

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

April 21, 2022

10:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Geran Tarr, Chair
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Dan Ortiz

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Louise Stutes, Vice Chair
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Kevin McCabe

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: COMMERCIAL FISHERIES ENTRY COMMISSION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MELVIN SMITH, Commissioner
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint on behalf of the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

JON HAGHAYEGHI, Executive Director
Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint on behalf of the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[10:05:30 AM](#)

CHAIR GERAN TARR called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Representatives Kreiss-Tomkins, Ortiz, and Tarr were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION: Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

[10:06:18 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR announced that the only order of business would be a presentation by the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC).

[10:06:59 AM](#)

MELVIN SMITH, Commissioner, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, stated that his role as commissioner is to protect the interest of commercial fishermen while ensuring sustainability for future generations. The main topic of the presentation would be policy objectives, 2021 accomplishments, and a summary of day-to-day operations.

[10:09:01 AM](#)

JON HAGHAYEGHI, Executive Director, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, directed attention to a PowerPoint presentation, titled "Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. He began with a historical overview of Alaska's salmon fisheries prior to the Limited Entry Act, implemented in 1973, which established CFEC in 1974. The commission's mission, in the public interest without unjust discrimination, is to promote the conservation and the sustained yield management of Alaska's fishery resource and the economic health and stability of commercial fishing in Alaska by regulating and controlling the entry of participants into commercial fisheries. He pointed out that in fiscal year (FY 21), CFEC generated \$7.2 million in revenue, of which \$3.2 million went to the operating budget. He stated that 2021 performance outcomes included 32 adjudicated decisions, 16,161 commercial fishing permits issued, 8,290 vessel licenses issued, 1,794 permit transfers processed, the continuation of the Cook Inlet Set Gillnet Optimum Numbers study, and the publication of 3 research reports. The quasi-judicial commission is supported by four sections: licensing, adjudications, research, and data processing. He gave a detailed overview of each section's core functions.

[10:28:23 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER SMITH concluded his portion of the presentation with an update from the chair commissioner.

10:30:03 AM

MR. HAGHAYEGHI, in response to questions from the committee, synopsized three optimum-numbers studies: a 1994 study on Southeastern roe herring; a study on the Northern Southeast Inside sablefish longline fishery; and a current study on the Cook Inlet fisheries. In addition, he pointed out that a report is being drafted from survey data on fishermen's costs and operations. To better understand the economic health of the fisheries, the report will detail each fisheries average cost. He discussed CFEC's proactive approach to monitoring fisheries and the rate at which optimum-numbers studies have been conducted. In particular, he pointed out the Cook Inlet optimum-numbers survey. This survey on set netters in the region consisted of 10 pages requesting financial data from the past three years. He stated that only 11 percent of participants responded, however, a statistically significant inference was still captured. He expressed the opinion that further consolidating CFEC could cause "devastating" impacts in the future. Regarding the CFEC's role in monitoring fisheries, he shared that the commission issues publications on the economic health of each fishery. He described phase two of limited entry as the monitoring of fisheries and ensuring that optimum-numbers studies are conducted. He stated that this was the impetus for his position.

11:01:06 AM

COMMISSIONER SMITH, in response to committee questions, agreed that optimum-numbers studies should continue, especially for distressed fisheries. He stated that to request an optimum-numbers study in an already limited fisheries, [stakeholders] would need to call or write CFEC; however, no requests have been received thus far. He stated that three petition requests have been made to limit open access fisheries. He said that Alaska Statutes require the commission to confirm receipt of those petitions, after which, the timeframe is open ended.

11:13:34 AM

MR. HAGHAYEGHI, in response to further committee questions, described the three standards for conducting studies: return on investment; the number of entry permits necessary to harvest the

allowable commercial take of fishery resources; and forfeited costs. Limiting any of the three open access fisheries being petitioned would require adjudication, resulting in an increase in the number of limited entry permits and a slight reduction in overall permitting issuance. He stated that following a 2015 audit, there were 13 pending adjudications, which have been resolved. He added that none were appealed to the higher courts.

[11:34:13 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 11:34 a.m.