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association (BBRSDA) board.

MR. WILLIAMS stated he is currently a member of the Naknek Native Village Tribe, and is presently employed as Director of Regional Affairs at the Pebble Limited Partnership. He said he owns and operates a Bristol Bay commercial fishing operation alongside his three sons. He has been involved with the fishery for more than 39 years and continues to do so as a fourth generation commercial fisherman of Bristol Bay. He owns and operates a business in Naknek that services the commercial fishing industry with the help of his family. He and his family enjoy the outdoors and share a love for Alaska and the plentiful resources that it has to offer.

MR. WILLIAMS thanked the members of the committees for their service to the state. He said he looks forward to a productive conversation today and into the future. He requested support from the members of the committees for his confirmation. In response to Chair Tarr, he said he was appointed in spring 2020 and therefore has served on the board for about a year.

[3:31:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked Mr. Williams for participating last year in a Zoom meeting that she held with her district. She related that her district has a lot of consternation because of Mr. Williams's involvement with Pebble Mine. She asked whether Mr. Williams has had to declare any conflict of interest on the Board of Fisheries with regard to Pebble Mine.

MR. WILLIAMS replied no, he has not.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE noted that the Pebble project is currently paused. She inquired whether there could be times that Pebble's interest would cross over into Board of Fisheries decisions.

MR. WILLIAMS responded he doesn't have an example of when that happened or when it could potentially happen. He pointed out that there is a process for determining a conflict of interest. He said he doesn't know that there will be or that there has been an instance where he would need to determine that conflict.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE, given that her district has such a direct interest in how Mr. Williams would be able to represent the Board of Fisheries, asked whether Mr. Williams could reconcile the relationship he has with the fishery and with Pebble Mine.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that because he is Director of Regional Affairs for the Pebble Limited Partnership, he engages with communities that have been closely related to the project. He said he also has engaged with fishermen over the years and continues to do so. Additionally, he has fished in Bristol Bay for 39 years, continues to do so alongside three of his sons, and will continue doing so until he can't handle it anymore.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE requested Mr. Williams to elaborate on what it looks like to be Director of Regional Affairs in regard to the communities in Bristol Bay. For example, she continued, what the direct activities are, what the purpose is, and what the hoped-for outcome is in that position.

MR. WILLIAMS replied he works with tribal entities, Native corporations, contractors, and maintains relationships with those that have worked closely or around the project itself. He has also participated in forums where the opposition is the focal point.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE noted Mr. Williams has been a Bristol Bay fisherman for many years. As far as the board's balance, she stated, the board needs a coastal fisherman to represent coastal communities. But, she continued, there is much consternation as to whether Mr. Williams would put the interest of Pebble above the fishery in serving on the board. She asked whether Mr. Williams would be able to objectively focus on the fishery alone when serving in this capacity.

MR. WILLIAMS responded, "Absolutely." He stated he doesn't know that there would ever be an instance where this board would take up anything that pertains to the Pebble project. He said he believes the state has processes in place that will address the project if deemed necessary.

[3:36:41 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN noted that before becoming a board member Mr. Williams was involved in advocating for and/or making proposals before the Board of Fisheries for permit stacking in

Bristol Bay fisheries. She asked whether Mr. Williams would, as a member of the board, continue to advocate for permit stacking.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that he doesn't know whether he would be allowed to do so as far as ethics are concerned. He said he believes there is a certain need for conversation like that.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN requested Mr. Williams to clarify whether "conversation" is in regard to permit stacking or conflicts.

MR. WILLIAMS replied that the conflict process is very sound, and it would determine whether he could participate in any proposal that was deemed potentially a conflict of interest for him. He said permit stacking has been discussed for many years and while looking at advancing something of that nature he has spoken with many fishermen and many folks in the region that support permit stacking. To say there is clearly overwhelming support or overwhelming opposition to it isn't that easy. He explained that the topic came about during the mid to early 2000s when the price for sockeye was 39-40 cents a pound, and people were leaving the fishery and selling their permits for \$20,000 each. Records at the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) show a drastic loss in permit ownership in rural communities like Naknek, Dillingham, Egegik, and the Iliamna Lake region. Those are things that stick in his mind as to how to maintain local participation in the fishery and at the same time how to achieve optimum numbers for the Bristol Bay fishery.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN inquired whether Mr. Williams has had to conflict out of proposals during his year on the board and, if so, how frequently.

MR. WILLIAMS responded that he has not had to conflict out of proposals in the most recent months. He pointed out that the [COVID] pandemic has really put constraints on the ability of the Board of Fisheries to meet and deal with proposals.

[3:40:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted that Mr. Williams lives in Anchorage but fishes in Bristol Bay. He asked how much time Mr. Williams spends in Bristol Bay.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that he would typically be out there now, but for the late breakup and winter continuing. He said he goes out there in April and returns to Anchorage the first week of

August. He and his sons then go back out for moose hunting season in September and they are home by October.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE related that he has a relative who is a limit seiner in the region. The relative does virtually the same thing, except the relative lives on the Kenai Peninsula. But he considers himself a coastal resident of Bristol Bay. He asked whether Mr. Williams spends so much time in the Bristol Bay area that he considers himself a resident.

MR. WILLIAMS replied he does consider himself as a resident. He said many of the folks he sees out there say he probably spends more time out there now than when he claimed residency there. Ultimately, he does have close to his heart the residency that he's grown to know out there, and at the same time he is very happy to be a resident of Anchorage as well.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE summarized that Mr. Williams considers himself a resident or semi-permanent resident of the coastal area of Bristol Bay, while also being in the Pebble issue, which seems as division as the fish issue. He inquired whether Mr. Williams would ever make a decision for Pebble over fish, given that his livelihood right now is fish and Pebble isn't even a project yet. Representative McCabe related that there seems to be some consternation that Mr. Williams has some sort of relationship with Pebble but at the same time everybody is discounting the relationship of Mr. Williams with fish. He requested Mr. Williams to explain the tension between the two in his own mind.

MR. WILLIAMS responded that throughout all his years living in Naknek and King Salmon he was very active in local, Native, community, and school board politics. He stated that watching the issues in the communities is what prompted him to look at Pebble from a different perspective. It would have been easy for him as a fisherman to say no, absolutely not, and he thinks that's where the angst from some of his colleagues comes from. But, he continued, he has a certain respect and a love for the communities of Bristol Bay to be the type of person who sits down and looks at a project like this for the potential it has in a region like Bristol Bay.

[3:44:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK said that in looking at the comments on the appointees he saw 29 that were from out of state relating to Mr. Williams. He stated that first and foremost he is a

representative of Alaska and it should concern everybody that people who don't live in Alaska are trying to influence who is put on Alaska's boards. He said that kind of influence concerns him, he doesn't appreciate those comments, and he wants Alaska to be run by Alaskans.

[3:45:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked Mr. Williams whether he feels he can make decisions based upon scientific recommendations and not on regional or sector preferences. If so, she further asked that he provide an example from his year on the board.

MR. WILLIAMS answered yes. He said he has always prided himself with the ability to sit down and listen to both sides and maintain a level of awareness that would propel him to make a decision based on both science and the factual information presented. Within the limited time he's been on the board, he would say that most recently the board was grappling with how to make up time for its lost effort due to the pandemic. He related that each and every board member expressed the desire to catch up and get back on cycle knowing there were concerns within ADF&G and others. But, he continued, the communities in many ways felt that that may have been a little too aggressive and trying to do that would potentially disenfranchise regions. A great deal of comments were coming in that were complement to the potential efforts there, and the majority of the comments said to push this thing out a year and then regain ground in a more meaningful way. He said that's when he agreed, and on advice from ADF&G, staff, and many stakeholders throughout Alaska, the board chose to do that.

[3:48:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN stated for the record that she has received dozens of letters from nonresidents of Alaska advocating for the confirmation of Mr. Williams. While she did not do a tally, most of them were blanket statements saying all four appointees should be confirmed. If it were a non-Alaska address, she just deleted it, but she said she would go back through the trash to check that it was dozens. She further stated that a couple hundred emails have been received about Board of Fisheries appointees, pro and con, and it's fairly easy to cast out the nonresidents and then return to what the residents of Alaska say, which has been both pro and con.

MR. WILLIAMS commented that in Bristol Bay there is a little over 1,800 drift permits, with more than half of those permits owned by folks in the Lower 48. He said that throughout his years of work he has never begrudged his colleagues from the Lower 48; he respected their comments and their position with regard to his work. However, he pointed out, it highlights the problem of permits leaving Alaska's rural communities and coastal communities, and ending up in out-of-state hands or other places than for which one would think they were intended.

3:51:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that in reading about permit stacking, it sounds to him that the ideas of Mr. Williams on permit stacking are an attempt to keep permits in Alaska. He further stated that this has been seen many times - from beach seines to setnet permits to individual fishing quotas (IFQs). They all get sold and eventually they get sold to people from out-of-state, which may or may not be good. It seems it would be better to keep or sell them within a family, he continued. He asked whether that is what Mr. Williams was after.

MR. WILLIAMS replied yes, that is part of the equation. He stated that the fishery in Bristol Bay is very congested and kind of oversubscribed, which has been highlighted by optimum number studies done by ADF&G over the years. A multiple pronged approach here would achieve what Representative McCabe is talking about and at the same time would allow for a reduction of gear in Bristol Bay and a more meaningful fishery. Many families that live in the region either sold or transferred permits out of their family because they weren't able to hang on to them and fish them in a more meaningful way.

