

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 20, 2022

1:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
Representative Calvin Schrage
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Ronald Gillham
Representative Tom McKay

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Josiah Patkotak, Chair
Representative Zack Fields

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Game

Ruth Cusack - Chugiak
James Cooney - Eagle River
Al Barrette - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Clay Nordlum - Kotzebue

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

RUTH CUSACK, Appointee
Board of Game
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Chugiak, Alaska

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

JAMES COONEY, Appointee

Board of Game

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Eagle River, Alaska

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

ALLEN "AL" BARRETTE, Appointee

Board of Game

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Fairbanks, Alaska

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

CLAY NORDLUM, Appointee

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

Kotzebue, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

LOUIS CUSACK, Executive Director

Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK)

Chugiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game.

RANDY ZARNKE, President

Alaska Trappers Association

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Al Barrette to the Board of Game.

VIRGIL UMPHENOUR

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game and Clay Nordlum to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

TED SPRAKER

Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game.

JEFF GARNES

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game.

MIKE SEWRIGHT, Board Member

Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game.

WILLIAM SCHENK

Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the confirmation hearing on appointees to the Board of Game, provided testimony urging there be more diversity on the board.

GARY GEARHART, Regional Representative

Safari Club International

Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game.

JENNIFER YUHAF

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack and Al Barrette to the Board of Game.

GEORGE PIERCE

Kasilof, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the confirmation hearing on appointees to the Board of Game, testified that only scientists or biologists should be appointed to the board.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:04:05 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR GRIER HOPKINS called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Representatives McKay, Cronk, Gillham, Hannan, and Hopkins were present at the call to order. Representatives Rauscher and Schrage arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :
Board of Game
Big Game Commercial Services Board

[1:04:33 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS announced that the only order of business would be consideration of the governor's appointees to the Board of Game and the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[1:05:15 PM](#)

RUTH CUSACK, Appointee, Board of Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Game. She stated that she grew up in Iowa and joined the US Army after high school where she became a medic. She said she moved to Alaska in 2007, obtained her Assistant Guide license in 2020, and has fished and hunted all over the state for moose, caribou, mountain goat, and black-tailed deer. She noted she volunteers for Alaska Healing Hearts, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW), Raise 'Em Outdoors, and serves as vice president of Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK). She related that her main objective is ensuring adequate harvestable and healthy populations of game in Alaska, and she firmly believes in the state's constitution.

MS. CUSACK stated she understands the importance of wild harvest to many rural families and supporting traditional generational subsistence use. She further stated she understands that tourism and non-consumptive use are also important and a huge part of Alaska's economy. She added that as a passionate female hunter she will bring diversity to the board given there are no women on the board. She noted that her family hunts for its meat and fish and shares its extra game with people who are less fortunate. She related that when initially contacted about being on the Board of Game she said no, but several days later she decided to say yes. She stated that as a conservationist who cares deeply for the resource, it is an honor to be appointed to the Board of Game.

1:12:10 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM commented that he has three women in his family who hunt and three on their way up and he appreciates Ms. Cusack stepping up to be on the board.

MS. CUSACK thanked Representative Gillham.

1:13:15 PM

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether Ms. Cusack has ever attended a Board of Game regional advisory committee meeting.

MS. CUSACK replied no, but said she understands the importance of them, has researched them these past few days, and is looking forward to attending as many as possible.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether Ms. Cusack has ever attended a Board of Game meeting in person or virtually.

MS. CUSACK responded that she has attended them with her husband because he has made proposals to the board. But, she continued, she admits that she never paid much attention.

1:13:59 PM

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether Ms. Cusack has sat on any boards or bodies that reviewed hunting and harvesting regulations at the state level.

MS. CUSACK answered no, but she is anxious to do so and to learn.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS requested Ms. Cusack to expound on how she has used her Assistant Guide license and whether she has experience in guiding.

MS. CUSACK replied that she received the license in 2020 and "we go ... on the peninsula and we hunt brown bears ... in the spring and it's only every other year ... on the peninsula." She has only gone a couple times, she continued, and it's a great way for her husband and her to spend some time hunting together. She makes little income from it, she added, it's just a small thing that she and her husband do.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether her husband is a guide, and Ms. Cusack is the assistant who goes with him.

