

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 13, 2023
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Representative Sarah Vance, Chair
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Rebecca Himschoot

HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Tom McKay, Chair
Representative George Rauscher, Vice Chair
Representative Stanley Wright
Representative Jennie Armstrong
Representative Donna Mears

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

Representative Ben Carpenter
Representative Craig Johnson

HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Josiah Patkotak
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Maxine Dibert

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Julie Coulombe

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Fisheries

Greg Svendsen - Anchorage
Mike Wood - Talkeetna
Gerad Godfrey - Eagle River
Stanley Zuray - Tanana

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

GREG SVENDSEN, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Anchorage, Alaska

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

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE CRONK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Asked questions during the confirmation hearing for appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

GERAD GODFREY, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Eagle River, Alaska

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

STANLEY ZURAY, Appointee
Board of Fisheries
Tanana, Alaska

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

FORREST BRADEN, Executive Director
Southeast Alaska Guides Organization
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

PAUL A. SHADURA II, representing self
Kalifornsky, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

GARY HOLLIER, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

TAD FUJIOKA, representing self
Sitka Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified that a coastal region be represented on the board.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[6:00:57 PM](#)

CHAIR SARAH VANCE called the joint meeting of the House Special Committee on Fisheries and the House Resources Standing Committee to order at 6:00 p.m. Representatives McCabe, Armstrong, Rauscher, and McKay from the House Resources Standing Committee and Representatives Himschoot, Stutes, McCormick, and Vance from the House Special Committee on Fisheries were present at the call to order. Representatives Wright and Mears from the House Resources Standing Committee and Representative Carpenter from the House Special Committee on Fisheries arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present were Representatives Cronk and Coulombe.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S): **Board of Fisheries**

[6:02:16 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE announced that the only order of business would be the confirmation hearings on the governor's appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

[6:03:23 PM](#)

GREG SVENDSEN, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, testified as an appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He stated he is a lifelong Alaskan, a graduate of what is now Alaska Pacific University

(APU) with a master's degree in teaching. He stated that he taught for 13 years in Anchorage, and then he became involved in building and developing. He said he has an airplane, is a pilot, and has fished in streams throughout Alaska. He related that he was asked to submit his name for the Board of Fisheries and decided he would do so to give back to Alaska. He noted that he has had over 50 articles published on fishing and other issues. He submitted that the most important thing he sees for the Board of Fisheries is to conserve and develop the resource for all Alaskans.

MR. SVENDSEN specified that another reason for his application to the board is to urge that regulations be written simply, so people can understand them. He disclosed that in 1996, while hunting caribou in [Game Management Unit (GMU)] 9B, he harvested a bear, but he had misread the regulations. After taking the bear to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), he was informed that [the bear season] in GMU 9B was open for subsistence but not regular hunting. He stated that this information had been written in the regulations for GMU 9A, which he had not read. He stated that he had never committed a violation before, and the judge had understood his confusion. He noted that the next year ADF&G changed the regulation and called it the "Greg Svendsen Amendment." He expressed the belief that the violation is still on his record even though it should have been expunged after a year with no violations.

[6:10:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES noted that there has been legislation proposed [SB 128] to reverse a decision made by the Board of Fisheries on the Area M situation. She invited any comments on this.

MR. SVENDSEN replied that he does not quite understand the legal process behind this and cannot comment. He expressed the understanding that the board's job is to make decisions, but it is the legislature's prerogative to overrule the board. He said if he were on the board, he would look at all the information before making any decision.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES asked whether the threat of the legislature overriding a Board of Fisheries decision sends up a red flag to Mr. Svendsen.

MR. SVENDSEN expressed understanding; however, he conceded that this is a difficult question, as it is a "slippery slope." He

stated that he does not know the legal implications, such as whether the legislature is allowed to do this, or whether these decisions should be left to the board.

6:13:18 PM

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked about Mr. Svendsen's understanding of the board's policy on "intercept fisheries."

