

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

April 16, 2021

3:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Joshua Revak, Chair
Senator Peter Micciche, Vice Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Scott Kawasaki

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Natasha von Imhof

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)

Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
Melvin Smith

- HEARD AND HELD

Board of Fisheries
John Jensen
Abe Williams
McKenzie Mitchell
John Wood
Marit Carlson-Van Dort

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

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

Anchorage, Alaska

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

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Fairbanks, Alaska

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

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and 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 and Game (ADF&G)

Willow, Alaska

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

MARIT CARLSON-VAN DORT, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Anchorage, Alaska

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

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Petersburg, Alaska

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

GILDA SAHELLOF, representing self

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Melvin Smith to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC).

ALANNAH HURLEY, representing self

Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries.

SHAG TRENT, representing self
King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries.

KATHERINE CARSCALLEN, representing self
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries.

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

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

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of all the appointees to the Board of Fisheries and the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

BARBARA REILLY, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to the appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:33:20 PM](#)

CHAIR JOSHUA REVAK called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:33 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Bishop, Kawasaki, Kiehl, Stevens, and Chair Revak. Senator Micciche arrived thereafter.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)
Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission
Board of Fisheries

[3:33:58 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK announced the considerations of governor appointees to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission and the Board of Fisheries

He stated that the function of the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission is to promote conservation and sustained yield management of fishery resources and to regulate and control entry into commercial fisheries.

CHAIR REVAK asked Melvin Smith to provide a brief background and tell the committee about his interest in serving on the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

3:35:10 PM

MELVIN SMITH, appointee, Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, expressed appreciation to the governor for appointing him to this position. He related that he was born in the small village of False Pass, and has been fishing since age six. At an early age he learned to operate a fishing vessel, set gear, navigate Alaska waters, and be a commercial fisherman. He was a commercial fisherman for more than 26 years before passing on his boat and fishing permits to his son. He emphasized that passing the torch is critical to address the greying of the fleet. He continues to have a thorough knowledge of the areas he fished, which were the Alaska Peninsula, Bering Sea, and the Gulf of Alaska. Thereafter and for more than 23 years he was the natural resource department manager for the Aleut Corporation. He was responsible for the corporation's land holdings, natural resources, and commercial real estate.

MR. SMITH advised that as a corporate manager he gained extensive experience working with various boards and commissions. He offered his belief that the skillset acquired in the corporate setting will serve him well as a CFEC commissioner. His goal is to utilize his years of management and knowledge of the fishing industry to help keep CFEC running smoothly, and to ensure that commercial fishing continues to be a viable industry for all Alaskans. He related that he had contact with the current commissioners and the executive director and has been briefed on matters that are relevant to CFEC. He concluded that he understands the duties but acknowledges that there is a lot to learn about the policies and procedures of the commission. He expressed hope the committee would support his appointment as the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

3:38:24 PM

SENATOR KIEHL asked if he thinks that fisheries around the state are insufficiently prosecuted or the numbers are off to the extent that there may be a problem with the fishery.

MR. SMITH replied he does believe some fisheries are distressed. He cited the Cook Inlet setnet fishery as an example and said some other fisheries merit scrutiny.

SENATOR KIEHL noted that with his appointment, this would be the first time the commission would not have an attorney member. He asked if that was a concern since the commission has a quasi-judicial role.

MR. SMITH replied he had no concerns because the CFEC has in-house legal representation and the attorney general also is available.

CHAIR REVAK thanked Mr. Smith for being willing to serve.

[3:41:40 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK turned to the Board of Fisheries nominees and explained that the board's function is the conservation and development of fishery resources for the state's commercial, sport, guided sport, and personal use fisheries. It also involves setting policy and direction. The board is charged with making allocative decisions, and the department manages based on those decisions.

[3:42:11 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK asked McKenzie Mitchell to provide a brief background and tell the committee about her interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries.

[3:42:35 PM](#)

MCKENZIE MITCHELL, appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Fairbanks, Alaska, stated she bought a one-way plane ticket to Alaska at age 20 and found work at a Kodiak hunting and fishing lodge for several years. During that time she acquired a captain's license, sport fishing guide license, and assistant big game hunting license. She found her calling working in the hunting and fishing industry but wanted an education as well so she enrolled in the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She majored in economics with an interdisciplinary minor in wilderness leadership and guiding services. She was introduced to resource economics during this time and felt compelled to obtain a graduate degree in resource and applied economics. Her research was focused on fisheries.