MS. CUSACK responded that her husband is a Class-A [Assistant] Guide, which is one step above Assistant Guide, and she and her husband work for a Master Guide who books all the hunts and does the advertising. When initially contacted about being on the board, she continued, it wasn't known [by the contact] that she had an Assistant Guide license because she never told anyone as it wasn't a big thing to her.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether Ms. Cusack thinks there is a place and role for a non-consumptive user on the Board of Game.

MS. CUSACK answered that it is important to understand and recognize that there are duties for the Board of Game for non-hunting, such as tourism and bear viewing.

1:17:01 PM

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether Ms. Cusack's statement about brown bear hunts on "the peninsula" meant "Alaska Peninsula."

MS. CUSACK replied yes.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN inquired whether in the capacity of Assistant Guide on those hunts Ms. Cusack had clients with her.

MS. CUSACK responded, "Yes ... but he has to be there." In further response to Representative Hannan, she stated that it is like a learner's permit.

1:17:59 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK stated he hunts and has an Assistant Guide license, and it doesn't make him a guide and it doesn't change his perspective on the purpose of game management. He said that if approved to the Board of Game Ms. Cusack will offer an interesting perspective.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS concurred it is important to have a diversity of voices on the Board of Game.

1:19:18 PM

JAMES COONEY, Appointee, Board of Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Game. He stated that he moved to Alaska in 2004 after graduating from Gonzaga University with a bachelor's in business

administration and being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army. He dreamed of hunting in Alaska as a boy, he said, so Alaska was his first choice of duty stations and after leaving the Army he bought a home in Eagle River and began working for the Army in civilian service. He related that he hunts whenever time away from work allows him to do so and that hunting has allowed him to see places in the state and establish relationships with people that otherwise would not have happened. He noted that he volunteers with Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK), and with Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation where he has helped raise money for Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) wildlife conservation projects. He said he would like to serve on the Board of Game as the next step in his efforts to serve the state in conserving and maintaining its wildlife resources.

[1:21:41 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN noted that Mr. Cooney was appointed to the Board of Game in 2021 for a term that ends in 2024. She asked why Mr. Cooney is being reappointed at this time.

MR. COONEY replied that he was appointed in July 2021 and went through Senate confirmation hearings but is still going through the House confirmation process.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN surmised Mr. Cooney hasn't yet had a confirmation vote by the legislature, has been serving on the Board of Game since 2021, and will serve until 2024 if he receives a full confirmation vote.

MR. COONEY clarified that he has never received a confirmation vote and didn't do any work in 2021. He said his first duties began in January 2022 and again in March 2022.

[1:23:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked Mr. Cooney why he wants to sit on the Board of Game.

MR. COONEY responded that selfless service is a core value of his. When he got out of the Army, he explained, he missed volunteering and serving so he got involved in wildlife conservation through nonprofit organizations in Alaska, starting with SCI and he is still serving with the Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation. In 2021 when a seat became available on the Board

of Game, he continued, he thought it important to take that next step to continue to serve the wildlife resources.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER explained he didn't ask this question of Ms. Cusack because he'd already asked her when she made a visit to his office.

[1:24:42 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS surmised Mr. Cooney has been to a Board of Game meeting and has paid attention to the regional advisory committees, given he has served for several months. He asked whether Mr. Cooney has a guide license or assistant guide license which might be a licensure that could be a conflict while serving on the Board of Game.

MR. COONEY answered that he holds an Assistant Guide license that he keeps current. He said his career as an active assistant hunting guide was short lived due to the vacation time required to step away from his day job working as an Army civilian. He said that due to the vacation time required to step away from his Army civilian day job, his career as an active assistant hunting guide was short lived, consisting of a total of six clients between spring 2014 and fall 2015. So, he continued, his experience as a resident hunter far exceeds his experience as an Assistant Guide. He explained that his conflict when taking vacation time was that he had to choose between hunting as a resident or being an Assistant Guide and his decision was to be a resident hunter.