MR. SVENDSEN answered that his understanding is that the fish return to where they were spawned. He opined that the fish should be allowed to return and not be intercepted by some other fishery. He said he could not second guess the board's decision in [Area] M because he was not privy to the information. He continued that when these kinds of decisions come up, he will take everything into account to make the best decision.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked who Mr. Svendsen would say owns Alaska's salmon.

MR. SVENDSEN replied, "The people."

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE [requested Mr. Svendsen's thoughts] about the importance of subsistence to Native Alaskans.

MR. SVENDSEN expressed the importance of this as their food and subsistence.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted that some people say hatcheries are important and some say hatcheries are damaging. He inquired about Mr. Svendsen's position and understanding of this.

MR. SVENDSEN answered that if Alaska has hatcheries, they should be on the streams and the hatchery fish should come only from those streams. According to studies, he related, if fish from other areas are pushed into a stream it would not take much time before the wild fish are bred out of the whole pool. Hatcheries are a good idea if the stock fish of that river are used, he continued, because over time it will build up and be all wild fish. He said he is concerned about the dumping of fish into Prince William Sound because the silver and king salmon eat the bait fish. He expressed the understanding that red salmon, he continued, eat zooplankton, and the warming of the lakes and ocean is producing more zooplankton which allows more production of sockeye without competition to the [silver and king salmon].

6:17:08 PM

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked whether food security should be considered as a factor when the board is making decisions.

MR. SVENDSEN replied that food security comes right along with subsistence, and this is the number one thing the board should be considering in the allocation of the fish.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked how Mr. Svendsen would interpret Alaska's sustainable salmon policy.

MR. SVENDSEN responded that maximum sustainability is the maximum number of fish taken without depleting the resource. If the resource goes down, too many are being taken, and if [the resource goes up] then more can be taken, he said.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked whether the salmon policy applies to all Alaskans. In other words, he questioned the importance of getting the salmon to all Alaskans who traditionally use them.

MR. SVENDSEN answered that the fish belong to the people. He stated that [the board] must decide on allocation and some of these other things by subsistence, personal use, sport fish, and commercial fish, as they all have their purpose, and they all have a right to their portion of the fish.

[6:19:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned who gets the fish when there are not enough fish to go around.

MR. SVENDSEN replied that everybody must share in the allocation. He suggested that it should start with subsistence and then personal use, sport fish, and then commercial fish. He continued that if there is a problem with the number of fish, everybody must come into consideration and "take their hit." The number one thing is to protect this resource, he stressed, because once it is gone, it is gone. He recounted that from 1960-1980 the Upper Cook Inlet was closed to king salmon fishing because ADF&G had allowed too many fish to be taken, and it took 20 years to build up the run again. He expressed his hope that [resource management] can continue, although there are lots of things going on in the ocean which are not understood.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether Mr. Svendsen considers himself a sport, subsistence, or commercial fisherman.

MR. SVENDSEN responded that he would fall under the category of a sport fisherman; however, he stressed that he would not make all his decisions [in favor of] sport fishing. He stated that he would consider the question and the allocation and make an informed decision on the information available.

MS. HIMSCHOOT noted that in August [2022] Mr. Svendsen wrote an article which related the opinion that because half of the state's population lives in Southcentral, the Cook Inlet fishery should be a sport fishery as it would be economically the best use of the resource. She pointed out Mr. Svendsen's ranking of subsistence, sport, and commercial and asked whether commercial fishing should be ranked behind sport fishing.

MR. SVENDSEN expressed the opinion that all these uses have a right to fish. He reasoned that half the state's population lives in Southcentral; therefore, sport fishing would bring in more money to the industry there. He qualified the statement by saying that commercial fishermen, subsistence, and personal use do deserve their fair share, but it is an allocation issue, and it is a complicated issue.

MS. HIMSCHOOT requested a description of the Board of Fisheries process and what Mr. Svendsen likes and dislikes about the process.

MR. SVENDSEN replied that, since he is new, he cannot say there is anything he dislikes about the board's process, and he expressed the opinion that it is a great process. He allowed he has disagreed with some of the board's decisions. He stated that it is easy to complain about the process, so one reason he volunteered is to help by using his ideas.