Having this degree prepared her use economic tools to evaluate the allocation and utilization of resources to achieve optimal environmental and social benefits. It also helped her understand the market and values associated with the environment and resource use as well as resource management decisions. She feels fortunate to live in Alaska that is endowed with incredible natural resources and is largely resource dependent.

MS. MITCHELL said much of her education centered on economic methods for valuing non-market goods. This is important when applied to resources because many resources provide utility but do not necessarily have direct or observable market prices. The process of how natural resources are allocated for consumptive purposes is of equal importance. She believes that allocative decisions intended to optimize social and environmental welfare over time require an evaluation of the resource and the user group by assigning values that may not be directly observable.

The commercial fishery in the state has important economic opportunities ranging from maintaining generational heritage of families and communities supplying fish to a world market. Subsistence and personal use fisheries in Alaska are important because the health of an economy and the strength of a state is greatly supported by the wellbeing of its people and their ability to feel unified under their tradition and belief system. The sport fishery is also important, and is helping maintain Alaska's status as a premier recreation travel destination.

MS. MITCHELL stated she currently teaches economics and recreation management at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks; works as a ground instructor at a flight school; and seasonally as a hunting and fishing guide. She is passionate about Alaska, its resources, and her Alaskan lifestyle. She would be honored to serve as a member of the Board of Fisheries. She understands the responsibility of helping to manage one of the best managed fisheries in the world.

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SENATOR MICCICHE joined the committee.

[3:47:44 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked how, as a board member, she balances the competing and controversial issues of sport fishing, commercial fishing, and subsistence fishing.

MS. MITCHELL answered it is on a case-by-case basis because every situation is different and each deserves due diligence to determine the appropriate allocative use of the resource.

SENATOR STEVENS requested she expand on the answer.

MS. MITCHELL explained that when making an allocative determination, the board considers subsistence use, dependency on subsistence, whether the area is remote and rural or more populated and accessible, the health of the resource, and competition between commercial and sport user groups, among other factors. Western Alaska along the Yukon River is remote and has more subsistence users whereas in areas like upper Cook Inlet, there is more competition between commercial and sport use. Each area requires a different focus and ultimately, it takes time to gain knowledge and understand the importance by user groups for particular species when trying to allocate according to the purpose of the board, which is to utilize, develop, and conserve the resource.

[3:50:13 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS expressed appreciation for the answer and her comments, and wished her good luck as a board member with this complex issue.

[3:50:45 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK thanked Ms. Mitchell and asked Abe Williams to provide a brief background and tell the committee about his interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries.

[3:51:25 PM](#)

ABE WILLIAMS, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, stated he was born and raised in King Salmon and has lived in Anchorage for the past 11 years. His experience includes: 15 years as president of a Native corporation, 3 years on the Bristol Bay Assembly, 6 years on the Bristol Bay School Board, 9 years on the Naknek/Kvichak Advisory Committee, 3 years on the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association, and he is a member of the Naknek Native Village tribe. He related that he currently is the director of regional affairs with The Pebble Partnership and he owns and operates a Bristol Bay commercial fishing business with his three sons. He is a fourth generation commercial fisherman. He and his family own and operate a business that services the commercial fishing industry.

MR. WILLIAMS asked the committee for its support for his nomination to the Board of Fisheries.

[3:52:55 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK asked him to speak to the concerns about his potential conflict of interest or influence in his objectivity due to his employment by The Pebble Partnership.

MR. WILLIAMS replied he was well aware of the concerns but he did not believe it was fair to discredit him as unethical because of his position with The Pebble Partnership. It does not reflect who he is or his moral compass. He added that he did not think the Board of Fisheries would be dealing with proposals or anything that would concern the Pebble project and how it moves forward.

CHAIR REVAK thanked him for the response.

[3:55:17 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked him to comment on two prevalent complaints about his appointment: 1) he is considered an out of region advocate when Bristol Bay typically has had a regional advocate on the board; and

2) he seems to represent the wealthier, DE boat fishermen with an interest in increasing the boat length beyond 32 feet.