3:53:29 PM

JOHN WOOD, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He stated that after fulfilling his commitment to the Louisiana Legislative Council he moved to Alaska in 1971 where he has made his home since. Upon arriving in Alaska he worked with the Alaska Court System as a court attorney, standing master, and acting probate master before going into private practice. Now retired, he still works piecemeal on contract with the State of Alaska, pursuant to which he advises and reports directly to the governor on primarily labor related issues; nothing relative to fisheries is involved in that contract. Regardless, at every Board of Fisheries meeting he

has disclosed in his disclosure statement the existence of this contract, and the board has never questioned that it does not constitute a conflict of interest.

MR. WOOD said he believes strongly in volunteering his time and talents to his community. He has served in many positions during his 49 years in Alaska, including being elected for three terms for almost 10 years on the Anchorage Assembly and serving as chair for one of those years, active member of the Mount McKinley Lions Club, board member of Greater Anchorage Inc., numerous years as board chair of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Animal Control, member of the MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission for several years, chairman of the MSB Salary and Emoluments Committee, president of Alaska Sled Dog Racing Association, director of the Montana Creek Dog Mushers, and director and board member of the Alaska Power Boat Racing Association.

MR. WOOD related that in 2013 he worked as staff for Senator Dunleavy where he handled fishery issues. As such, he attended the pertinent Board of Fisheries sessions, but also took it upon himself to travel on his own time and nickel to actually visit the fishing sites and speak directly with several east side setnetters, as well as tour two processing facilities to get their perspective. He has focused entirely on the health of Alaska's fish stocks and ensuring the best chance for them to flourish and return to their historic levels in both size and numbers through all species. That remains his emphasis and he approached a recent Board of Fisheries cycle with this as his overriding goal.

MR. WOOD specified that since his initial appointment to the Board of Fisheries he has continued reaching out to all stakeholders. He related that on his own nickel and time he attended the "North Pacific Council Salmon Committee" in Homer, and while there he met with several seine netters as well as a Homer processor. On his return home he spent an extra day to meet with three east side setnetters about their fishery and the legislative efforts underway to provide a buyout system that was being moved by Senator Micciche. Because their arguments were persuasive, at the board meeting he spoke strongly in favor of, and voted for, their proposal that provided backfill provisions, which is a key component of that buyback program. Also, he took the opportunity to meet with Roland Maw and others at the headquarters of United Cook Inlet Drift Association (UCIDA), where he was given his first opportunity to read UCIDA's federal

Ninth Circuit lawsuit as well as listen to their concerns being considered at the upcoming cycle.

3:58:08 PM

MR. WOOD stated that this last Board of Fisheries cycle dealt with many contentious issues with strongly held beliefs and convictions by all stakeholders involved. No participant in past meetings would have predicted what occurred, he said. Stakeholders who had been bitter rivals and barely spoke with each other opened dialog and negotiated approaches that each could live by and preserve their lifestyle. Who would have thought that the Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA), Kenai River Professional Guide Association (KRPGA), and Eastside Setnetters would actually work together to create a plan for that area? They came extremely close to a total agreement but fell short on one or two of the issues. Nonetheless, the dialog was open, and he hopes it continues into the next round. Equally amazing, Mr. Wood continued, is that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission and the "northern setnetters" did the same and together succeeded in strengthening the paired restrictions while making them fairer. Additionally, as the Kodiak meeting was winding down their advocacy group, the Kodiak Salmon Work Group, initiated RC 131, which reached out to create a study on all fisheries from Unimak Island to Prince William Sound, including Cook Inlet, patterned on a highly successful study conducted in Western Alaska. This Kodiak RC 131 was subsequently supported by a resolution of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

MR. WOOD opined that there are those who wish to perpetuate the fish wars for whatever reason, whether political, economic, or simply harboring old grudges. He said his approach was and will continue to be to listen and learn from all perspectives, as well as to act as a catalyst to bring competing parties together in a constructive setting and encourage them to work out their differences. The parties will be much better served, and the result will be accepted and honored if it is their own plan that they created. He noted that he went through three legislative hearings last year and participated in Representative Vance's district meeting. He asked that his nomination be confirmed and that the records of those three hearings be made a record within this hearing. In response to Representative Tarr, he said he was appointed to the Board of Fisheries in spring 2019 and has gone through one full cycle, plus this year.

4:01:22 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES recalled Mr. Wood's statement that he has a contract with the administration, reports directly to the governor, and the contract has nothing related to fisheries. She asked whether she is correct in understanding that Mr. Wood is currently involved in the labor contract with some of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's employees.

MR. WOOD replied that the "supervisory employees union" has some employees in the union that are at ADF&G.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES inquired whether Mr. Wood perceives that to be a conflict in any capacity.

MR. WOOD responded, "Absolutely not, I'm at the 30,000-foot level." He stated that other than Bob Murphy, who is on the negotiating team, he wouldn't know who in ADF&G is a member of that union.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether Mr. Wood is still on the MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission.

MR. WOOD answered no. He stated that he resigned on the day he was appointed to the Board of Fisheries.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES related that the MSB Fish & Wildlife Commission met prior to the Board of Fisheries meeting in Kodiak. Present at the commission's meeting were Mr. Wood, the ADF&G commissioner, and a couple other Board of Fisheries members. She said she had the opportunity to review the minutes of the commission's meeting, "and a portion of the meeting consisted of the anticipation of how and what you were going to do at the Kodiak meeting and kind of determine which way it was going to go." She asked whether she was looking at those minutes with a tainted view and whether Mr. Wood could help her understand it.

MR. WOOD replied he doesn't have a copy of the minutes in front of him and doesn't recall a reference to the Kodiak meeting. Perhaps it took place, he continued, but he doesn't remember it. He said his purpose in being at the meeting was that the commissioner was going to update the commission on the status of the [Matanuska-Susitna] Valley.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES offered to provide Mr. Wood with a copy of the minutes, but surmised Mr. Wood might have access to them.

4:04:23 PM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE stated she has tried to not like Mr. Wood as a board member because of statements she heard a while back that Mr. Wood said one of his goals was "to get fish in the Mat-Su." So, automatically that created a conflict with the interest of her district in the Cook Inlet. But, she continued, one of the things she looks at in a board member is how he or she interacts with all of the stakeholders and whether the board member is truly fighting for the fishery itself. Because she represents all the different fishing groups in her district, she wants someone who can do no harm. She related that she did see Mr. Wood at the meetings in Homer and he was interacting directly with the different users. She added that she has heard how Mr. Wood has been one of the most diligent members in seeking everyone's input, which she appreciates. Because Mr. Wood has continued to seek insight from all the different user groups, she said she would like his insight on bycatch and what the Board of Fisheries could do to strengthen Alaska's position as a state for the fishery.

MR. WOOD responded that what jurisdiction the Board of Fisheries would have on regulating in open water is highly questionable. Coming up with a bottom line on what is actually happening is needed so that it can be dealt with accordingly. He noted that a question was asked earlier about what could be done to increase the king salmon returns. He urged the committees to invite Dr. David Welch of Kintama Research Services [a marine environmental consultancy in Nanaimo, British Columbia] to present his study findings that many of the problems are out in the blue water and the bycatch is out in the blue water.

4:06:45 PM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE remarked that bycatch is of interest to all stakeholders. She asked for Mr. Wood's opinion about what could be a solution to sustain Alaska's king salmon runs.

MR. WOOD answered that he agrees with the earlier speaker who said it's not particular to one region but is a problem throughout the state. He related that while at the Anchorage meeting, he met with Duncan Fields of Kodiak and Dr. Robert Foy, [Science and Research Director of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center], National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He related that Dr. Foy said [NOAA] had several federal research vessels working in Alaska waters and was in danger of losing one to the Lower 48 because of lack of work. So Dr. Foy was trying

to solicit the state to join with the [federal government] to do research in blue water; the money for the research facilities was already in place and Dr. Foy had the vessels. Mr. Wood said he spoke with U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan's office to see if the senator could get on board and move it along because apparently a word of authorization was needed, but it never caught traction at that level, and he hasn't pursued it any further. He stated that the single most important thing to deal with the king salmon issue is to find out what is happening in the blue water and then respond accordingly. Every net and line can be pulled out of the water and still not have any positive results if the problem is in the blue water, he added, and it seems to be.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE stated she too has heard from NOAA about blue water, which is facing all fisheries, not just king salmon returns. She returned to her statement regarding her bias against Mr. Wood based on his stated goal to get fish up in the Mat-Su. She asked what Mr. Wood sees as his role on the Board of Fisheries and whether he still holds his previously stated goal as his primary focus.

MR. WOOD replied that his primary focus is to get fish back into all the streams, not just the Mat-Su. He said he doesn't recall making the aforementioned statement, but nonetheless he looks out at the resource before he even considers looking at the allocative issues.

4:10:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE recalled Mr. Wood mentioning some new relationships that have developed over his tenure on the board, and remarked that it sounded like perhaps somebody with interest-based negotiating experience had their hand on the tiller. He inquired whether that was Mr. Wood.

MR. WOOD responded, "Yes it was and continues to be." He added that he could provide other examples as well.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE thanked Mr. Wood and said he hopes Mr. Wood will continue doing so.

4:11:29 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked why Mr. Wood's contract as a labor negotiations consultant is through the governor's office rather than through the [Division of Personnel and Labor Relations] in the Department of Administration.