[6:23:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MIKE CRONK, Alaska State Legislature, noted that his district includes most of the Yukon River as well as the upper Kuskokwim River. He noted that these are the two main rivers with a lack of chinook and chum salmon. He related that people have been unable to subsistence fish for several years, and the devastated fish runs are harming the people because the smokehouses [are not running], the mental health aspect is coming into play, and the culture is not being passed on. He asked whether Mr. Svendsen was willing to make the hard decisions to ensure fish could return to the rivers.

MR. SVENDSEN stressed that he is willing to make these tough decisions. He reiterated that subsistence is very important. As a terminal fishery, he said, he would like to see the fish that spawn in a stream, get back to the stream. For an intercept fishery, he continued, it is great when there is extra fish and everybody can share, but the most important issue is for people in the Interior to get enough fish to eat.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK stated that the important issue is when a resource has been depleted in one area, the focus is shifted to another area. People in the Interior, he said, are shifting from one resource to another resource, which could be the Copper River. He continued that ignoring certain situations, and not making these hard decisions, could set up another river for the exact same failure.

MR. SVENDSEN expressed the opinion that it is a great idea to have the hatcheries, but he qualified this by saying that only the stocks of these rivers should be taken; the stocks from other rivers should be disallowed because then the wild fish will be lost.

[6:27:27 PM](#)

MIKE WOOD, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, testified as an appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He related that since coming to Alaska in 1989 he has participated in mountain climbing, guiding, commercial fishing, and, currently, carpentry work. He stated that he has a commercial setnet permit in Cook Inlet. He added that he serves on various boards, including the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Upper Susitna Advisory Committee, the Chase Community Council, and the Susitna River Coalition. He noted he has been through two rounds of representing the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission in the Cook Inlet board cycle. He stated that he has attended hatchery committee meetings and the most current Bristol Bay finfish meeting.

MR. WOOD expressed the opinion that ADF&G has a democratic process in hearing from the public, especially when the Board of Fisheries has made difficult decisions regarding the health of Alaska fisheries. He said he is aware of the hard work and commitment involved in speaking to fishermen, reading ADF&G reports, and traveling to witness fisheries firsthand. He discussed how the fisheries bring Alaskans together. He continued that, regrettably, Alaska is facing a scarcity of fish because the resource is impacted by many critical issues. He

expressed the understanding that it will be a hard task to understand the issues and how the Board of Fisheries can help. He discussed the critical issues of ocean health, habitat, bycatch, and allocation. He stated that understanding these while balancing the economic need is important. He expressed dedication to listening to all who care deeply for sustaining the Alaskan way of life. He offered his appreciation for being nominated and allowed that it will be daunting to understand the whole spectrum of issues.

[6:32:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE noted that the current administration is pushing to open the West Susitna Access Road, which the Susitna River Coalition is against. He questioned his opinion on whether fish habitat can be protected during road and bridge construction. He further asked whether Mr. Wood is willing to be impartial when weighing cost versus benefit.

MR. WOOD replied that the Susitna River Coalition was created in response to the Susitna Hydroelectric Project. He expressed the understanding that the coalition has always been concerned with habitat issues, which are major elements that the Board of Fisheries takes into consideration. He suggested fish culverts and bridges can be built to not overly impact the fish. He expressed the hope that proceeds from development would be given to the cost of "doing it right the first time," rather than having to retrofit so fish resources are not lost.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE expressed the hope that Mr. Wood can be impartial in regard to the cost versus benefit issue of the West Susitna Access. He acknowledged that Mr. Wood is associated with the Susitna River Coalition, and the coalition is strongly opposed to the project, which causes concern.

MR. WOOD responded that he considers himself more of a "habitat guy" than a fisherman. He remarked that he is not opposed when things are done correctly. He added that he will recuse himself if necessary.

[6:35:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES noted that there has been legislation proposed [SB 128] to reverse a decision made by the Board of Fisheries on the Area M situation. She invited any comments on this.