VICE CHAIR HOPKINS asked whether Mr. Cooney sees that there is a place for non-consumptive users being appointed to the Board of Game and having a place in the decisions being made.

MR. COONEY replied that that is the prerogative of the governor and the legislature. Someone in a seat for a specific user or representing a specific stakeholder group, he stated, might not be objective or have the wildlife resource's best interest in mind when listening or looking at proposals. He said objectivity is a strength that he brings to the board.

[1:28:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether Mr. Cooney anticipates using his Assistant Guide license in the future. She further asked why Mr. Cooney has chosen to keep his license current if he isn't using it and his hunting doesn't require it.

MR. COONEY responded that he has not used his Assistant Guide license since 2015 and isn't planning to use it anytime soon because he has 18 more years of Army civilian career before he can retire. He explained that he maintains the license because the requirements to obtain one have changed, some of the [required] experience is stricter, and since he worked hard to get the license, he wants to maintain it because he earned it.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether Mr. Cooney foresees board decisions where he is going to be "conflicted out" because of having guided in, or potentially going to guide in, a unit for which a decision is being made. She further asked whether Mr. Cooney believes he would need to declare a conflict even if not actively using his license.

MR. COONEY answered no, but that if needed he would [declare a conflict] during the initial portion of the board meeting as that is what is done. He explained that his reason for saying no is because he has continued to hunt as a resident in some of the units in which he guided. For example, he continued, in 2014 he guided for brown bear in Game Management Unit (GMU) 9 on the Alaska Peninsula; then in 2021 he hunted there as a resident with a friend. In 2014 and 2015, he added, he guided for sheep in GMU 19C, and he has returned there to hunt as a resident hunter. He said he doesn't think it conflicts him because he has guided before, but that if he were to feel he had a conflict it would be because he is a resident hunter who has hunted in the area [in question].

[1:33:06 PM](#)

ALLEN "AL" BARRETTE, Appointee, Board of Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), testified as appointee to the Board of Game. He stated that his three children were raised utilizing Alaska fish and wildlife resources, his wife is a falconer, and since 1992 his primary occupation has been as a fur dresser with supplemental income from trapping. He said he utilizes his Class-A Guide license about 10 days a year, although he has not guided the last two years due to the low number of sheep in the area in which he would work. He noted that doesn't have a commercial interest in guiding, he only participates in guiding as an employee of registered guides.

MR. BARRETTE related that his interest in being on the Board of Game is not to favor commercial interests, but to manage Alaska's wildlife resources and provide as many opportunities as

possible with sustainable management in mind. He said he is well qualified to serve as a member of the Board of Game member given his 20 years of involvement at the local level, including serving on the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee. He stated that he has knowledge for wildlife management, understands Alaska's constitutional mandate, and is versed in Alaska's statutes, regulations, wildlife management plans, and public interest. Mr. Barrette noted that he has served for many years on the Western Arctic Caribou Working Group, the Fortymile Caribou Coalition, the Wood Bison Planning Team, and Dall Sheep working groups. He further noted that he has participated in the statewide revision of bear baiting regulations, collaborated with trapping groups to align furbearer seasons regionally, worked on intensive management plans, and understands state subsistence and the laws. Given his years of involvement, he added, he brings historical background to the Board of Game on certain issues.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN announced that Vice Chair Hopkins needed to attend another meeting and had passed the gavel to her.

[1:37:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER offered his understanding that Mr. Barrette was a sheep hunting guide.

MR. BARRETTE answered that he has been primarily sheep guiding since 2006 or so.

[1:38:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked whether Mr. Barrette has conflicted out on any issues during his time on the board in relation to raptor regulations or his [guide] licensure.

MR. BARRETTE confirmed he has had to declare a conflict of interest. He further noted that there is always a potential for him to be conflicted out given his many interests. He explained that he reviews all the proposals and then lets the chair know at the start of each meeting [if he has a conflict].