MR. WILLIAMS said he recognizes that some in the region do not support him and some of the objection relates to the dual permit proposals he has put forward. He refuted the second complaint maintaining he had never talked about lengthening a 32 foot boat, but he did think there was merit to the idea. To the claim that he represents wealthier fishermen, he said he leased permits before he could purchase his own. He started small but was consistently a top producer and that got him where he is today in the fishery. He explained his view of permit stacking is that it allows fishermen to be more resourceful and profitable in a fishery that fluctuates drastically.

[4:00:44 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked for an explanation of his position as a director with The Pebble Partnership.

MR. WILLIAMS answered that as the director of regional affairs, he engages with stakeholders in the region, including fishermen, to learn about their concerns. "I'm mostly a conduit between the

project and understanding concerns in communities throughout the region."

CHAIR REVAK thanked Mr. Williams and asked John Wood to provide a brief background and tell the committee about his interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries.

4:02:20 PM

JOHN WOOD, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Willow, Alaska, stated that in 2013 he handled fishery issues for Senator Dunleavy's office. He attended pertinent Board of Fisheries sessions and traveled on his own time and nickel to visit fishing sites to speak to and get the perspective of East Side setnetters and processing facilities. His focus was entirely on the health of the fish stock and the return to historical levels in both size and numbers of all species. He said that remains his emphasis and overriding goal.

MR. WOOD stated he reached out to stakeholders after his initial appointment, and on his own nickel and time he attended the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council meeting in Homer. On that trip he met and discussed issues of concern with a broad number of individuals and groups. He offered highlights of the different meetings. He related that his approach was to listen and learn and act as a catalyst to bring parties together to find solutions.

MR. WOOD asked the committee for its support and said he would submit his comments in writing.

4:06:29 PM

SENATOR KIEHL asked if the contract he had with the governor when he came before the committee last year was still in effect.

MR. WOOD answered yes, but it was unrelated to fisheries.

SENATOR KIEHL asked if he was doing work under that contract at this time.

MR. WOOD answered yes.

SENATOR KIEHL asked if he had talked about fish and the fisheries with the governor lately.

MR. WOOD answered no.

SENATOR KIEHL mentioned the concentration of board members within a 100 mile radius, and asked how well the board reflects the interests of all Alaskans today.

MR. WOOD offered his belief that experience and knowledge of the issues and areas was more important than where board members live.

SENATOR KIEHL commented that his take was remarkable.

[4:08:26 PM](#)

SENATOR BISHOP mentioned the continuing critical lack of fish running up the Yukon and asked him to keep an open mind about helping the people in that area as much as possible.

MR. WOOD said he was committed to do what he could to help get the returns up to the numbers they should be so the users have a reliable and consistent source of fish.

[4:09:48 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked when the board was going to take a more comprehensive cradle to grave approach to managing fish to understand where the fry go and what happens to them before they return to their natal stream or river as mature fish. This would be beneficial to fishermen, in Cook Inlet for example, who find themselves fighting their neighbors over the comparatively few mature fish that return.

MR. WOOD stated support for that approach but pointed out that the Board of Fisheries only has jurisdiction on the cradle and the grave, not what happens in the ocean. He suggested the legislature might help elicit interest at the federal level to do research and gather data to better understand what is happening to fish runs in the blue water. He added that he did not believe the board's goal was to have neighbors fighting neighbors, but allocation decisions in a mixed stock fishery such as Cook Inlet, can cause conflict. He said his primary focus is to get fish back into the streams in sufficient numbers to provide a consistent harvest.

[4:13:27 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said his question was not about allocation, but about a more comprehensive approach to management. He pointed out that not all fishery impacts occur in the blue water. Without a more comprehensive approach, other areas of the state will see competition like Cook Inlet is experiencing. He

reiterated, "We really need to think about not pitting end-of-the-line-neighbor against end-of-the-line-neighbor.

4:15:12 PM

CHAIR REVAK thanked Mr. Wood and asked Marit Carlson-Van Dort to provide a brief background and tell the committee about her interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries.

