

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

February 9, 2022

3:40 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

Big Game Commercial Services Board
Clay Nordlum - Kotzebue

-CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Game
James Cooney - Eagle River

-CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

CLAY NORDLUM, Appointee
Big Game Commercial Services Board
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Kotzebue, Alaska

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

JAMES COONEY, Appointee
Board of Game
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Eagle River, Alaska

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

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR JOSHUA REVAK called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Kiehl, von Imhof, Micciche, Kawasaki, and Chair Revak. Senator Bishop arrived shortly thereafter.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) **Big Game Commercial Services Board**

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CHAIR REVAK announced the consideration of the governor's appointee to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. He called on appointee Clay Nordlum to provide his testimony.

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CLAY NORDLUM, Appointee, Big Game Commercial Services Board, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, Kotzebue, Alaska, stated he is a NANA shareholder, Air Force veteran, and private pilot. He grew up in Kotzebue gold mining, hunting, and fishing. He resided in Anchorage for ten years and while there, he did a lot of hunting and fishing. He moved back to Kotzebue ten years ago, is raising a family, and is getting more involved in the community and state. He would like to serve on the Big Game Commercial Services Board for these reasons.

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SENATOR VON IMHOF asked whether he likes to camp with the family, sightsee, hunt, or do other flying activities with his plane.

MR. Nordlum answered all of the above. He would fly to hunt, fish, enjoy family outings and explore the Northwest Arctic area. He bought a house a few years ago and for financial reasons, he sold his plane and has not flown for a few years.

SENATOR VON IMHOF emphasized that a pilot's license/plane is an excellent asset, especially in remote locations. It is a good way to see and experience the state.

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CHAIR REVAK thanked Mr. Nordlum for his service in the Air Force and inquired about his military history.

MR. Nordlum responded that he joined the Air Force as a security forces member shortly after high school. Duties of security forces include base defense and policing. He trained in San Antonio, was stationed in California for a year, served a three-month tour in Saudi Arabia, was stationed in Korea, and finished his four-year career at Elmendorf Air Force Base.

CHAIR REVAK asked Mr. Nordlum what he hopes to add to the board and what aspects of serving he finds particularly interesting.

MR. Nordlum answered that he brings a levelheaded approach. He loves getting outdoors and using the land, whether in a national park or on private land. He expressed his hope that as a NANA shareholder, he would bring the voice of rural Alaskans and their challenges, especially issues related to land.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked what issues he would like to delve into and what challenges might be encountered with commercial service providers.

MR. Nordlum responded that in unit 23 specifically, there has been a decline in the caribou population. It is always an issue. He has experience all over the state and wants to be the voice for people that sometimes do not feel heard.

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SENATOR BISHOP joined the committee.

Board of Game

[3:47:45 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK announced the consideration of the governor's appointee James Cooney to the Board of Game.

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JAMES COONEY, Appointee, Eagle River, Alaska, testified as the governor's appointee to the Board of Game, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. He moved to Alaska in 2004 after graduating with

a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Gonzaga University and being commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. He started serving as an active-duty armor officer with the 172nd Stryker Brigade combat team at Fort Wainwright. His first choice of duty station was Alaska. It was a childhood dream to hunt in Alaska, so after serving a 16-month tour in Iraq, he returned to Alaska, bought a home in Eagle River, and pursued his dream. He was honorably discharged from the Army after 4.5 years of service and currently serves as an Army civilian at the U.S. Army Alaska Headquarters. He has about 17.5 years of combined military and civilian service. He hunts whenever possible and has been living out his childhood dream here in Alaska for the past 17.5 years. Hunting has been a conduit to see places, meet people, and establish relationships that otherwise might never have occurred. A passion for hunting and a service-oriented attitude led to volunteering and raising funds for wildlife conservation with Safari Club International - Alaska Chapter and the Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation. He served as the Safari Club International - Alaska Chapter board director from 2015 to 2017. He served as director of the Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation board from 2017 to the present. He expressed pride in his volunteer work and for raising fund that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will use for wildlife conservation.

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CHAIR REVAK commented that he and Mr. Cooney served on the board together. He said that the appointee had an impressive resume, and he expressed his surprise to discover that Mr. Cooney was an Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America. He thanked Mr. Cooney for his service to the nation and the state.

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SENATOR KAWASAKI noticed that Mr. Cooney disclosed, on the Public Official Financial (POF) disclosure form, a phone number with a 509 area code. He asked Mr. Cooney if he currently lives in Alaska.