[1:39:35 PM](#)

CLAY NORDLUM, Appointee, Big Game Commercial Services Board, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, testified as appointee to the Big Game Commercial Services

Board. He stated he was born and raised in Kotzebue, is a shareholder in the Northwest Alaska Native Association (NANA) Regional Corporation, a Native allotment owner, and a subsistence hunter and fisherman. He noted he holds a private pilot's license and owns boats, four-wheelers, and all-terrain vehicles for use in Kotzebue to access the country for what he loves to do.

MR. NORDLUM related that he applied for the local landholder seat on the Big Game Commercial Services Board to provide a local voice in rural communities. He said he has attended a couple board meetings over the last eight months, and now he is going through this confirmation process. He noted that his wife was born and raised in Kotzebue, is a nurse at the local hospital, and they both love being out in the country and hunting and fishing to stock their freezers every year.

[1:42:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN inquired about Mr. Nordlum's employment.

MR. NORDLUM replied that he works for the Northwest Arctic Borough as a planning director in Kotzebue.

[1:43:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK asked whether there are issues of concern in Mr. Nordlum's area that make him want to be on the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

MR. NORDLUM answered yes. He explained that in the Kotzebue area there are issues with transporters taking hunters into Game Management Unit (GMU) 23 and dropping them off one after the other on public state land. He said he has looked into the laws that govern guides and transporters and of interest to him is correcting the deficiencies in the way that transporters and guides are handled.

[1:45:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN opened public testimony on the governor's appointees to the Board of Game and Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[1:45:46 PM](#)

LOUIS CUSACK, Executive Director, Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK), testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game. He stated that Ms. Cusack is his wife, and that she is a passionate wilderness hunter who would be a great representative for the largest growing demographic in the hunting community. He said she would bring insight and perspective to the Board of Game that has not been present for some time and she will set an example that will encourage others and other women to participate in the outdoors. He related that he and Ms. Cusack have hunted almost every part of Alaska and use Alaska's wildlife resources to fill their freezer and to share with others less fortunate. He noted that Ms. Cusack volunteers for several hunting programs for women and children and is vice president of SCI-AK, which in 2022 alone will contribute over \$1.2 million in Pittman-Robertson Act funds to ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation. He added that as a member of the Board of Game, Ms. Cusack will work hard at researching and listening to all testimony and make a fair decision that is based on the best interest of the resource and on behalf of all user groups.

[1:48:44 PM](#)

RANDY ZARNKE, President, Alaska Trappers Association, testified in support of the appointment of Al Barrette to the Board of Game. He said he has seen Mr. Barrette in action at a variety of meetings and Mr. Barrette is always well informed and oftentimes the most informed person in the room. He stated that Mr. Barrette has a great understanding of the relationship between statutes and regulations and often points out conflicts that might exist. He pointed out that Mr. Barrette is self-taught and motivated to educate himself on these details. He related that Mr. Barrette interacts with people testifying before the Board of Game by asking questions, often leading to greater clarity of the testimony itself.

[1:50:08 PM](#)

VIRGIL UMPHENOUR testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game and Clay Nordlum to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. He stated that he had served three terms on the Board of Fisheries, is [currently] serving on the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee, and he is a Master Guide. He said he is the owner of a meat and fish processing facility in Fairbanks and has known Mr. Barrette since at least 1992 given Mr. Barrette's fur tannery and that they do business together. He related that he

and Mr. Barrette served together on the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee for more than 15 years. He emphasized that Mr. Barrette is a hard worker, knowledgeable, and gets along well with people. He further stated that he supports all the appointees who are up for confirmation to the Board of Game and the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[1:51:51 PM](#)

TED SPRAKER testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game. He noted that after retiring from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game he served six consecutive terms on the Board of Game. He stated he has known Mr. Barrette for many years, including serving with him on the Board of Game where Mr. Barrette was always prepared and one of the leaders when it came to building a solid record for each of the votes that the board was dealing with. He expressed his support for Mr. Cooney after recently meeting him and being impressed with his action on the board. He related that he has known Ms. Cusack for some time and said she is an accomplished outdoors person who is dedicated to wildlife conservation and helping youth hunters. He noted that Ms. Cusack was selected from a group of 80 women nationwide for the Extreme Huntress Award and was honored with the SCI Diana Award.