MR. WOOD answered that it is with both - the Department of Administration as well as the governor's office.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN inquired whether Mr. Wood is the person behind the pay cut proposal that's before the supervisory union.

MR. WOOD replied no, he simply advises and monitors the negotiations as they take place and advise the governor. The decision as to what strategy to follow or take is up to the governor and the chief of staff.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN related that a criticism brought to her attention is that Mr. Wood was personal staff to Senator Dunleavy and now has a substantial contract with him directly. Even though that isn't a conflict of interest in the Board of Fisheries conflict out context, she stated, it seems to be a direct hand of the governor on the board. She requested Mr. Wood to explain that he isn't there simply voicing the governor's actions but rather is there as an objective member of the Board of Fisheries.

MR. WOOD answered that that is a tough question to respond to because what he says won't be given much credibility. He stated that people who would jump to a conclusion such as that don't know either Mike Dunleavy or John Wood. [Governor Dunleavy], he continued, "would not ever put himself in a position of trying to direct me to take any course of action on the Board of Fish or anywhere else, nor would I allow it." Mr. Wood further stated that the totality of the governor's comments over the last two years has been the sarcastic remark of, "Are you having fun yet?" when the publicity was ongoing and, "Do you think what's being done at that Board of Fish is going to be effective?" to which Mr. Wood said he responded that he hopes so and time will tell.

[4:13:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER addressed Mr. Wood's earlier response that he would like to see fish go up a lot of the streams in the state of Alaska. He offered his assumption that it takes fish to make fish and they're not made in the ocean. He asked whether that is the basis for Mr. Wood's comment.

MR. WOOD responded correct. Another element that goes along with that, he added, is dealing with the habitat that the fish are returning to.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER requested Mr. Wood to elaborate.

MR. WOOD stated that there are some changes being made, whether it is the introduction of northern pike or elodea. For example, during the Kodiak meetings he was told by Mr. Duncan Fields that changes in one of the Chignik lakes may be either contributing to or responsible for a lot of the [salmon] numbers falling down. Habitat, Mr. Wood related, is something to look at to see if there is indeed an issue there. He related that at the last meeting he asked ADF&G to consider designating the Chignik lakes as a stock of concern because this designation would require that a plan be put together and the habitat would be part and parcel of that plan.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER commented that he has known Mr. Wood for 10-15 years and has "never known him to be a yes-man to anybody." He said Mr. Wood "definitely believes what he says and says what he believes, and he'll tell you how it is no matter what it is."

[4:15:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ recalled Mr. Wood's opening comments that he came from Louisiana, worked primarily in the legal world once in Alaska, and served on community boards. He asked what Mr. Wood thinks is the primary reason that Governor Dunleavy nominated him to serve on the Board of Fisheries. He further inquired about what specific experiences or past history of Mr. Wood's would show the governor that he is qualified to serve on the Board of Fisheries.

MR. WOOD replied that as staff to Senator Dunleavy he handled all the fishery issues. In the [Matanuska-Susitna] Valley, he stated, the impact of the lower fish numbers and closures directly resulted in most of the lodges closing, many fish businesses closing, and people in economic distress. He and Senator Dunleavy were in daily communication at that time, and it caused frustration that he spent so much time on the fish issue. So, Governor Dunleavy knew of his knowledge of the Board of Fisheries process. He surmised that Governor Dunleavy's answer to the question would most likely be that they both believe the primary concern is to get the fish returning in sufficient numbers consistently in order to rebuild the stocks. Once the stocks are rejuvenated, he continued, all users/all harvesters will then benefit, but don't put the cart in front of the horse.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked whether Mr. Wood is familiar with all, some, or none of the letters of opposition to his nomination. If familiar, he requested Mr. Wood's response to the statements of opposition.

MR. WOOD responded he has not read all the statements that were put into the record as he ran out of time this morning. He said he is willing to answer any direct question that Representative Ortiz may have.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ drew attention to a letter from the Kodiak Seiners Association (KSA).

MR. WOOD said he did read that particular letter.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ requested Mr. Wood to summarize KSA's points of opposition and provide his response to KSA's reasoning of opposition.

MR. WOOD answered that his take of the letter is that it says he is carrying the water for Governor Dunleavy and KSA doesn't feel that is something that should be on the Board of Fisheries, but no specific example was given. He said he doesn't recall KSA reaching out to talk about it.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked what Mr. Wood would say to the concern in general that the Board of Fisheries has traditionally shown a balance between the interests directed toward commercial fisheries and sports fisheries. He further asked whether Mr. Wood thinks there is an importance to that balance and, based on the current list of nominees, whether the needed balance would be there.

MR. WOOD replied that he sees the current panel as having three active people related to the commercial fishing industry - Mr. Jensen, Mr. Godfrey, and Mr. Williams; three with noncommercial interests - himself, Mr. Payton, and Ms. Mitchell; and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has formerly done commercial work. If there is an imbalance, he continued, it is more toward the commercial end of things, not the other way around.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ reiterated his question about whether Mr. Wood thinks there is an importance to balance. He further asked whether Mr. Wood thinks geographics should also be considered.

MR. WOOD responded that statute addresses geographics pretty clearly. There is a value to it, he agreed, but what importance is placed upon it -- there are 60 legislators so there are probably 60 different opinions. He said it helps to be able to talk to Mr. Jensen on Southeast matters, and when he worked for Senator Dunleavy, he talked several times with [previous board member] Orville Huntington regarding subsistence issues. Each person brings a different lifestyle to it, just as he brings a different lifestyle to it.

[4:21:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted that commercial fish, sport fish, and subsistence fish have been talked about, but said that maybe things should be a bit different. Perhaps being wrapped up in one world, such as commercial fishing, is the wrong way to do it, he opined, and maybe a wider, varied background such as economics and negotiation would bring the parties together. He inquired whether Mr. Wood thinks that is as important as geographics or previous fishing experience.

MR. WOOD answered:

To me it is of utmost importance that you have somebody on that body that understands how to bring competing interests together. Even if you don't end up with a final product that they all buy off on, you start a dialog. And once that dialog starts and they build trust amongst each other the conflicts will diminish and the need for the board to be used in intervention will diminish as well, and it will benefit the fishery. But if you don't have any dialog, they're just rolling the dice as to how many of the board members they can convince to go their way and it doesn't have to be a win or lose situation.

MR. WOOD continued his answer. He said economics is of critical importance because, by law, two of the criteria used in allocation deal with economics. Right now the board has no access to an economist and the department has no economist, yet two of the criteria deal specifically with that.

[4:26:18 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR opened public testimony on the appointments of John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood to the Board of Fisheries.

4:26:34 PM

HOWARD DELO testified in support of the confirmations of all five appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He noted that he is a former Board of Fisheries member. He said he hasn't met or dealt with Ms. Mitchell or Mr. Williams in the context of board operations, but has an extensive history dealing with Mr. Jensen, a little bit shorter with Mr. Wood, and then Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and he was impressed with all three. It has always been his opinion that the primary interest of a Board of Fisheries member should be taking care of the resource first and then worry about how to allocate it. All five nominees have expressed that interest. The slate of nominees is impressive. He urged that all five nominees be confirmed.

4:28:07 PM

CLIFTON IVANOFF testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He stated he is a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in a fishing family and he has commercially fished for the last 25 years. He maintained that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is serving her personal interests over her civic duties and has conducted herself unethically. She has proven she is biased against the commercial fishing industry and should be replaced with a nonbiased open-minded board member and not a sport advocate pretending to be a commercial fisher supporter.

4:29:32 PM

MARCI NELSON ORTH testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. She said she is an Alutiiq woman originally from the village of Afognak and later Port Lions. She currently lives in Wasilla but still has a home in Port Lions. She grew up in a family that fished Kodiak waters for a livelihood for generations prior to that fishery being severely stunted for Kodiak fishermen. In the past she personally fished as a crewmember in the same areas, and has deep cultural roots with fishing as not only her livelihood but also her subsistence. Based on information gleaned throughout this past year, her opinion is that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort should not be confirmed and should be replaced with an open-minded representative who will self-conflict out of proposals if necessary, and will truly advocate for all fishermen's interests in the state of Alaska.

4:30:54 PM

GREG JOHNSON, testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He stated he was at the last board cycle in Kodiak and was amazed at Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's obvious conflict with her roots in Chignik. He couldn't believe she was allowed to sit on the board and be involved in such big decisions that were happening to the [Kodiak] fishery. Mr. Wood tried to find solutions to problems and work with people, whereas Ms. Carlson-Van Dort was the only one who didn't see the conflict with own self. She didn't know how many people were fishing there and she didn't have any answers to the questions that were asked of her. He opposed her confirmation based on how she conducted herself at that meeting. The board needs people who can find solutions for what is going on in Chignik. There are problems with the lake, it isn't everybody catching their fish; there are no fish to catch because there are problems with that system.

[4:32:18 PM](#)

CHUCK MCCALLUM testified in support of the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood. He said he is a retired fisherman from Chignik, now residing in Anchorage. Having participated in Board of Fisheries meetings for over 30 years, he has observed many board members over that time span. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort consistently engages with stakeholders in an effort to establish middle ground and identify negotiated solutions to regulatory challenges. That some commercial stakeholders are unwilling to compromise should not minimize her efforts to achieve consensus in an increasingly polarized process. Mr. Wood has demonstrated an extraordinary ability to listen and understand all sides of complicated issues and to work for reasonable and equitable management compromises. He also brings an independent point of view and keen discernment skills. The board needs intelligent, perceptive, and fair-minded individuals like Mr. Wood. Both Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Wood have shown a willingness to listen, be thoughtful in deliberation, and committed to working towards fair decisions on challenging issues. Ms. Mitchell has served on the board since July 1, 2020. She has limited experience in the Board of Fisheries process, but she has made an effort to educate herself in the last year and presents herself as a fair and open-minded person. She has the makings of a good board member.