4:15:32 PM

MARIT CARLSON-VAN DORT, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, stated she was born and raised in Alaska, Juneau in the winter for school and Chignik Bay in the summer fishing with the extended family. Since 2015, she has lived in Anchorage. She explained that Chignik is a small village with a long fishing history, primarily sockeye salmon. She started seining with her grandfather at age 14 and continued to do that for 13 years. She is also a lifelong subsistence fisherman. After high school, she earned a bachelor's degree in conservation biology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. She concentrated her studies in fishery science and ecology. Returning to Alaska, she continued her studies at the University of Alaska, Southeast in fisheries science and secondary education with a math/science emphasis. She taught physical science and oceanography at Juneau Douglas High School for a year.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT stated that how Alaska taxes, manages, and uses its resources has been central in her personal and professional interest. Work experience in this area include legislative staff to the Resources Committee, legislative liaison for the Department of Natural Resources, and private sector work in public and government affairs and areas associated with state and federal regulation, environmental policy, permitting, development, and community outreach and engagement. She is currently employed as the president and CEO for Far West Inc., which is the Native corporation for Chignik Bay. The corporation's board of directors recognizes that managing their lands for subsistence and cultural resources is the best use of that land. As such, the corporation derives no revenue from fisheries.

4:18:54 PM

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT related that her interest in serving on the Board of Fisheries stems from what seems to be a dramatic shift in recent years in the behavior and population of many of Alaska's fish runs. She is interested in learning about the cause of these changes and ensuring that fisheries management

policies are appropriately responsive to local observations and what is reflected in the scientific data. She emphasized the importance of management for long term sustainability. First, sufficient numbers of fish are returning and reproducing to renew the wild populations. Second, management must be based on maximum sustained use yield principals, while ensuring that Alaska's subsistence use priority is being upheld.

She stated support for the commercial fishing industry in Alaska as an important part of the economy and bolstering food security. She said she recognizes the value and importance of Alaska's subsistence, commercial, sport fishing, and personal use fisheries to the culture and economies of Alaska communities, particularly rural communities.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT thanked the chair for the latitude to address the controversies her appointment elicited, calling them misrepresentations and falsehoods.

First the assertion she occupies a commercial fishing seat. She explained that she was appointed in the spring of 2019 to fill the remaining three years of Orville Huntington's seat when he moved to the Board of Game. While there are no designated seats, he was recognized as filling a so-called subsistence seat. John Jensen, Chris Johnson, and Gerad Godfrey were recognized as occupying commercial fish seats, and Reed Morrissey, Israel Payton, and John Wood occupied sport fishery seats. The board appointments under consideration now would maintain the seat she occupies as a subsistence seat.

Second, the assertion that she did not provide valid justification for her vote, and that she arrived at the Upper Cook Inlet meeting with her mind made up. She maintained that she provided plenty of justification for the proposals she supported and did not support. Furthermore, the claim that she supported sport fish proposals over commercial fish was inaccurate. She did not arrive with her mind made up. She asked questions of the department staff and the public and she worked hard to broker a compromise between commercial and sport fish interests on a proposal addressing late run Kenai King salmon conservation concerns. She emphasized that this was the process and type of communication that stakeholders value in board members.

Third, the assertion that commercial fishermen are frustrated that she does not engage. She said that was a surprise because she made herself available and participated with groups and

individuals on many occasions including: leadership, members, a panel discussion hosted during the virtual Fish Expo, the Kodiak Salmon Working Group, Cook Inlet drift fishermen and setnetters, sport fish guides and conservation groups from the Lower Cook Inlet to the MatSu Valley, Southeast commercial fishing interests, Chignik area stakeholders, hatchery representatives, and Alaska Native regional corporation members and tribes. She said she has done her best to be available to Alaskans because they deserve no less.

Fourth, the assertion that she was a vote solely for Chignik fishermen, shareholders, and directors of the Chignik Village Corporation. She pointed out that the corporation has some shareholders who hold Chignik permits and others who are Kodiak permit holders. She said the board made a very difficult and unpopular allocation decision to decrease the time and allocation percentage for the Kodiak fleet in their prosecution of a very specific fishery on a struggling Chignik run that has failed to meet minimum escapement goals for the past three years. There is no evidence that she colluded with family members and she did not work with a cousin or anybody else to craft and submit proposals to the board. To the accusation that she colluded with her uncle to transfer his permit to alleviate a conflict of interest prior to the Kodiak meeting, she said she had no knowledge of the transfer of that seine permit and he submitted a sworn affidavit to the committee affirming the facts. She added that when she drafted her ethics disclosures she checked with the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission website to ensure her disclosures were accurate. In two prior meetings she disclosed that her uncle held a permit and at the Kodiak meeting she disclosed that he had held a Chignik permit. Prior to deliberations, she further disclosed that a first cousin submitted proposals that were before the board. She consulted with the Department of Law and the chair of the board as the ethics supervisor on all the disclosures and was advised there was no conflict of interest under the Executive Ethic Act so she was allowed to participate.