MR. SPRAKER pointed out that the first couple Board of Game meetings are a steep learning curve and that a person must be committed and have the time to serve on the board. He said all three appointees have that commitment and the time to serve as effective board members. Regarding guides being on the board, he argued that a requirement for a board seat is experience in the outdoors and knowledge of wildlife. He further noted that there are usually 100-plus proposals to address at board meetings and there is often a proposal or two with which a board member may have a conflict that requires that member's recusal. He asserted that being an Assistant Guide on the board has never been a problem, but rather an asset.

[1:55:44 PM](#)

MARK RICHARDS, Executive Director, Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK), testified in opposition to the appointment of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game. He related that RHAK sent identical letters to committee members and to the Board of Game appointees. He said RHAK has discussed its position in the hope that the appointees understand RHAK's

position. He pointed out that all three appointees to the Board of Game are licensed hunting guides and that, if confirmed, there will be five licensed hunting guides and one retired guide on the seven-member board. He said RHAK believes that all the individuals being appointed or reappointed to the Board of Game are qualified to serve but explained that RHAK must oppose in principle the addition of any more guides to the Board of Game regardless of their class of guide license because it clearly does not provide a diversity of interests and points of view as called for by the statute. Whether real or perceived the board will be unbalanced in favor of commercial hunting interests, he stated, and beyond that it is horrible optics that exacerbates the belief held by many resident hunters that the Board of Game does not value or consider their opinion. [The portrayal] of Assistant Guide as being meaningless is ridiculous, he argued, because most of the guides in Alaska are Assistant Guides and they do most of the guiding in the state.

MR. RICHARDS stressed that none of this is personal and puts RHAK in the uncomfortable position of opposing good qualifying people to serve on the board. He related that RHAK has always made recommendations to boards, commissions, and the governor's office, and RHAK's four currently recommended individuals, three men and one woman, are all highly qualified and none hold a guide license of any kind. He pointed out that over 100,000 Alaskans purchase a hunting license every year and contribute more than \$1 billion dollars to Alaska's economy in hunting pursuits. Less than 1 percent of those Alaskans hold a guide license, yet having most members of the Board of Game be hunting guides is somehow okay as if there are no qualified applicants who aren't guides, he questioned. He asked what the purpose is of a statute requiring a balanced board if it isn't adhered to. He recalled Mr. Cooney being asked about having non-consumptive users on the board and Mr. Cooney's expression of concern that someone representing a specific user group may not be objective. Is that to say, Mr. Richards asked, that by holding a guide license a board member doesn't represent that specific user group? He reiterated that this isn't personal, rather it sets a horrible precedent to have so many guides on the Board of Game.

[1:59:56 PM](#)

JEFF GARNES testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game. He noted that he is an environmental engineer and a Samish Indian Nation tribal member. He qualified that he is speaking as a private citizen, but because he sits on the Alaska State Board of Registration for

Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors he is familiar with what it takes to be on a board. He stated that he is a current board member of Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK), and having worked with Ms. Cusack for many years he can attest that she is a hunter to the core for both sport and subsistence. He said Ms. Cusack has a history of service in conservation, hunter education, and hunter rights and access issues, as well as providing veterans with opportunities to hunt. She has a tremendous personal commitment to this, he continued, and she is level-headed and will bring a woman's perspective, which is important.

[2:02:07 PM](#)

MIKE SEWRIGHT, Board Member, Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK), testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game. He related he is now retired, but that as a former assistant attorney general for the State of Alaska Department of Law he advised and litigated for ADF&G, chiefly in state and federal subsistence and game management issues, so he is familiar with the issues presented to the Board of Game. He stated that he personally and SCI-AK strongly support all three appointees to the Board of Game because they will responsibly manage Alaska's wildlife resources and make balanced decisions in the best interest of all user groups. He said Ms. Cusack has been a very engaged vice president of SCI-AK, and has shown initiative, energy, hard work, and professional practicality in the interest of Alaska's wildlife populations, together with supporting ADF&G wildlife conservation initiatives and hunter education. He stated that Ms. Cusack is a hunter who understands the concept of sustainable wildlife populations first, regardless of pressures from hunting or other influences. He added that he does not see Ms. Cusack favoring guiding interests as she is more of a subsistence user than a recreational hunter and has a broad perspective.