[4:34:14 PM](#)

TIMOTHY GERVAIS spoke to the conversation between Representative Stutes and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort regarding the January 2020

Kodiak Board of Fisheries decisions. He stated that Cape Igvak fishing didn't come into effect at all in 2020. The sockeye escapement at the Chignik weir was so low that even under the old regulations the Cape Igvak fishery wouldn't have been opened. To date, there has been no economic loss to Kodiak permit holders due to the 2020 Cape Igvak Board of Fisheries decisions. In regard to the confirmation of Mr. Williams, Mr. Gervais related that in a number of public forums he has read and heard the position and opinion of Mr. Williams on the Bristol Bay salmon fishery and Bristol Bay fish habitat. He said the positions of Mr. Williams have been against fish, against fisheries, against fishery habitat, against the Bristol Bay commercial fleet, against the subsistence economy, and against sport fishing. He regards Mr. Williams as a shill and a promoter for the Pebble Partnership. The relationship of Mr. Williams with the Pebble Partnership creates a bias against healthy fisheries and against sustainability. He urged that the committees not forward the confirmation of Mr. Williams and that the legislature not approve the appointment of Mr. Williams.

4:36:18 PM

NORRIS JOHNSON testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He said he has been a Kodiak fisherman all his life. Mr. Johnson said that in the last Kodiak meeting John Jensen voted against the seaward zone change for Kodiak and testified that he knew he was speaking to deaf ears. Mr. Johnson further said that the "corrupted position" of some of the new board members was clear, specifically Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He continued:

Ms. Carlson had so much special interest, in regards to Chignik, it was obvious that she shouldn't be voting on that proposal. If her uncle hadn't sold his Chignik permit two weeks before that meeting, she would not have been allowed to vote on the proposal. While her uncle selling [his] permit made her vote legal, it did not change her special interest. This, along with the fact that Ms. Carlson is president of the Chignik village corporation, shows how much she is invested into one specific fishing area and she should have removed herself from voting on that proposal. Her bias is further emphasized by a slip of her tongue at the Kodiak meeting when on record she said "we" instead of "I," indicating that she and Chignik were one party instead of herself singularly. I think that that was poor judgment on her part to not remove

herself from that decision and that that means that she shouldn't be qualified to serve on the Alaska Board of Fish.

MR. JOHNSON addressed an earlier conversation regarding there being three board members for other areas who could have voted against Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He stated that two out of the three didn't vote -- one left early and the other one couldn't vote because he had a conflict of interest for Kodiak. The proposals implemented on Kodiak were not protecting the fish because there was already a plan in place for that, he said. Sustainability and making the runs come back is up to ADF&G, not the Board of Fisheries.

[4:38:55 PM](#)

FRANCES LEACH, Executive Director, United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. She noted that United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is a statewide commercial fishing organization with 37 fishing member groups specializing in the best interest and advocacy for commercial fishermen in the state. She said UFA is aware that the Board of Fisheries has no designated seats in statute, but UFA also knows that each board member comes with his or her own expertise or background in fisheries or science. Every user group knows what side of the fence each member of the Board of Fisheries sits on. In this case, regardless of which seat she represents, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is an advocate for the sport fish sector. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's voting record shows that she leans pro-sport and is biased against commercial fishing proposals unless they benefit Chignik's commercial interests. Alaska's people and resources cannot afford to have biased board members who are willing to hurt user groups and resources for the benefit of their own interests. The balance issues on the Board of Fisheries must be fixed so that user groups will stop fighting this ridiculous war over who gets to manage Alaska's fishery resources. Until this deep-rooted imbalance is fixed, individuals who openly wear their biased positions should not be appointed.

[4:40:37 PM](#)

SUSAN DOHERTY, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SEAS), in regard to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), pointed out that these commissioners are not like other commissioners in the state's system. She said the CFEC department, and its commissioners are fully funded by fees

commercial fishermen pay for their licenses. A postage stamp-sized department, the CFEC is responsible for ensuring that fishermen have every opportunity to prosecute their fishery without glitches to their annual permit renewal or transfers. This requires prompt and oftentimes compassionate help from CFEC staff to deal with a myriad of individual hardships that may occur. The CFEC has only two commissioners who oftentimes have to roll up their sleeves and help staff. The current commissioner's term will expire in one year, and if history is any indication, she will not be reappointed. That will leave the CFEC with a commissioner at the helm with one year of very limited knowledge and experience. The CFEC has two attorneys, one is a hearing officer and the other is a law specialist. During questioning, the appointee didn't seem to understand that the hearing officer breaks the tie for cases when the two commissioners disagree. This does not negate the appointee's need to understand and be able to come to a legal decision on his own. Ms. Doherty said SEAS is disappointed that the administration didn't reach out to identify candidates that are already highly qualified instead of spending the fishermen's hard-earned dollars and the remaining time of the current commissioner on training and educating the second commissioner instead of doing the work that could be done this year. Making Mr. Smith the chair adds insult to injury. She implored the committees to demand an appointee that is highly qualified at the time of hire so as to not jeopardize this very important commission.

MS. DOHERTY, in regard to the Board of Fisheries, offered the support of SEAS for the confirmation of Mr. Jensen. She noted Mr. Jensen has served since 2003 and has a wealth of knowledge. Continuity is desperately needed on the board, she added. In regard to Marit Carlson-Van Dort, she stated that when the governor submitted Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's name he highlighted her experience as a commercial fisher as justification for appointment to add balance to the board. While Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has reached out to user groups prior to the official meetings, it's imperative that all user groups have access to the board while information is given during public testimony and dialog at the Committee of the Whole and during breaks. Ms. Doherty said this is where people are speaking from that there was no access to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and that her mind was already made up. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's efforts to educate herself prior to the meetings are appreciated, but that relationship is only the beginning. In regard to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's comments that she satisfied everything required under the law about conflict of interest, Ms. Doherty said that that

does not speak to transparency and humbling one's self to the people a board member has agreed to serve.

4:46:55 PM

BEN MOHR, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA), testified in support of the confirmations of all five appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He explained that KRSA is a charitable nonprofit dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of the world's premier sport fishing region, which is Alaska. He said KRSA believes a balance between all user groups provides the best management of Alaska's fisheries, and these five appointees represent a balance between sport, commercial, and subsistence user groups. These appointees have demonstrated an understanding that service on the Board of Fisheries is a public trust responsibility and that their decisions are answerable to all Alaskans. The board members have proven to be accessible to the public, and they provide thoughtful consideration of all perspectives brought before them. He said Chair Carlson-Van Dort has been a welcome presence on the board. Her decision-making has indicated a preference for accuracy and precision in management and for ensuring long-term sustainability of Alaska's fisheries. Mr. Wood's hallmark at the Upper Cook Inlet meeting was to encourage collaboration between stakeholders, and constantly encouraging different sectors to work together to reach the board's ultimate goal of conserving and developing Alaska's fisheries resources. Mr. Jensen has served Alaska with distinction for many years. His experience and knowledge of Alaska's fisheries sectors is an asset to the state. Ms. Mitchell brings to the board a new and fresh perspective and her position as an economist will help influence the decision making process of the board when it comes to the board's core goals. Mr. Williams has been an active participant in the Bristol Bay commercial fishery for the better part of 30 years, and has often been one of the most successful fishermen in the district.

4:49:40 PM

LORENA SKONBERG, Acting Chair, Ouzinkie Native Corporation (ONC), testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. She stated that the Ouzinkie Native Corporation has worked with the Board of Fisheries for decades, and in doing so at the board's January 2020 meeting in Kodiak ONC found Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's actions offensive and wrong, the details of which were submitted [to the committees] in writing yesterday. The Ouzinkie Native Corporation supports the

Board of Fisheries process with the expectation that board members will use their knowledge and experience to evaluate and make decisions on conflicts and difficult fishery issues, being unbiased, open minded, and not having economic or personal conflicts of interest. By her actions and interactions with stakeholders, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has demonstrated that she has a strong bias, has personal conflicts of interest, and has shown little interest in better understanding complex fishery issues.

4:51:09 PM

ERNIE WEISS testified in support of the confirmation of Mr. Jensen. Mr. Weiss noted that he is a member of the Anchorage Fish & Game Advisory Committee, but qualified that today he is speaking on behalf of himself. He emphasized that Mr. Jensen is effective in interacting with stakeholders and in general public outreach. Mr. Jensen has the experience and the ability to get work done on the board and has a perspective that is needed on the board as a long-time board member, as a lifelong Alaskan and fisherman, and his experience on other management bodies like the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Above all, Mr. Jensen is fair and will continue to work with all stakeholders for the best fishery management decisions for the people and fishery resources of the state. He offered his appreciation for Mr. Jensen's willingness to serve one more term.

4:52:15 PM

MOLLY MILLER testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. She stated she was born and raised in Kodiak, got her start in commercial fishing on her father's boat in Kodiak, and is currently a permit holder in Bristol Bay. She expressed her belief that the connection of Mr. Williams to the Pebble Mine constitutes a conflict of interest with being on the Board of Fisheries. She stated that it shows Mr. Williams does not put the resource first, nor the fishery first. The potential impacts of the Pebble Mine on the Bristol Bay fishery are devastating, she added. She expressed her concern about the lack of representation of coastal communities within this group of appointees and urged that members of the committees keep this in mind when considering the appointees.