MR. WOOD answered that he cannot comment on a decision without knowing the details. In order to come up with the best decision for everybody, if possible, he expressed the opinion that the board is there to understand the different sides and talk to all stakeholders. He expressed doubt that the legislature should weigh in on every decision the Board of Fisheries makes.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES questioned Mr. Wood's opinion on whether halibut individual fishing quotas (IFQs) should be required for sport charter fisherman.

MR. WOOD expressed uncertainty, as he currently does not understand this topic.

[6:37:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked whether Mr. Wood has ever advocated for or against any positions before the Board of Fisheries.

MR. WOOD responded that a few years ago he joined in on testimony via telephone, but he does not remember the details of the conversation.

[6:38:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK, regarding the dialogue on the Area M situation and the role the legislature plays, noted that he represents a group of people whose identity and livelihood are connected to fish. Furthermore, he said that he represents people who do not have access to grocery stores and must pay around \$30 for a gallon of milk. Subsistence fishing, he stressed, offers these communities the opportunity to support themselves. He expressed appreciation for the importance of the board's autonomy; however, his constituents feel ignored, as the subsistence way of life is not being given precedence. He explained that this is a matter of identity and survival for some communities. He questioned what weight should be given to food security when making board decisions.

MR. WOOD expressed the understanding that subsistence is a priority, as it is the law. He further stated that there cannot be any allocation before there is conservation, and everybody should bear the burden of conservation equally.

[6:41:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK asked whether Mr. Wood agrees with the statement: "The fish on the table is the most important fish."

MR. WOOD responded in the affirmative. He said fish on the table has kept many people alive.

[6:41:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned whether the resources or the stakeholders are the most important factor in fisheries management.

MR. WOOD responded that the resource is the most important. He stated that without the resource, there would be no allocation. He stated that he supports habitat because it is intertwined with the resource.

[6:43:13 PM](#)

GERAD GODFREY, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, stated he is an Alaskan Native, and because of his father's job as a state trooper, he has lived in many places in the state. He added that he has commercially fished, worked on the North Slope, and worked on the Trans Alaska Pipeline System. He said he has not commercially fished for about 10 years, but he has had a sport fishing license for the last 20 years. He noted he has never been a permit owner or owned a business in the fishing industry.

MR. GODFREY related that his history and involvement with the Board of Fisheries goes back to serving in Governor Bill Walker's administration as the Senior Advisor for Rural Business and Intergovernmental Affairs. As needed, he had attended the Board of Fisheries meetings in the lieutenant governor's stead. He continued that after a new administration came in, he served a full term of three years on the Board of Fisheries. He explained that he did not seek reappointment because of a family commitment. He continued that now is a good time for "throwing his name back into the hat."

MR. GODFREY expressed support of fish hatcheries because this fills a gap when returns do not come back. He expressed uncertainty about the science around "straying," and this being a major concern. He added that currently he considers himself a sport fisherman, and his family members are personal use fishermen.

[6:48:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked whether Mr. Godfrey is familiar with the controversy surrounding the intercept fisheries in Area M and requested his opinion about the recent rejection of the [board's decision].

MR. GODFREY confirmed he is familiar with the issue; however, because he was not on the board at the time and did not hear the public testimony or see the data, he cannot give an opinion. In these situations, he continued, science and data are of utmost importance, as is public testimony. He stated he is sympathetic to the challenges in the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers, as he had gone there for fish camp as a child and as an adult.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE inquired about Mr. Godfrey's approach to mixed stock fisheries management.

MR. GODFREY replied that he is open minded except on proposals to shut down hatcheries. He stated that, per [mixed stock] discussions, he leans on the biologists' reports and data, as well as public testimony on all sides of the issue. He can be persuaded with compelling data and information, he said, because he is not a participant in most fisheries with mixed stock; therefore, he is not an authority. He continued that he asks lots of questions to glean more information when he does not feel he has enough information to decide.

[6:50:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER requested Mr. Godfrey's opinion on whether the bycatch problem is being tackled in the right way.