Finally, she used the term "we" when she referred to the loss of two processing plants in the community of Chignik. She admitted that was a mistake, but disputed the allegation that it was proof that she did not draft her own comments. She said she worked hard to draft her comments and reviewed department data related to the proposals. She said she worked with the Chignik stakeholder group to ensure the intent and effect of the proposed policy change was accurate, but not until after she heard the staff report, public testimony, and information that

was provided during the committee of the whole process. That is the job of a board member, just as any changes in policy or management plans are board decisions.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT pointed out that many Alaskans have deep and meaningful ties throughout the state, and said that should not preclude qualified candidates from consideration. She said she was honored to be the first woman and the first Alaska Native woman to be elected as chair of the Board of Fisheries, and she would like to give back by continuing to serve on the board.

CHAIR REVAK said he appreciated that she had reached out to his office to request additional time.

[4:27:21 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked her to comment further on the difficult decisions the board faces to balance the competitive interests by different user groups.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT responded that the decisions are incredibly difficult. She explained that her approach is to first look at whether there is a conservation issue, because the fish come first. Second, the board looks at how to sustain a harvestable surplus, taking the subsistence priority in law into consideration. When evaluating allocative decisions, she said she tries to look at the totality of the issue such as whether other fisheries in the area are available for harvest; the job opportunities in the particular area where people are living; trends over time; and whether the science supports the assertions being made, including genetic data and historic tagging studies.

[4:29:59 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL advised that his question related to the serious concern about whether all the facets of Alaska's fishing community believe they have representation on the board. He said it was very worrisome that a previous nominee discounted the concern saying he was familiar with both Anchorage and MatSu. He asked her to talk about her role and why there was so much concern about her appointment.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT said she believes that board members should represent the interests of the fish and all Alaskans, and that there is a difference between representing a specific interest and having that experience represented on the board. Consideration should be given to where board members live

experience has been, rather than where they physically reside today.

4:33:09 PM

SENATOR KIEHL asked her to comment on the concern he was hearing about who had her ear and what group or area she was advocating for.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT replied she had done her best to be available to anyone who wanted to meet and she had tried to reach out to get additional information about proposals that were put forward. She reemphasized the importance of local and traditional knowledge because nobody understands the resource better. She tried to be objective in evaluating the 300 some proposals that came before the board over the last year, always taking science into consideration.

4:35:20 PM

SENATOR MICCICHE commented that members of the Board of Fisheries do in fact over time fall into a slot of voting in a particular way. He said board members are under tremendous pressure by public lobbyists, various special interest groups, and the administration when they are trying to make the best decisions possible, but he knows for a fact that not every board member has chosen what they believe is right because of all that pressure. He asked how she believes she can make the best decision under that collective pressure.

4:38:33 PM

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT agreed that board meetings generally are a very intense environment. She said she recognizes the different interests, but ultimately she relies on the data the department provides and conversations with managers and department staff. Decisions should largely be based on that information. The component of local and traditional knowledge is also very important in informing individual board member decisions, as is participation from the advisory committee. She related that her approach is to be available in the early part of the meeting, but the night before deliberations she spends time looking through and digesting all the materials, so she can make the best decision based on the information. She acknowledged that not everybody would agree on any one decision, and some individuals and interest groups might be very unhappy. That is part of the job, she said.

SENATOR MICCICHE asked what the Board of Fisheries can do to ensure they receive reliable and apolitical information from the department that actually puts the fish first.

MS. CARLSON-VAN DORT answered that her approach would be to ask for information and talk with managers throughout the year rather than just before or during a meeting.

CHAIR REVAK thanked Ms. Carlson-Van Dort for being willing to continue to serve.

[4:43:43 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK asked John Jensen to provide a brief background and tell the committee about her interest in continuing to serve on the Board of Fisheries.