4:53:35 PM

NATE ROSE, President, Kodiak Seiners Association (KSA), testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He said KSA represents over 100 active seine permit

holders in the Kodiak area, as well as a number of crewmembers and local area businesses. He noted that under AS 16.05.221, regardless of whether statute determines that a seat is a commercial, sport, or subsistence seat, the fact of the matter is that members are appointed to the board with a view to providing diversity of interests and points of view in the membership. The board is currently skewed and the diversity of interest, while some of the individuals have participated in every sector, there is no diversity of interests when it comes to the actual votes being taken. Regardless of her user group affiliation under this statute, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's voting record is that she votes with sport fish interest groups. The governor's appointees should provide diversity, and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort cannot do that in an unbiased manner that doesn't put her self-interest and the interest of the Chignik region over sustainability of the runs.

[4:56:12 PM](#)

ALEXUS KWACHKA testified in opposition to the confirmations of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Williams. He said he is a 43-year resident of Alaska, 34 years as a resident of Kodiak. A sport fisherman, subsistence user, and commercial fisherman, his household owns four limited entry permits from Kodiak to Bristol Bay. He said Ms. Carlson-Van Dort should have recused herself in the Kodiak meeting because there was an association and a bias of opinion, and it was egregious to be sitting in the audience. People who have not been confirmed to the board are making decisions and voting; if not confirmed a person should not be voting. In regard to earlier comments about influence by outsiders, he pointed out that the Pebble Partnership is an outside foreign entity that would potentially undermine Bristol Bay, something he is worried about. In regard to earlier comments about bycatch and blue [water], he noted that those are federal waters. Alaska has six voting members on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which votes on bycatch, so that is the place to address bycatch, given Alaska has the controlling number of votes on that body.

[4:58:28 PM](#)

GEORGE PIERCE testified in opposition to the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Williams. He stated that some of the appointees to the Board of Fisheries are out of touch with Alaska's fishery. There's controversy over Mr. Williams who is Director of Regional Affairs for Pebble Mine, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort who is a former director with the Pebble

Mine, and Ms. Mitchell who is one-sided. The problem is special interest groups. Most of these nominees are inland representatives; only one is a coastal representative. This is a stacking of the deck, a big red flag, and a joke on Alaskans and Alaska's fish. Fish are a renewable resource, mining isn't. Alaska is a fish state and Alaskans are opposed to the Pebble Mine. He urged that freshmen legislators listen to Alaskans, not lobbyists.

5:00:57 PM

VIRGIL UMPHENOUR testified in support of the confirmations of all five appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He noted he used to be a commercial fisherman on the Yukon [River], owns a meat and fish processing plant in Fairbanks, served three terms on the Board of Fisheries, and has been a member of the "Yukon River Panel to the salmon treaty with Canada" since 1988. He offered his belief that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has a great degree of integrity and moral courage. He stated that the United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) went after him on each of his appointments using false innuendos and statements, just as UFA is doing now to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. To be a good board member requires doing research and knowing science and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort does that. Ms. Mitchell is new and while in college was a student of one of his daughters at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). He urged members of the committees to go along with what the actual record says, not what UFA says. Her decisions on Upper Cook Inlet were based on conservation. The Board of Fisheries did the same thing when he was on the board and after he got off the board Mr. Jensen and others reversed it. Now it has been reversed again to get escapement on the Yentna River and up the Susitna drainage.

5:03:01 PM

GARY HOLLIER commented in regard to Ms. Mitchell and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and testified in support of the confirmations of Mr. Jensen, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Wood. Mr. Hollier stated he is a lifelong resident of Kenai and an eastside setnetter in contentious Cook Inlet. He related that he has been to every Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting since 1986 and has personally interacted with 59 different board members. To be a good board member requires being available, using the best science available, and being fair when allocating, which is what the Board of Fisheries is all about. He said he doesn't know a thing about Ms. Mitchell except for her statement that Reed Morisky asked her to apply for the board. Mr. Morisky, he

continued, was on the board for three terms, never once voted in a positive for commercial fishermen, and was biased and hopefully Ms. Mitchell isn't. He stated that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort made herself very available at the Upper Cook Inlet meeting in 2020; she listened to the science but didn't follow it, and while there she never voted for a commercial fishing proposal. He said he doesn't know a thing about Mr. Williams, but liked his presentation and therefore is in favor of his confirmation. He urged that Mr. Jensen be confirmed and offered his hope that Mr. Jensen would stay on the board for five more terms because he is one of the best board members Alaska has had. He specified that he didn't know Mr. Wood until three or four years ago when Mr. Wood showed up at his beach site and asked many questions. Mr. Wood has tried to solve a lot of problems in Cook Inlet and is an excellent board member. He said he hopes Mr. Wood is confirmed.

[5:04:57 PM](#)

DENISE MAY testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. She said she is Ag'Wanarmiut Afognak people from Kodiak Island Archipelago. She said she attended the Kodiak meeting and was not impressed by Ms. Carlson-Van Dort at that meeting, but she was impressed by today. It had nothing to do with the vote, it had to do with Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's demeanor and her ability to sit and listen and understand some of the Kodiak issues and to engage with that. Ms. May said she was disappointed because she always supports her fellow Native women in leadership, but she was disappointed in Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's demeanor. The [appointees] just went through a job interview and people are at their best at a job interview, she continued. Look at the record and see what Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has done and see if she has followed the science and decide based on that because a lot of things were not addressed that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort did and it's not good if someone is going to represent people. No core Native values were seen in Ms. Carlson-Van Dort at that meeting, and while maybe she has on other days "that day was a bad day for all of us and it divides people and we're not about dividing people."

[5:06:54 PM](#)

CHELSEA HAISMAN, Executive Director, Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU), testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and in support of the confirmation of Mr. Jensen. She referenced the questions surrounding the perceived conflict of interest in Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's decisions at the

Kodiak meeting. She said it is critical that board members take the time to listen and engage with the public regardless of the user group in which they participate. It is also critical for board members to weigh their decisions carefully using the information presented in written and verbal testimony, reports provided by ADF&G, and during committee work within the meetings. Additionally, CDFU has significant concerns that the balance of the board has recently deviated from historical norms and precedents. Coastal communities are intimately tied to the decisions made by the Board of Fisheries, but are vastly underrepresented. The divide between rural and urban areas has become more pronounced, and the balance between user groups remains heavily weighted toward sport fish interests. She encouraged legislators to carefully consider the comments provided today and ensure that the balance of the board is not too heavily weighted toward urban, noncoastal regions, or toward one user group over others. She said CDFU supports Mr. Jensen given his history on the board as a fair, engaged, and well-rounded board member. Mr. Jensen has been involved in all user groups over the last 30 years and his experience within both the sport and commercial sector makes him an ideal candidate for this position.

[5:08:32 PM](#)

JULIE KAVANAUGH testified in support of the confirmation of Mr. Jensen, in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams, and expressed concern about Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson Van-Dort, and Mr. Wood. Ms. Kavanaugh said she is 100 percent dependent on state and federal fisheries resources. She noted she serves on the Kodiak [Fish & Game] Advisory Committee to the Board of Fisheries, the advisory panel to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Joint Fisheries Work Group for the City & Borough of Kodiak, and as an elected official in her community, but specified that this is her personal testimony. She stated she supports the confirmation of Mr. Jensen and said he is a valuable direct link and liaison to the federal process as a member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. She stated she opposes the confirmation of Mr. Williams.

MS. KAVANAUGH stated she is concerned about Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson Van-Dort, and Mr. Wood due to their lack of regional and stakeholder diversity and specifically their lack of coastal and commercial fishing representation, more specifically the representation for harvesters that utilize fish for consumers via retail stores, restaurants, and direct sales. There is no balance, she continued, and any link that has been expressed is

tenuous and vague. Ms. Kavanaugh related that she attended the 2020 Board of Fisheries meeting in Kodiak, and after public testimony a non-confirmed member stated, "That was a great therapeutic exercise for those involved." She said another member commented that the extensive work and reference material presented by the Kodiak Fisheries Work Group was overdone and too extensive, which she interpreted to mean it was unnecessary. She was told directly prior to this meeting not to expect agreement when it comes to salmon issues in Kodiak. She said that this testimony is difficult for her and that there are many communities and individuals wanting to testify but they are concerned with the potential damage to relationships with the decision makers that have a stranglehold on their livelihoods.

[5:10:49 PM](#)

RAYMOND MAY testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He stated he is a lifelong Alaskan, a third generation fisherman, his grandparents came from Afognak Island and Kodiak Island, and he owns multiple permits across the state of Alaska in multiple state fisheries. He said he attended the Kodiak meetings and believes Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is unethical, comes with a pre-determined judgment on issues, and is a difficult board member to speak with. He heard Ms. Carlson-Van Dort say she was there to bring compromise, but said compromise isn't taking from one person and giving to another, so there was no compromise. There are many other things he could point out, he continued, but he is putting himself on the line here because of being a multiple permit holder across the state and he must deal with whoever is confirmed for years to come. It was a big step for him to come forth and speak against someone, he added, but rather than representing the state of Alaska Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has a personal agenda and she is carrying out.