MR. GODFREY responded that most of the bycatch is occurring in federally managed waters. He expressed frustration that the state's hands are tied in managing this, as it is Alaska's resource that is being subject to bycatch. He suggested that the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council is not tackling it the way it should, as there should be live observers or real-time unalterable cameras aboard every vessel to monitor the bycatch. He stated that while he was on the Board of Fisheries, photos of the trolling fleet were sent to him which showed bycatch occurring in state waters. The fishermen who sent the photos were told by the Alaska State Troopers that troopers cannot do anything unless the incident is caught at the time. He offered his belief that for federally managed waters, bycatch is beyond the scope and authority of the Board of Fisheries. He

stated that for state waters he is a proponent of using technology.

[6:53:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES noted that there has been legislation proposed [SB 128] to reverse a decision made by the Board of Fisheries on the Area M situation. She invited any comments on this.

MR. GODFREY answered that when the legislature seeks to circumvent or override a decision made by a board, regulatory entity, or management entity that was created by the legislature, it starts to negate the value and purpose of the body. He suggested it could become a "tit-for-tat" when user groups lobby their legislators to try to counter board decisions. He suggested that, if board decisions can be overturned after members have reviewed thousands of pages of data and attended multiple meetings a year, there could be the unintended consequence of not being able to find qualified Alaskans to serve on the board. Another unintended consequence, he added, is that the Board of Fisheries has the ability to call a meeting and quickly respond to an emergency petition, such as an escapement issue, whereas the legislature cannot quickly call a session during the summer.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES questioned Mr. Godfrey's opinion on whether halibut IFQs should be required for sport charter fisherman.

MR. GODFREY replied that he does not have an opinion. He related that he has listened to people make these arguments over the past few years. However, he said, he has not heard both sides of the argument and does not like to make a decision without being fully armed with information.

[6:57:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned the last time that Mr. Godfrey fished commercially.

MR. GODFREY responded that it was the summer of 2013 in Bristol Bay.

[6:58:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK recounted that during the March 30, 2022, meeting on the reconsideration of the Upper Cook Inlet King Salmon Management Plan, Mr. Godfrey had described the idea of slowing commercial activities to conserve king salmon as being akin to "stepping over dollars to pick up pennies." He asked whether Mr. Godfrey plans to employ this philosophy when making decisions across the state.

MR. GODFREY responded in the negative. He explained that he and another board member had made the request for an emergency meeting to provide release to the upper eastside Cook Inlet setnetters. This was because ADF&G's data showed that 34,000-plus sockeye salmon had made escapement in excess of what was necessary. He continued that only 11 king salmon were observed within these sockeye salmon. He argued that because this was within the margin of error, it could have been 22 kings or 0 kings. He suggested that these setnetters were unable to fish because the entire fishery and all the user groups were being managed for one specific species. He expressed the opinion that it makes no sense to not harvest 34,000 sockeyes to save potentially 11 kings. He continued that there is also the potential for over escapement, with some of these 34,000 sockeyes dying before spawning because the spawning grounds are full, and the king salmon could die before spawning for this same reason. He further argued that setnetters constantly pull their nets, so the king salmon would not necessarily die; if caught they could be released to go upriver.

7:00:58 PM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK stated he represents most of the Yukon River and the upper Kuskokwim River. He pointed out that "sympathy" is one word the people of this area hear, but sympathy does not put fish back in the river. He continued that Area M is a mixed stock fishery, and this is important for the people of his district, as genetic testing shows some of these fish are being caught. He stressed that he does not want sympathy, he wants decisions made which ensure these fish get up the rivers because [right now] there is absolutely no subsistence fishing.

MR. GODFREY responded that he said he is sympathetic because he is. He stated that subsistence is at the top of the pyramid, so if there is only enough fish for one user group, then it is subsistence. He explained that this issue was not on the table during his prior three-year term on the board. He acknowledged

that he is completely moveable on the issue of subsistence because it concerns food security.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK noted that currently there are not enough fish for subsistence, and even if fish are allowed up the rivers, it will take some time to rebuild [the stocks] before a subsistence harvest can happen again.