[4:44:08 PM](#)

JOHN JENSEN, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Petersburg, Alaska, stated it was an honor to be reappointed to serve a seventh term on the Board of Fisheries. He related he has more than 50 years of professional experience as a commercial fisherman, permit owner, and hired captain of larger fishing vessels. He has participated in multiple fishery gear types and species throughout coastal Alaska. Since 2010 he has operated a seasonal self-guided skiff business for sport fishing, hunting, camping, whale watching, glacier viewing, and local exploration. As a lifetime resident in coastal Alaska, he has experienced all aspects of historical dependence on fisheries resources, including personal, subsistence, recreational, sport, and commercial fishing. He has a keen interest in the regulatory process, and he supports all efforts to maintain the customary and traditional lifestyles for all users in Alaska, and to continually strengthen the economies of coastal communities and ports of call for the fishing fleet. His enthusiasm for the work of the Board of Fisheries never waivers.

MR. JENSEN related his overarching goal is to work to provide sustainable fisheries for all user groups in the state. After 19 years on the board, he has a deep understanding of the regulatory process for Alaska's managed fisheries. As a commercial fisherman he is able to contribute a working knowledge of the fishing industry statewide. He said he strongly advocates for fair and equitable allocation of the resource by user groups based on the best science available.

MR. JENSEN said he was committed to play a positive role in addressing the significant challenges ahead while upholding the goal of sustainability, fair allocation, conservation, preservation of lifestyles, and economic resilience of communities for all participants.

MR. JENSEN added that, as a member of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, he recently participated in the decision to close the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters of Cook Inlet. He explained that the issue started when a commercial fish organization filed a federal lawsuit seeking more federal oversight of these waters. The state intervened in opposition and the federal court ordered the council to amend the existing fishery management plan. He opined that allowing federal oversight of mixed stock fisheries has the potential to significantly impact the fisheries in state waters because the fisheries under review are first in line mixed stock fisheries. This could also potentially result in allocation shifts to already fully allocated fisheries in Cook Inlet, and potentially impact the current management plans designed to protect weaker recovering stocks. He posited a solution would be to insert the word "federal" in Section 302(h)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

CHAIR REVAK thanked him for being willing to continue to serve.

[4:50:38 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK opened public testimony on the nominations to the Board of Fisheries and the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. He noted the time limitation today and advised that public testimony would be held open to the next meeting so everyone could be heard.

[4:51:42 PM](#)

GILDA SAHELLOF, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Melvin Smith to the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC). She and Mr. Smith are both from False Pass and she has known him her entire life. He has a lot of knowledge about the fisheries and will make a good commissioner.

[4:52:53 PM](#)

ALANNAH HURLEY, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, stated she is a Bristol Bay setnetter who believes Abe Williams's conflict of interest due to his work for The Pebble Partnership should preclude him from serving on the Board of Fisheries. The primary role of the board is to conserve and develop fishery resources in the state so his appointment makes no sense.

[4:53:57 PM](#)

SHAG TRENT, representing self, King Salmon, Alaska, emphatically stated that an employee of The Pebble Partnership should not serve on a board that is tasked with managing the fishery resource of the state. Mr. Williams has an obvious bias toward developing Bristol Bay, and his approach to development in other areas of the state where it conflicts with the salmon resource should be questioned as well. He urged the legislature to reject his name and ask the governor to find a more suitable candidate. He concluded that Abe Williams cannot be trusted to put fish first.

[4:54:57 PM](#)

KATHERINE CARSCALLEN, representing self, Dillingham, Alaska, related that she was born and raised in Dillingham in a commercial and subsistence family, and she has operated a drift boat for ten years. She first participated in a Board of Fisheries meeting in 2009 to support habitat protection for Bristol Bay from the Pebble mine. Board members were open minded and accessible, and that shaped her understanding and respect for the Board of Fisheries process. She has attended every meeting since then. To the question of whether Mr. Williams' connection to the mine is relevant to his nomination, she offered her belief that his decade of work promoting a project that would directly remove essential habitat to the region's fishery as at odds with the guiding principals of the sustainable salmon policy board members are expected to uphold.