[5:12:37 PM](#)

BONNIE LILLEY testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. She stated that Mr. Williams, as a director with the Pebble Mine, and Pebble Mine having filed a lawsuit to keep the fisheries from opposing someone with a mining interest to be allowed on the board, should be enough to not confirm him. It is obscene to believe there is no conflict of interest, she continued. Mr. Williams just confirmed that he looks at Pebble Mine in a different light, already clearly supporting Pebble Mine and, in her opinion, it is impossible to not influence Pebble Mine's goals, which have been opposed over and over by the people of Alaska, overwhelmingly. Saying it is out-of-

staters trying to direct Alaska's decisions is a ridiculous statement, as the majority of Alaskans have opposed the mine. It is hard for the people of Alaska to learn what is truly going on because of nondisclosure laws. Members of the committees should put the people of Alaska first, a requirement that legislators agreed to do when accepting their positions, and which makes this decision easy. More time should be set aside to give everyone wishing to speak the ability to do so. Today, people waited four hours to speak and then were only given one and a half minutes. Many people are unable to take the whole day waiting to be able to speak.

5:14:39 PM

CHAIR PATKOTAK reminded the public to submit written testimony, which legislators look forward to reading while they contemplate their decisions.

CHAIR TARR added that the cutoff for witnesses was so that everyone who had signed up to testify could be heard today. She allowed it would be up to the committees to decide whether to have additional testimony.

5:15:19 PM

DYLAN BEAN testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He noted he is a lifelong Alaskan and a combination fisherman who fishes the entire Gulf of Alaska. He stated he believes Ms. Carlson-Van Dort displayed extreme bias at the last meetings in Kodiak and that she made decisions on emotion and personal interest, not science and fact. If allowed to stay on the board, she will damage the legitimacy and reputation of the board, he continued. As long as she is on the board, people in Kodiak and other areas surrounding Chignik will never get a fair trial. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort said in her opening statement that her grandfather's father and generations of her family have fished Chignik in that water, and that Alaska fisheries paid for her schooling and many things in her and her family's lives. It has to be assumed that it was Chignik reds that were paying for all those things. So how can she tell the state that she is not biased toward that water system, which her family lineage has been a part of for 7,000 years? People in Kodiak have strong ties to villages and the people in them, and know the connection there, and so he is not buying that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is unbiased.

5:16:58 PM

SPENCER ROBINSON testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. He specified that he was born and raised in Alaska and is a young fisherman. He has fished four seasons in upper eastside Cook Inlet and will be fishing in Bristol Bay this summer. In regard to Mr. Williams, he said there isn't a more clear-cut conflict of interest than Pebble Mine, and it is ridiculous to entertain the idea that that isn't going to have implications on decisions made on the Board of Fisheries. He said he doesn't see how someone holding seats on both the Board of Fisheries and the Pebble Mine can be interpreted as something that is not a concern for commercial, subsistence, and sport fishing interests.

[5:18:07 PM](#)

DUNCAN FIELDS, Chairman, Kodiak Salmon Work Group, testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He related that this would be his sixtieth season fishing the same place on Kodiak Island. He said the Kodiak Salmon Work Group represents Kodiak Island's salmon fishermen from all gear types as well as the processors and community stakeholders. Working primarily on Board of Fisheries issues, the group develops materials, information, and data to present at the board's meetings, and has been engaged in the board process for 30 years. He stated that the Kodiak Salmon Work Group's opposition to Ms. Carlson-Van Dort is based on her failure to disclose personal conflicts of interest, and on which the group has submitted a detailed seven-page letter relative to the legal basis. She failed to disclose her personal conflicts of interest when looking at the sum total of the circumstances of her engagement with Chignik as a community and with the Chignik fisheries. Mr. Fields maintained that two misconceptions should have been clarified in Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's presentation. First, the Igvak Management Plan was not, and is not, a conservation issue. The plan first provided that Chignik gets the escapement that it needs and then it provided an additional 100,000 fish to Chignik fishermen, all before the Kodiak fleet even went fishing. It was a \$6-\$8 million guarantee to the Chignik fishermen before the Kodiak fleet went fishing. It wasn't a conservation issue, he continued, it was straight up an allocation decision made in 1968 that balanced the equities between the two fishery groups. A single Board of Fisheries member who had personal conflict of interest disrupted that balance at the last Kodiak meeting. The second issue had to do with the question from Representative Stutes about how sockeye are counted in Chignik and whether it should be viewed more as

mixed stock fishery. [Indisc.] biological issues in Chignik Lake because they count all of the sockeye of Chignik fish, so they overestimate the amount of fish available for that system. It is a detailed biological argument and Representative Stutes is on to something and Ms. Carlson-Van Dort should have owned up to there being biological concerns with the identification of Chignik for the mixed stock fishery.

5:21:28 PM

GARY CLINE, Regional Fisheries Director, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. He related that BBEDC represents 17 communities and roughly 6,000 residents in the region. He said it is appalling that the governor would appoint someone to the Board of Fisheries that currently works for the Pebble Mine, especially when the main role of the board is to conserve and develop the fishery resources of the state. This presents a huge conflict of interest, he continued, as a member of the Board of Fisheries should not work for a highly controversial project that could devastate the ecosystem and economy of the Bristol Bay salmon fishery. The BBEDC firmly believes that the Bristol Bay salmon fishery has been so resilient and sustainable because the natural environment is still intact and unscathed. It's clear the Pebble project would destroy certain drainages and salmon populations of the Nushagak and Kvichak rivers. Furthermore, if Pebble were to be developed it could potentially disrupt the marketability of Bristol Bay salmon for future generations. This was demonstrated when the superior court judge dismissed the lawsuit that Abe Williams was a part of when trying to sue the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association (BBRSDA) for funding groups opposed to Pebble Mine. Additionally, this would undermine all the efforts that fishers have made to improve the quality and value of their catch, including the marketing endeavors by Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) and BBRSDA. The BBEDC believes it's important to see more representation on the Board of Fisheries from residents that actually reside in rural coastal communities where the fisheries take place, as they bring invaluable knowledge to the board on how proposals may impact the stakeholders that participate in those fisheries.

5:23:18 PM

SYLVIA KAVANAUGH testified in support of the confirmation of Mr. Jensen and expressed concern about the appointment of Mr. Williams. She said she is a lifelong Kodiak resident who comes

from a commercial fishing family. She worked for her father for many years in a variety of fisheries, and now as the mother of two girls her family remains reliant on commercial fishing for its household income, as her husband is also a commercial fisherman. She said she supports Mr. Jensen's confirmation because he has been a longstanding member of the Board of Fisheries and holds a unique position as a former working fisherman with a depth of understanding that comes from years of involvement directly through the process and active engagement. She said the appointment of Abe Williams is quite concerning given his affiliation with the Pebble Mine. It is untenable to the majority of the groups that benefit from Alaska's salmon resource that he is a Pebble Mine employee.

MS. KAVANAUGH stated that she has a general concern about this administration's appointments overall, and the balance of representation is not reflective of all stakeholders. The other nominees have very tenuous links to coastal Alaska, do not reside there, and have demonstrated a bias for specific regional goals. During the January 2020 Board of Fisheries meeting in Kodiak, hundreds of testimonies were taken on salmon issues, but the board demonstrated a lack of consideration or responsiveness for the overwhelming testimony. Residents from Kodiak were asked in the stakeholder meeting if they felt their testimony mattered. Not a single person felt that his or her comments were taken under advisement, and a common opinion was that the outcomes were predetermined. It's difficult to oppose appointees when they may become successfully seated and have leadership roles that could impact one individual's access. The lack of diversity within the appointees is disappointing, and Mr. Jensen is the only appointee she can support.

[5:25:48 PM](#)

BRENT BORCHERD stated he is a nonresident and finds it extremely insulting that Representatives Cronk and Hannan think nonresidents have no say in the world-class fisheries that Alaska has to offer. He said he is a recreational fishing guide who makes one-third to one-half of his income from guiding people on their bucket list trip in Alaska. Everyone that pays taxes in Alaska and contributes to the world-class fisheries in Alaska should have a say. He is against any Pebble employee who has had a dime put into their bank account from Pebble being on the Board of Fisheries because anything that a Pebble employee says has a bias on this. He thanked [the Board of Fisheries] for its many years of work to make Alaska continue to be a bucket list trip for people all over the world.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked what tax Mr. Borcherd pays in Alaska.

MR. BORCHERD replied he pays employment taxes. Responding further to Representative Stutes, he said State of Alaska taxes are taken out of his paychecks.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES pointed out that the State of Alaska has no taxes, but there are federal taxes.

MR. BORCHERD responded he would talk to his accountant.

[5:28:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked whether Mr. Borcherd, as a sport guide working in Alaska, thinks there is a need to take a look at limited entry for sport guides in Alaska or whether the current situation is okay in terms of promoting stability and sustainability of Alaska's fisheries overall.

MR. BORCHERD answered he thinks there should be limited use on a lot of the premier rivers. Over his 15 years of guiding, with a few years off to raise his children, the increase of pressure on the recreational fisheries out there has gone through the roof astronomically. The fishery should be limited to protect the overall recreational stability and recreational enhancement of the tourists' enjoyment. It is turning into Disneyland with a cattle line of guides and clients going down rivers every day. Some kind of permit system, or something to protect that situation, [is needed] because these are the nursery rivers of the salmon and it needs to be protected with historical clients and historical lodges.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ asked about Mr. Borcherd's main residence.