[7:04:16 PM](#)

STANLEY ZURAY, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, testified as an appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He stated he is originally from Massachusetts where, starting at age 14, he worked as a mechanic. He stated that he then attended university as a zoology major before relocating to Alaska in 1973. He said his occupations in Alaska have included fishing, trapping, and running a chum salmon instream incubation program. He stated that on this stream he designed pumps and incubation boxes which eventually made the runs bigger. After moving to the Yukon River village of Tanana, he stated that he divided his time between trapping and fishing, and he eventually bought a commercial fishing fishwheel permit. He stated that in 1996, he began working as a fishwheel contractor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's chum salmon counting project, where he jointly developed a video counting fishwheel and other fish friendly ways of enumerating passing salmon and whitefish. Eventually he took over the project and ran it until 2015.

MR. ZURAY stated that in the early 1990s he also became involved in fishermen's concerns and research efforts into the declining size and numbers of Chinook salmon and Ichthyophonous disease on the Yukon [River], which was showing up in very troubling numbers and severity. He related that in 2001, with help from concerned fishermen, state and federal biologists, and fisheries researchers, he formed the Rapids Research Center. Over the next 18 years, he said, the center's camp included hundreds of students who came and collected size, sex, and disease data from over 10,000 king salmon taken in the upper river. He added that this included important data on all other species present. He specified that until his Board of Fisheries appointment, he was chairman of the ADF&G Tanana Rampart Manley Advisory Committee since 1998, and he was the secretary of the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association since 1993. He related that since the Yukon River's salmon collapse, he has been working as a mechanic and equipment operator in Tanana and spends one month in the summer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service looking into Ichthyophonous disease. He said his desire to be on the Board of

Fisheries stems from requests from several people and organizations, along with his desire to do something good for the fisheries.

[7:09:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES noted that there has been legislation proposed [SB 128] to reverse a decision made by the Board of Fisheries on the Area M situation. She invited any comments on this.

MR. ZURAY responded he is not aware of this. He suggested that there needs to be a very good reason for the legislature to do this; however, he is not familiar with this specific situation.

[7:11:00 PM](#)

The committees took an at-ease from 7:11 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

[7:15:10 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE called the meeting back to order.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE related that the current administration is pushing to open recreation and development access in Alaska, and one of these pushes involves the West Susitna Access Road. He explained that this would go about 80 miles west of Big Lake and into the mountains by Rainy Pass. He questioned Mr. Zuray whether roads can be built with fish culverts and bridges while protecting fish habitat. He further asked whether he has taken a position on this road.

MR. ZURAY replied he has not taken a position, and he is unfamiliar with this issue. He expressed the belief that from his 11 years of living on a spawning stream, there would be no problem, as long as bridges and obstacles are built properly to allow the salmon to pass. He expressed the understanding that the issue would be seeing that the road is built in the right way.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE requested that he rank the importance of Alaska's five salmon species from a cultural and subsistence standpoint.

MR. ZURAY answered that coming from the upper Yukon River, there is no question that king salmon is the most important, then fall

chum salmon. He stated that fishing 40 miles downriver in Tanana, coho salmon would be the third.

[7:18:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER requested that he rank the importance of commercial, sport, and subsistence salmon harvest.

MR. ZURAY replied that personally he ranks the subsistence harvest as number one, with commercial next, and then sport. He recognized that many people put sport fish before commercial, but he said he is looking from the viewpoint of food for the people and then the economy for the villages on the Yukon. He pointed out that where he is from, sport fish is not an issue.

[7:19:41 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK requested a discussion on the in-river hatchery work to build up the run.