MR. COONEY responded that he bought a house in Eagle River in 2007. He has lived there since 2007, except for one year spent as a volunteer army civilian in Afghanistan alongside soldiers in the U.S. Forces Afghanistan Headquarters building.

SENATOR KAWASAKI noticed a blank "homeownership interest" field on the POF disclosure form. He asked Mr. Cooney whether the ownership interest was 100 percent.

MR. COONEY answered the only property he owns is in Eagle River, so it was an oversight if the field was blank.

SENATOR KAWASAKI joked about whether the Zags [Gonzaga Bulldogs] were going all the way in March Madness.

MR. COONEY answered hopefully, fingers-crossed the Zags will compete for another national championship.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked Mr. Cooney to clarify when he worked as an assistant hunting guide, which units, and species.

MR. COONEY expressed his belief that he has held an assistant guide license since 2011. He has about 1.5 years of guiding experience, guiding approximately six hunters between spring 2014 and fall 2015. He guided in unit GMU9 for brown bears in spring 2014. He guided on the Mulchatna River for grizzly bears and in unit GMU19C for sheep in fall 2014. He guided two clients for sheep in unit GMU19 in 2015.

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SENATOR KIEHL expressed jealousy that Mr. Cooney drew a musk ox permit and asked whether the permit was used.

MR. COONEY replied that his father drew the permit; they share the same name. Due to COVID-19, they were unable to travel to Nunivak Island to use the musk ox permit. One of the more special activities in his life has been hunting with his father, so it was a great disappointment to miss that hunt. His father inspired him to do hunting and wildlife conservation volunteer work. When he started, he had no idea that wildlife conservation would become the passion that it has.

SENATOR KIEHL stated that with that answer, he was sympathetic to Mr. Cooney and his father instead of bitter.

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CHAIR REVAK commented that Mr. Cooney was an active Safari Club International board member who put in considerable personal time. He asked Mr. Cooney to describe the experience he gained from serving, how those experiences might translate as a board member, and whether he had goals for the Board of Game.

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MR. COONEY said the most important experience has been building relationships with local Alaskans and other like-minded

individuals interested in conserving wildlife. He served on the live auction committee, soliciting donors throughout Alaska, the Lower 48, and overseas to sponsor the Safari Club's live auction banquet. The organization raised money for wildlife conservation, and he created connections with people interested in ensuring regenerative capacity. He picked up listening skills by listening to the public, advisory committees (ACs), and other testimony. He also gained a good understanding of proposals to sustain Alaska's future wildlife resource.

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SENATOR BISHOP commended Mr. Cooney for stepping up to serve. He inquired about his philosophy on antlerless moose hunts.

MR. COONEY answered that antlerless moose hunts are a useful tool to control moose populations in specifically approved units. The department recently approved a couple of antlerless moose hunts to control cow numbers. Antlerless hunt permits address overgrazing, disease, and starvation die-off conditions to increase the overall strength of the herd. He expressed support for tools the board and department recommend that sustain good, healthy GMU populations.

SENATOR BISHOP asked whether he always takes department recommendations at face value or is inclined to ask questions, dig deeper, and explore data before making decisions.

MR. COONEY replied that the department provides the board with plenty of data; however, it is incumbent upon members to objectively read information to make informed decisions on proposals. He expressed his belief that the board functions well because members have the intelligence to know they must review all data objectively. The review includes considering information from the public, the department, and the advisory committees. Sometimes department data is not up to date, so the board relies on advisory committees to supply information about what is happening on the ground. Advisory committees see what is occurring in the field as they are out in the units every year. They provide valuable information. Sometimes members have to make difficult decisions, such as whether or not there will be a biological impact on a resource if a specific proposal is adopted.

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CHAIR REVAK thanked Mr. Cooney for willingly serving the state on the Board of Game and his service with all other charitable work.

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At ease.

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CHAIR REVAK reconvened the meeting.

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CHAIR REVAK opened public testimony for both Clay Nordlum, Big Game Commercial Services Board, and James Cooney, Board of Game; finding none, he closed public testimony.

CHAIR REVAK solicited a motion.

[4:03:32 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to forward the following named appointees to a joint session of the legislature for consideration:

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Clay Nordlum - Kotzebue

Board of Game

James Cooney - Eagle River

[4:03:42 PM](#)

CHAIR REVAK stated that without objection, the motion passes. In accordance with AS 39.05.080, a signature on the report does not reflect an intent by any of the members to vote for or against the confirmation of the individuals during any further sessions.

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There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Revak adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:04 p.m.