MR. BORCHERD replied he lives in Michigan and goes to Bristol Bay every summer to take clients out. Working at fly-out lodges in the Bristol Bay region he has guided thousands of clients.

[5:30:29 PM](#)

DANIEL MILLER testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. He related that he has lived in Kodiak continuously for 45 years and has been a commercial fisherman that entire time. He sold his Bristol Bay permit to his daughter who fishes Bristol Bay now. He stated that Mr. Williams is an advocate for

Pebble Mine and was also involved in a lawsuit suing a marketing association, trying to silence the group with a frivolous lawsuit. As a strong advocate for Pebble, Mr. Williams would be a terrible board member. Mr. Miller related that last year a friend of his who is an investor in Northern Dynasty told him that Pebble would provide lots of jobs for the local people taking mine tailings down the rivers. Pebble is going to be a terrible marketing problem for Bristol Bay, he continued, if not an environmental disaster. The strong stance of Mr. Williams on permit stacking is another reason for his opposition. Mr. Williams wants to be able to own a permit and not go out on the boat. Somebody can stack a bunch of permits and not hire anyone. His daughter actually works on a boat, as do a lot of people because they don't have to own the boat, but they fish on it, and that option should be left open for those people.

5:32:24 PM

ERIN WILLAHAN testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. She noted she is a lifelong Alaskan and currently an eastside setnetter in Upper Cook Inlet. She stated that even though she respects his experience and agrees with some of the points Mr. Williams brought up about keeping permits in Alaska, particularly creating opportunities for permits to stay in the hands of rural Alaskan residents, having an employee of Pebble Mine is a clear conflict of interest and also erodes the trust in the Board of Fisheries. She urged the appointment of a less divisive candidate who doesn't have present ties to Pebble Mine. Fisheries management is obviously inextricably linked to the protection of the habitat that makes Alaska's fisheries possible in the first place. There is no way to reconcile the conflict of interest brought between managing allocation of fisheries and a vested interest in the Pebble Mine.

5:33:51 PM

KIRIL BASARIGIM, K-Bay Fisheries Association, testified in opposition to the confirmations of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Williams. He related he has been fishing since he was born in Alaska. His parents are from Cordova and the Aleutian Islands back to Bristol Bay. He said his association represents 48 fishing members and over 200 families from Alaska who were and still are fishermen for half a century. They reside from north in Delta all the way down to the Peninsula of Homer, including the Kodiak islands. He stated that the association strongly opposes Ms. Carlson-Van-Dort's confirmation because of her conflict of interest from her strong ties to the Pebble Mine

project and Far West Incorporated, which have no interest in helping Alaska's fisheries become sustainable. She does not rely on the highly respected Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), the science studied by ADF&G, and the hard work put into helping to keep Alaska's oceans sustainable. "An example is when fish come into contaminated lakes to spawn, almost more than half or none of the fish come out of the lake because their bodies have been deceased by the contamination." He stated that K-Bay Fisheries Association also opposes the confirmation of Mr. Williams due to his conflict of interest in the Pebble Mine project. The interests of Mr. Williams are making bigger profits for the Pebble Mine project instead of sustainability for Alaskan fisheries and not for the fishermen and fishing communities in Alaska.

5:37:12 PM

RICK DELKITTIE testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. He said he is a subsistence user and opposes Mr. Williams because the conflict is imminent. He explained that he relies on the fisheries resource in this region, along with 32 other villages, and that proposal does not complement any other infrastructure in this region. The science that has been discovered to date indicates an adverse impact on all the fish in this region. A person holding a chair on the Board of Fisheries must have 100 percent participation in the voting, which means he or she cannot be in conflict and unable to vote on an issue. Any individual on the Board of Fisheries must be able to vote on every issue because of their importance. He further stated that the fisheries are in trouble, and regulations are needed on when the fishing starts after the fish have come into fresh water.

5:39:36 PM

JEFFREY MOORE testified in support of the confirmations of all five appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He related that he is a subsistence user, and has been involved in the commercial fishery since 1976. He has owned eight vessels, owns six limited entry permits for herring and salmon, and has setnetted, gillnetted, seined, longlined, pot fished, dragged, and fished for salmon, herring, halibut, groundfish, and shellfish all over the state of Alaska. He stated he has known Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Williams for 35 years and both are quality people. There is so much contention over Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, he continued, but this goes back before she was even born, and it's an allocation issue. In previous years there were Board of

Fisheries members from Kodiak who didn't recuse themselves for that allocation meeting in Kodiak. Chignik is getting another biologist this year, probably the fourteenth, so there isn't a consistent biologist for Chignik. The current problem is because of how the state has managed it and now [Chignik's] run is gone. There is no longer a salmon fishery or a processor, and a processor had operated continuously for 138 years. He said he supports all five nominees because all are well qualified.

[5:43:04 PM](#)

SUE MAUGER testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Williams. She said she is a personal use fisherman, but most importantly she is someone who cares about trust in Alaska's policy decision making. Trust is an incredibly important part of the way that power is given to people who are nominated to help make decisions. She thought it very telling that when testifying today, Mr. Williams didn't introduce himself as an employee of the Pebble Partnership. Further, when Representative Vance asked questions about the concerns from her constituents, of which she is one, about his role in the Pebble Partnership, Mr. Williams was very dismissive and did not offer much for people to feel less concerned. Being dismissive is probably the worst quality in a candidate. She urged that legislators opposed the confirmation of Mr. Williams.

[5:44:53 PM](#)

BENJAMIN ALLEN testified in support of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood. He noted he is from a multi-generational fishing family, uses subsistence in sea life as well as game, serves on a number of boards and committees, and has a deep appreciation for the continuation of Alaska's resources. He said Board of Fisheries members make difficult decisions for the entire state. Every community is different and having diverse members on the board is important. It is a great time of change in Alaska and fisheries are not the same as the days of plenty, he continued. Evaluation of climate and technology changes is very necessary. All user groups are very important and need to have representation. Mr. Allen said is seeing difficulty in maintaining sustainable fisheries occurring in the Gulf of Alaska, with dramatic changes in focusing on conservation concerns of the fish. From what he has seen now, the concerns of fish are going underneath the concerns of income in the short term and he believes that Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood have a willingness to maintain

long-term viability over the quick buck. Users use fish and cannot be expected to protect them, and sometimes need to be told not to use them. Though the decision is painful, the board must make it and these three nominees would do the job well. He said Kodiak was given the Igvak plan to help when it was suffering, and the change made by the board was given to Chignik for that same opportunity now. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort made her mainland and Igvak decision to help bolster the recently damaged terminal fisheries and was given a hard push for helping ADF&G keep its ability to maintain sustainability. He added that he doesn't always agree with the board members' decisions, but extends his appreciation to all past and current board members who have a difficult task.

[5:47:48 PM](#)

BRIAN MCWETHY testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. He noted he is a second-generation fisherman, and stated that much of what he wanted to say in regard to his opposition has already been said. In regard to the changing of the Cape Igvak Management Plan, he related that the plan has been in place since the induction of limited entry in those areas, and isn't helping the Chignik run at all. Previous to the change, Chignik fishermen in the initial season needed to harvest 200,000 fish before [Kodiak fishermen] even got a fish, sockeye that is, a \$6-\$8 million value as previously stated by Mr. Fields. When Ms. Carlson-Van Dort made that decision, he continued, she took the two worst proposals for Kodiak and meshed them into one. They doubled the threshold and halved the allocation for Kodiak. Historically, Kodiak got a harvest 15 percent of what Chignik harvested in that area, and that dropped to 7.5 percent. It was a very biased decision, he said; she never wanted to hear [the Kodiak] side of it and came in with her mind made up. He lost a lot of trust in the board and he wants someone on the board who is going to be honest and straightforward, hear everyone out, and make the best decision for everyone involved. He offered his understanding that Chignik is suffering and has been for a couple years, but said it isn't the fault of Kodiak or Area M; that system is not producing, [Kodiak fishermen] haven't fished in that area.

[5:50:23 PM](#)

TOM MANOS testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and in support of the confirmations of Mr. Jensen, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Wood. He noted he has commercially fished in Alaska for 45 years, primarily along

the south peninsula. He is in the process of passing the baton to his sons and several other young fishermen to provide good employment for 20 young Alaskans. He has participated in the Board of Fisheries process for 40 years. Though he doesn't always agree with the decisions made, he feels that the process has been instrumental in making Alaska fishing a healthy sustainable business, perhaps the most successful fishery resource utilization in the world. He said Ms. Carlson-Van Dort comes with a regional bias and a strong sport fish bias, as evidenced by her record. She does not fairly represent [the commercial] industry and the fishers that are an important part of the Alaska economy. A fair and thoughtful Board of Fisheries is critical for the viability of Alaska fishing, he continued, and it's important to the health and resource of all the user groups. He said he supports the confirmations of Mr. Jensen, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Wood. He offered his respect for the hard work and dedication of board members.

[5:52:34 PM](#)

ED MARTIN stated he is a 56-year resident of Alaska and the son of a homesteader. He stated that the first duty of legislators is to Article VIII of the constitution in establishing, protecting, and utilization of Alaska's resources. For almost four hours he has listened to controversy on whether the legislature should install another lieutenant to do its work in the fish wars that go on and separate urban and rural areas in the competition and allocation of that resource that belongs to all Alaskans. Legislators need to cut the budget and in doing so there are 140 boards and commissions. The duties of Alaska's legislature need to be re-evaluated and Alaska should go to a biennial legislative session. He urged that none of the nominees be appointed and that the board be abandoned completely because prior legislatures have created a fish war that doesn't have to exist.