MR. ZURAY responded that big hatcheries put fish into the ocean in the beginning, and then the fish return to a bay where they are harvested; however, he took eggs and sperm from the fish he caught in the river. About 50 percent of the [female] fish he caught had runny eggs, meaning the eggs were ready to be fertilized. He stated that a 99 percent fertilization rate can be achieved with these eggs using running sperm from the males he caught. He then used hand pumps to put the fertilized eggs back into the river's gravel, which resulted in an incredible increase in the number of fish which normally hatched out of the gravel. He stated that from observations he learned that with live spawning salmon, half the eggs do not make it into the gravel and another quarter go into the mouths of graylings. He said this gravel method does not change the genetic variability of the salmon because it uses salmon from a particular stream to produce more salmon for the stream. He suggested that incubating the eggs in trays away from the stream will narrow the genetic variability over time. He related that in correspondence with an "old timer" who had worked at the fish hatchery in Auke Bay, he had learned that putting a guy with a five-gallon bucket on a salmon spawning stream could do better than a multi-million-dollar hatchery. He conceded that politicians are the ones with the money, and they want to build big hatcheries. He said the method he used is no longer legal, but if it were legal it would work.

[7:26:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether there was an issue with Mr. Zuray's application for the board because the committee does not have it.

MR. ZURAY answered that he did not receive the information until a couple of days ago, and he had included his resume with his application for the board position; therefore, he had presumed the committee would have both.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether Mr. Zuray had any conflicts of interest which affected service on the board.

MR. ZURAY replied that he has recused himself at a board meeting because of his and his son's commercial fishing licenses. He stated that after the meeting he had obtained his and his son's sales records and found that over a 32-year period he averaged about \$1,900 a year and over a 12-year period his son averaged between \$100 and \$200 a year. Once this information was out, he continued, he no longer had to recuse himself from issues because it was a meaningless amount of money; therefore, he does not see this being an issue any longer.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT expressed appreciation that randomly spawning salmon is no longer legal. She noted that she had to do a lot of permitting to have an in-classroom salmon tank with 100 eggs.

[7:30:19 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE opened public testimony on the four appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

[7:30:47 PM](#)

FORREST BRADEN, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO), testified in support of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He noted that SEAGO represents about half of Alaska's saltwater guided sportfishing businesses. He stated SEAGO has engaged in the Board of Fisheries process many times and is aware of the importance of a well-functioning board, and the role it plays in the industries and user groups. He said SEAGO has worked directly with Gerad Godfrey at one meeting and found him approachable and willing to listen to SEAGO's needs concerning a high-profile salmon management issue. He expressed the opinion that Mr. Godfrey was engaged and even-handed. He

related that SEAGO had a short call with Greg Svendsen to get to know him, and he sounded committed to trying to serve. He said membership on the Board of Fisheries is a heavy load and SEAGO trusts that Mr. Svendsen will lean on his academic background to prepare himself on the issues. He concluded by saying that SEAGO supports advancing [and confirming] each of the four appointees to the Board of Fisheries.

[7:32:29 PM](#)

PAUL A. SHADURA II, representing self, testified in support of Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He stated he is a long-time participant of the eastside setnet fishery in Cook Inlet and commends any individual who is willing to serve on Alaska's Board of Fisheries. He expressed his hope that each of the appointees will remain open minded in the process and will consider the diverse views of other Alaskans in their decision-making process. He reported that the Kenai/Soldotna Fish and Game Advisory Committee voted unanimously to request the Board of Fisheries to meet in the Kenai/Soldotna area for the upcoming Upper Cook Inlet Regulatory Meeting. He said he supports the confirmations of Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray. He stated that not yet having met Greg Svendsen, he does not have an opinion for his confirmation; however, he expressed the opinion that Mr. Svendsen's knowledge and experiences within Alaska should be of benefit to the Board of Fisheries process.