[2:05:49 PM](#)

WILLIAM SCHENK, during the confirmation hearing on appointees to the Board of Game, urged that there be more diversity on the board. He stated he doesn't mean to detract from any of the qualified people who have volunteered to be on the Board of Game. However, he continued, he feels that commercial interests are being overly represented on the Board of Game and he would like to see more diversity and more decisions based on biology rather than politics.

2:07:14 PM

GARY GEARHART, Regional Representative, Safari Club International (SCI), testified in support of the appointment of Ruth Cusack to the Board of Game. He stated that Ms. Cusack is a passionate individual, a remote hunter, works hard within hunting organizations, and volunteers with organizations that promote hunting and women and children being outdoors. He said she pays attention to the issues that appeal to all outdoor users, including fishermen, bird watchers, and backpackers, and she will consider those concerns and issue a decision that will benefit all users. Ms. Cusack will responsibly manage Alaska's wildlife resources, he added, and make balanced decisions in the best interest of all user groups.

2:09:51 PM

JENNIFER YUHAF testified in support of the appointments of Ruth Cusack and Al Barrette to the Board of Game. She said both appointees are well rounded individuals who each represent a diversity of interests. She maintained that the way these two appointees have been criticized for possessing a guide license for limited areas and limited species is unfair and equivalent to saying that possessing a driver's license would exclude a person from participating in a green energy panel or a public transportation panel. Ms. Yuhaf stated that as a hunter and hunter's advocate she has endured the same types of criticism, but she is also a birder and a photographer and has raised \$103,000 to put forth the viewing of bears at McNeil River Sanctuary. She said both appointees are well rounded and diverse, and she doesn't want those types of individuals to be discouraged from serving in a public capacity. Both appointees, she added, have shown that they will take their appointments seriously and take it as a measure of service, not their egos or self-interest. She stated that both appointees will dissect the ramifications of any decision on each of the people that would be affected.

2:12:13 PM

GEORGE PIERCE, during the confirmation hearing on appointees to the Board of Game, testified that only scientists or biologists should be appointed to the board. He stated that the people [applying] to the boards represent special interest groups and nonprofits, there has been no testifier on personal use or subsistence, and the governor is appointing guides to the Board

of Game. He said the idea of the Board of Game is to promote more game, but instead the board kills off all the predators. Animals need habitat, he specified, not another bunch of special use interest groups. When guides beg for the job on the board, he argued, they are representing their clients, not [the public]; only qualified scientists or biologists have a place on the fish and game boards. He maintained that putting in special interest groups has resulted in the loss of Alaska's fish and game and urged that this be stopped.

[2:14:46 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN clarified that, by law, legislators are to hear the names put forth by the governor, which is what the committee is doing today. Actions taken [by the committee] are not binding, she explained, and there will be a confirmation vote in a joint session for each [appointee].

MR. PIERCE responded that the appointees must be confirmed, and it is legislators that confirm them.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN responded that is correct. She reiterated that legislators are required by law to consider the names selected and put forth by the governor for the boards, and [the committee] is following what it is legally obligated to do in the process.

MR. PIERCE responded that it is the duty of legislators to represent Alaskans, not people representing out-of-state guides.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN stated she has not heard any concerns that any of the nominees are nonresidents.

[2:16:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK opined that of utmost importance to him is ensuring there are animals to put in the freezers of Alaskans, especially given the high [food] prices of the last few years.

[2:17:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on the appointees to the Board of Game and the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[2:17:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN stated that in accordance with Alaska Statute (AS) 39.05.080, the House Resources Standing Committee has reviewed the following names and recommends the appointments be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Clay Nordlum to the Big Game Commercial Services Board; and Ruth Cusack, James Cooney, and Al Barrette to the Board of Game. She pointed out that any signature here does not reflect the intent for any member to vote for or against the confirmation of individuals during any further sessions.

[2:19:03 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.