

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

May 18, 2021

10:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Geran Tarr, Chair
Representative Louise Stutes, Vice Chair
Representative Andi Story
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Sarah Vance

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Kevin McCabe

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 52

"An Act providing that operation of the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery in Kachemak Bay is compatible with the functions of Kachemak Bay State Park; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 52(FSH) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 52

SHORT TITLE: TUTKA BAY HATCHERY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) VANCE

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	FSH, RES
04/29/21	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
04/29/21	(H)	Heard & Held
04/29/21	(H)	MINUTE(FSH)
05/06/21	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
05/06/21	(H)	Heard & Held
05/06/21	(H)	MINUTE(FSH)
05/18/21	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

SAM RABUNG, Director

Commercial Fisheries Division
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 52.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[10:05:12 AM](#)

CHAIR GERAN TARR called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 9:34 a.m. Representatives Vance, Stutes, Story, and Tarr were present at the call to order. Representative Ortiz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 52-TUTKA BAY HATCHERY

[10:05:41 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 52, "An Act providing that operation of the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery in Kachemak Bay is compatible with the functions of Kachemak Bay State Park; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CS for HB 52, Version 32-LS0327\I, Bullard, 4/29/21, adopted during the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting on 4/29/21.]

[10:06:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE noted additional documents in the committee packet, including a contract agreement with the Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery and more letters of support.

[10:07:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY recalled there had been concerns about maintenance, upkeep, and disposal, and she asked for assurance that upkeep and maintenance is happening.

[10:07:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE deferred to Sam Rabung.

[10:07:40 AM](#)

SAM RABUNG, Director, Commercial Fisheries Division, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, advised that as with all private,

nonprofit hatchery permitted operations in Alaska, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) has requirements and guidelines spelled out in statutes, regulations, and policies. Periodically, the department evaluates the operations of each hatchery, which is required to turn in a report annually. The report details the hatchery's operations; any anomalies or events must be submitted through incident reports. He concluded, "We have had no issues with the operation of Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery."

[10:08:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered her understanding that the committee had heard testimony that there have been "some incidences of not having the upkeep as planned." She said it is curious that ADF&G does not have that on record.

[10:09:04 AM](#)

MR. RABUNG said he thinks it is a matter of perception. He said during the three-week period when salmon come back to spawn, there are always some dead fish around; it is the natural cycle of the salmon. He said those who have been around large salmon hatchery programs "see nothing of an issue there," while others are sometimes alarmed.

[10:10:14 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR noted there are two components of HB 52. The hatchery component is the purview of the House Special Committee on Fisheries, while the land swap component is the purview of the House Resources Standing Committee. She noted that some [testifiers] had suggested there was overproduction or "more fish dying off," and she asked Mr. Rabung for his feedback regarding the idea of adjusting the production levels.

[10:11:27 AM](#)

MR. RABUNG responded that the hatchery has been at its current permit capacity since 1992, contrary to what some would say. He referred to a published document available on ADF&G's web site that provides the history and chronology of all the operations at Tutka Bay Lagoon Hatchery through 2012. He said the department has noticed that because of "warmer years," the water at low tide tends to get warm, which is potentially lethal to salmon. The warmer the water is, the less oxygen it holds, he explained; a lot of fish in the water on a warm day use up the

available oxygen. He said that is the one issue with that hatchery that ADF&G struggles with, and it has been that way since the hatchery's inception in the 1970s.

[10:13:04 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR observed that in general, "there are sort of new feelings, it seems, around that." She expressed her hope that the topic could be addressed another time. That said, she expressed that her questions had been answered, and she is comfortable with the operation of the hatchery.

[10:14:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE stated her intent to spend time this summer reaching out to communities that would be affected by the land swap proposed under HB 52.

[10:15:13 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR entertained a motion.

[10:15:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES moved to report CSHB 52, Version 32-LS0327\I, Bullard, 4/29/21, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 52(FSH) was reported out of the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

[10:17:32 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.