[5:54:58 PM](#)

RAEHEL ALLEN testified in support of the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood. She related that she fished on her father's boat through the 1980s, ran her own seiner for 20 years, and has passed on the seiner to her husband so she can raise her children. She further noted that she is secretary of the Chignik [Fish and Game] Advisory Committee. She stated that last week she purchased a Kodiak permit because it is very unlikely that Chignik is going to have a fishery for this next year, and fishing is her family's only source of

income. It should be acknowledged that both of the lake systems are failing. [Chignik] has a subsistence problem, the in-river escapement goal for subsistence is not being reached. [Chignik] has a sport fishery problem, the Chignik sport fishery is getting shut down. As well, Chignik has a commercial escapement problem, a river problem. With all those problems in mind, she continued, her family picked up a permit for Kodiak to be able to continue fishing. She said she supports Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood because they will support protecting salmon. Right now, protecting the sustainability of the salmon and the sustainability of the escapement should be the main focus for most of Alaska, and that cannot be done without protecting the terminal harvest. If Ms. Carlson-Van Dort has any bias, it is a bias to protect salmon, so she highly supports her confirmation, as well as the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Wood.

5:57:57 PM

PAUL A. SHADURA II testified in opposition to the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries; and testified in opposition to the confirmation of Mr. Smith, appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. He began his testimony by reading an excerpt from a report to the people from the Alaska Constitutional Convention: "The future wealth of the state of Alaska will depend largely on how it administers the immense and the varied resources to which it will fall heir." He said he resides on the Kenai Peninsula and has been a commercial setnet fisherman in Cook Inlet for 53 years, and an active participant in the Board of Fisheries process since the early 1970s. He has served on many resource-related committees, including the Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee as a designated commercial interest seat for many of those years.

MR. SHADURA, in regard to the confirmation hearing for the appointees to the Board of Fisheries, stated that past governors have been cognizant of the immense responsibilities toward the people of the state and therefore have strived to balance the expertise through the representation process. An unwritten policy is three commercial interest seats, three sport fishing interest seats, and one primary subsistence stakeholder who may participate in other multiple uses. Alaska's supersize requires some sensitivity to regional perspectives, and currently there is a severely disproportionate board representation issue. Because of this, he said, he cannot support the confirmations of Ms. Mitchell, Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, and Mr. Wood.

MR. SHADURA, in regard to the confirmation hearing for the appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), read from a recent Alaska Supreme Court decision having to do with AS 39.05.080, Procedures for All Appointments. He urged that appointee Melvin Smith not be confirmed at this time.

6:01:29 PM

DANIELLE RINGER testified in opposition to the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort. She said she was born to fishermen and raised in Homer, and operates a small-scale fishing vessel with her husband who was also born and raised in Alaska. She stated that based on Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's resume she would be inclined to support her, aside from the appointee's [past] employment with the Pebble Partnership, which really bothers her. More Indigenous and female representation is needed on the Board of Fisheries, she continued. However, after firsthand experience watching the appointee function as a board member at the last Kodiak meeting, she said she believes Ms. Carlson-Van Dort arrived in Kodiak with her mind already made up about Chignik proposals, some of which were written by her family members, and she didn't seem to take into account the public testimony or the scientific data. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort said earlier today that she has worked hard to broker compromise, but it seemed to be the opposite of that in Kodiak. Testifying [before the Board of Fisheries] can be very intimidating, yet the Kodiak community showed up to teach the relatively new board members about the mixed commercial and subsistence fishing in the Kodiak region. The Kodiak community's words were lost on Ms. Carlson-Van Dort, who appeared wholly uninterested in what people were sharing. Alaskans deserve a balanced board with diverse geographic and stakeholder representation with members who are held to the highest ethical standard. Ms. Ringer requested that members of the committees oppose the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort.

6:03:25 PM

AXEL KOPUN testified in support of the confirmations of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Wood. He stated he is a fourth-generation Native Alaskan commercial and subsistence fisherman. He grew up between Kodiak and Chignik and has fished Chignik his entire life. He said that with all the struggles and changes going on lately in the Gulf of Alaska, there has been a lot of need for fresh eyes on the salmon fisheries, and the nominees for the Board of Fisheries provide just that. The various

backgrounds and expertise that they hold are what is needed at this point. Some of the struggles going on are what have led to a lot of the current contention.

MR. KOPUN stated that Board of Fisheries meetings are especially contentious when they get between areas that traditionally fight over fish resources. Kodiak hates Chignik, he said. Ninety-nine percent of today's comments against the confirmation of Ms. Carlson-Van Dort have come from Kodiak. They're all based on two proposals at the 2020 Board of Fisheries meeting in Kodiak. He urged that that be taken with a grain of salt and that members of the committees understand what is really going on. Chignik is a small fishery that is in between the two largest interception fisheries in the state of Alaska. [Chignik] has to fight all the time just to get its fish back to the rivers and [Chignik] has been unable to fish two of the last three years because of not getting the escapement. So, there is a lot of contention.

MR. KOPUN further stated that he has been going to Board of Fisheries meetings since 1998 and over 23 years of observation, and intense interaction with the board members, he truly believes that Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Wood have what it takes to move Alaska into this new era, that may or may not be a permanent change. Ms. Carlson-Van Dort and Mr. Wood are quick thinking and intelligent and independent-minded, he continued. They don't take marching orders from a certain sector or a certain political group that informs them how to vote. They vote what they think is right for the fish. It's all about the fish - let the fish get back to the streams and everything else will take care of itself. He noted he has submitted in writing some points about the fallacies and misrepresentations, including on Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's voting record.

6:06:33 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ agreed it's all about the fish. He asked whether Mr. Kopun sees any problems with Ms. Carlson-Van Dort's prior connection to the Pebble project and Mr. Williams.

MR. KOPUN replied he doesn't see what it has to do with making decisions on the Board of Fisheries. In his 23 years of going to board meetings he has never heard a proposal come forward that is going to deal with mining. He said he doesn't know Abe Williams, but he doesn't see how it would ever come into play. He doesn't see how those two worlds interact on the regulatory level where a Board of Fisheries member would have to make a

decision. If for some reason it did, he imagines there would be a conflict of interest with being an active board member with Pebble. He personally has no problem with it.

[6:07:55 PM](#)

The committees took an at-ease from 6:07 p.m. to 6:09 p.m.

[6:09:01 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR closed public testimony for the Board of Fisheries confirmation hearings. She urged the public to submit written testimony to: house.fisheries@akleg.org.

[6:09:26 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM stated there were many good comments and conversation. He expressed his hope for legislators to make the right decision.

[6:09:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY thanked committee members for their good questions to the nominees and the public for listening and giving their comments.

[6:10:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked the public for waiting so long to testify. She also thanked her constituents who have called her and sent messages. She said these communications are read and considered and do help in making a decision. She hasn't yet made a decision because the controversy needs to be weighed.

[6:10:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE thanked Chair Tarr for running a good meeting and thanked the public for staying on for so long and listening. He said he's confused as to why being associated with Pebble Mine is such an issue. He questioned whether being pro-Pebble means someone is anti-fish.

[6:11:59 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK thanked everyone who testified. He expressed concern about the statement that rivers are congested and said taking a look at why they are congested may be needed.

6:12:31 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SCHRAGE thanked the appointees for putting their names forward and thanked the public for speaking and submitting written comments. He said the testimony really does help in making a decision.

6:12:59 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN commented that this is a reminder that democracy is a messy process and only works if people participate. She thanked the public for spending five hours with the committees today.

6:13:16 PM

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER thanked Chair Tarr for running a good and fair job running the meeting. He thanked the public for waiting hours and hours online to provide testimony. He offered his apology for the one-and-a-half limit on testimony, but said members took notes. He said his mind is not yet made up and he will be reviewing his notes and the testimony. He gave credit to the appointees for stepping up, taking on so much work, and facing a lot of hard questions.

6:14:33 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ concurred with the other comments and stated his mind is not yet made up either. It's a big decision, he continued, and the length of time people waited to testify shows that.

6:15:08 PM

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES stated this shows how important fisheries are to Alaskans and she is grateful to the public and members of the committees for their time today. She said she takes exception to the disparaging comment that was made towards UFA. She pointed out that UFA is membership group with 37 member groups and over 500 individual members, and she doesn't think that would be the case if going after someone were UFA's mode of operation. She added that UFA has participated and done a lot of good for the fisheries.

6:16:31 PM

CHAIR PATKOTAK offered his appreciation to those who spoke and participated in the public process. The comments are of help to him because, he quipped, whale wars are what he is used to, not fish wars. He thanked Chair Tarr.

[6:17:24 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR noted that Board of Fisheries member, Israel Payton, called her office and expressed his support for the five people under consideration for the board. Mr. Payton had good things to say about the nominees and she agreed to share his thoughts with the committee. She pointed out that the committee heard from people in numerous communities all over the state. She expressed her appreciation for the testimony.

[6:18:34 PM](#)

CHAIR PATKOTAK reminded the two committees that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions is in accordance with AS 39.05.080 and in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. [The names advanced to the full legislature were: Marilyn Charles and Renee Alward, appointees to the Fisherman's Fund Advisory Board & Appeals Council; Melvin Smith, appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission; and John Jensen, McKenzie Mitchell, Marit Carlson-Van Dort, Abe Williams, and John Wood, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.]

[6:19:21 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House Resources Standing Committee and the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.