MS. CARSCALLEN charged that Mr. Williams consistently misrepresented the views of commercial fishermen, often falsely presenting them as divided on an issue. Furthermore, he wasted fishermen's resources by bringing a Pebble-funded lawsuit against the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association. She offered her belief that if appointed, he would continue to misrepresent support for the mine among the fishing industry. She said she has no doubt that if her introduction to the board had put her before a member with as clear a conflict of interest as Mr. Williams has on this issue, her assumption would have been that politics has a greater role on this board than public input and science. She said that is the question before this legislature and the committee. Governor Dunleavy's appointment of Mr. Williams was a political maneuver in support of the Pebble mine, and to allow that level of politics on a board that is so important to Alaska's fisheries would be an abdication of the legislative role of checks and balances.

MS. CARSCALLEN asked the committee to reject the nomination of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries.

4:57:45 PM

SUSAN DOHERTY, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Seiners Association (SASA), Ketchikan, Alaska, stated that the Board of Fisheries was established as an open process to give user groups an equal voice in the decisions that affect resources. This process relies on the expectation that everyone is heard and has an opportunity for the board's ear. She said the outcry about a particular appointment is not because people are upset that a ruling was made against one group over another, it's about the expectation, oath and commitment to be unbiased and impartial. People are upset because it was clearly demonstrated that they had no real opportunity at the meeting to have their side heard. They were shut out and one board member had already made up their mind. This was the loud and clear message. She said the board process only works when members commit to being open to all users and develop trust with all user groups. This trust was violated, thus the angry and frustrated testimony to not confirm Marit Carlson-Van Dort. She asked the committee and legislature to hear the cries and restore the trust in the Board of Fisheries process that is vitally important to the livelihood of fishermen.

5:00:19 PM

BEN MOHR, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA), Soldotna, Alaska, stated that KRSA supports all the governor appointees before the committee today because they represent a balance between the sport, commercial, personal use, and subsistence user groups. John Jensen, John Wood and Marit Carlson-Van Dort clearly understand that service on the board is a public trust responsibility. Their decisions are answerable to all Alaskans. During the 2020 meeting they were accessible to the public and provided thoughtful consideration of all perspectives. Chair Carlson-Van Dort has been a welcome presence. Her upbringing in Chignik and Juneau and her background in subsistence and commercial fisheries help inform her decision making, but not an unfair bias. She has a preference for accuracy and precision in management and for ensuring long term sustainability of the fisheries. She takes up issues based on their merit and the best available information.

MR. MOHR highlighted that John Wood has exhibited a desire for equity and inclusiveness. He brought people together at the Upper Cook Inlet meeting, consistently working for collaboration to reach the ultimate board goal to conserve and develop the

state's fishery resources. He said John Jensen has served the state with distinction for many years in his role on the Board of Fisheries. His experience and knowledge of Alaska fisheries is an asset to the state. He said McKenzie Mitchell brings a fresh perspective to the board that will serve Alaska well. Her role as an economist will influence her decision making and help fulfill the goal of the board to conserve and develop fisheries. He offered his understanding that Abe Williams has actively participated in the Bristol Bay commercial drift fishery for about 30 years. His experience will be invaluable to the board.

CHAIR REVAK asked those who were unable to testify today to call in again on Monday.

[5:03:52 PM](#)

BARBARA REILLY, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, testified in opposition to the appointment of Abe Williams to the Board of Fisheries. She reported that she has master's degrees in marine science and environmental engineering, and she worked as the sediment disposal expert and the environmental compliance officer for the Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska district for 20 years. She listed the medals she has received for her work. Based on her credentials and experience, she found Abe Williams an unsatisfactory appointment to a seat on the Board of Fisheries. She noted that the personal history he provided was detailed but it omitted his Pebble mine experience, and that demonstrates a lack of transparency. His service on the board would be an alarming conflict of interest because he is the regional director of The Pebble Partnership and has been an ardent champion of that project for more than a decade. His nomination is a reflection of Governor Dunleavy's efforts to promote the Pebble mine despite Alaskans' widespread opposition. She pointed out that the appointment also reduces rural representation in state fisheries management decisions. Mr. Williams is an Anchorage resident and this seat has traditionally been held by a Bristol Bay resident.

[5:06:38 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK announced that public testimony would remain open.

[5:07:37 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Revak adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 5:07 p.m.