[7:34:00 PM](#)

GARY HOLLIER, representing self, testified in support of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stanley Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries. He stated he has been involved in the Board of Fisheries process for five decades. He said he met Greg Svendsen playing basketball back in the 1970s and expressed the opinion that Mr. Svendsen would be a fine member of the board. He related that he has interacted many times at the board level with Mike Wood and expressed the opinion Mr. Wood would be a fine board member because he has high energy, commitment, and puts in many hours. He submitted that it takes a full term on the Board of Fisheries to really become knowledgeable, and Gerad Godfrey has been a "top shelf" board member, as he has made himself available, looked at the data, and voted accordingly. He noted that he has not always supported the way Mr. Godfrey has voted, but he was fully available to the public. He acknowledged that Stanley Zuray was "thrown into a firestorm" at the Area M meeting and the Bristol

Bay meeting, and he commended Mr. Zuray for his stances and positions. He stated that Area M is as contentious as Upper Cook Inlet and Mr. Zuray did an admirable job being a [first-time] appointee. He expressed his hope that all four appointees will be advanced from the committee.

7:35:54 PM

TAD FUJIOKA, representing self, urged that someone be nominated from a coastal region currently without representation on the board. He stated that fishing is an extremely important part of his life. He pointed out that should all four nominees be confirmed, the board's members would be geographically concentrated such that most coastal regions would be left without representation, including Southeast, Kodiak, and Bristol Bay. He further pointed out that more than three-quarters of last year's salmon catch came from regions that would not have any board members. He urged the committee not to allow this to happen.

MR. FUJIOKA submitted that while members of the Board of Fisheries are supposed to represent all Alaskans, members of the board should not be just political appointees but subject matter experts on the fish and fisheries in their home region. Without first-hand knowledge from a respected peer, he asserted, other board members struggle to understand the complex relationships between fish and fishermen that are unique to each area. Furthermore, he said, the best board members of the past have recognized their responsibility to represent not just fishermen but also to speak for the fish. Unless a board member has a strong personal understanding of specific fish populations, he continued, they cannot adequately speak for the fish.

MR. FUJIOKA said the issue here is the overall composition of the proposed board, not a glaring defect in any specific individual. He suggested that the question is how to determine which nominee to single out for replacement. He proposed that the committees consider each nominee's experience with the Board of Fisheries and with advisory committees. He stated that advisory committee members learn how boards work and get a comprehensive education on all hunting and fishing activities in their area. A lack of this experience, he maintained, puts at risk the fish resources in Alaska. Of the Board of Fisheries nominees before the committees, he continued, only one has a resume that lacks extensive experience as either a former board member or long-time advisory committee member. He urged that this individual is not confirmed, and instead the governor finds

a more experienced nominee from a currently unrepresented coastal region.

[7:39:02 PM](#)

MR. SVENDSEN promised to put in the time to work hard and do a good job.

[7:39:52 PM](#)

MR. GODFREY revisited and reframed the comment he made regarding stepping over dollars to pick up pennies. He said that when approaching the different stakeholders and geographic fishery areas, he looks at whether the net benefit is far outweighed by the net detriment. He stated that concerning the eastside setnetters in Cook Inlet, the numbers were so disproportionate, it was a detriment to let 34,000-plus salmon go unharvested for the benefit of 11 kings.

[7:40:53 PM](#)

MR. WOOD stated that being a member of the Board of Fisheries is a huge responsibility, and he will work as hard as possible.

[7:41:29 PM](#)

MR. ZURAY allowed it is a struggle to learn other areas of Alaska and learn the fisheries, and he agreed that knowledge is needed. He said he understands the Yukon River and subsistence because this is where he has lived. His approach as a Board of Fisheries member would be to listen, no matter how much he may disagree, because this person would educate him more than with someone whom he agrees with.

[7:43:23 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 7:43 p.m. to 7:46 p.m.

[7:46:18 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE apologized to anyone calling in for public testimony and unable to get through. She explained that an overwhelming number of people are calling in for another meeting which is occurring at this same time. She asked people to send in written testimony by email.

[7:46:56 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY moved to advance the confirmation of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stan Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries, to the joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. He reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, the confirmations were advanced.

[7:47:45 PM](#)

CHAIR VANCE moved to advance the confirmation of Greg Svendsen, Mike Wood, Gerad Godfrey, and Stan Zuray, appointees to the Board of Fisheries, to the joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. He reminded members that signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees, and that the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection. There being no objection, the confirmations were advanced.

[7:48:28 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint House Special Committee on Fisheries and House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.