

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2023

1:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tom McKay, Chair
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Stanley Wright
Representative Jennie Armstrong
Representative Donna Mears
Representative Maxine Dibert

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Josiah Patkotak

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW: RESPONSIBILITIES AND CURRENT ISSUES BY ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH & GAME

- HEARD

PRESENTATION(S): UNIVERSITY EFFORTS AND STATUS OF LAND GRANT

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

DOUG VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of the
responsibilities and current issues of the Alaska Department of
Fish & Game.

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director of Government Relations
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered the presentation on University Efforts and Status of Land Grant.

ADRIENNE STOLPE, Chief Lands Officer
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-offered the presentation on University Efforts and Status of Land Grant.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR TOM MCKAY called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Representatives Mears, Armstrong, Dibert, McCabe, Rauscher, Wright, Saddler, and McKay were present at the call to order.

**Overview: Responsibilities and Current Issues by Alaska
Department of Fish & Game**

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CHAIR MCKAY announced that the first order of business would be an overview of the Responsibilities and Current Issues by Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

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DOUG VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, provided the overview of the responsibilities and current issues of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). He began the overview via PowerPoint [hard copy included in the committee packet], on Slide 2, "Constitutional and Statutory Mandates," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Constitution of the State of Alaska

Article 8 -Natural Resources; §4. Sustained Yield.

Fish, forests, wildlife, grasslands, and all other replenishable resources belonging to the State shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.

The Alaska Statutes

Title 16. Fish and Game; Sec. 16.05.020. Functions of commissioner.

(2) manage, protect, maintain, improve, and extend the fish, game and aquatic plant resources of the state in the interest of the economy and general well-being of the state.

Mission Statement

To protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state, and manage their uses and development in the best interest of the economy and the well-being of the people of the state, consistent with the sustained yield principle.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG showed Slide 3, "Core Services," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Management

Provide hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities, protect state's rights to manage its fish and wildlife resources, conserve and improve habitat and access.

Stock Assessment & Research

Ensure sustainability and harvestable surplus, improve assessment and research capabilities, invest in new technologies, anticipate changing conditions.

Customer Service & Public Involvement

Make improvements to information and education services, the Boards and other regulatory processes, licensing and permitting.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG stated ADF&G exists because of the "Return on Investment," shown on Slides 4 and 5, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game turns a \$240 million dollar (of which \$65 million is GF) into a return of over \$12.5 billion annually.

Economic Value of Commercially Harvested Alaska Seafood (2019)

- Directly employs 62,200 workers annually, more than any other industry in Alaska -Largest private sector employer in Alaska
- Contributes \$163.2 million in taxes, fees, and self-assessments which help fund state, local and federal government
- Alaska seafood contributes an annual average of \$5.7 billion in economic output to the Alaska economy
- Alaska exports 2.2 billion pounds of seafood each year, returning over \$3 billion of new money into the U.S. economy

Economic Value of Sport Fisheries

- 15,879 Jobs supported
- \$246 million in taxes contributed (adjusted for inflation, \$298.64 million in 2019 dollars)
- \$545 million in income provided (adjusted for inflation, \$661.63 million in 2019 dollars)
- \$1.6 billion industry output (adjusted for inflation, \$1.950 billion in 2019 dollars)

Economic value of Wildlife

- More than 27,000 Jobs supported
- 1.4 billion in labor income (adjusted for inflation, 1.566 billion in 2019 dollars)
- 3.4 billion spent by hunters and wildlife viewers (adjusted for inflation, 3.87 billion in 2019 dollars)
- \$4.1 billion economic activity statewide (adjusted for inflation, 4.59 billion in 2019 dollars)

Economic Value of Subsistence

- Replacement value of the wild food harvest of communities outside non-subsistence areas is estimated between \$170-\$340 million and \$227-\$454 million for all Alaska communities (2017)

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE remarked that the annual average of \$5.7 billion seemed a little high.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG responded that the numbers were sourced from an independent economic analysis, and he said he would provide the citation in a future date to the committee. He then advanced to Slide 6, "Leadership," which shows the affiliate groups housed within ADF&G and the three main divisions: Commercial Fisheries; Sport Fish; and Wildlife Conservation.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG spoke to the bullet points on Slide 7, "FY2023 Authorized Budget," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$230,865.3 million
- 819 permanent full-time positions
- 598 permanent part-time positions
- 5 non-permanent position

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG listed fund sources and allocation by division on Slide 7. He moved on to the department's mission, Slide 8, "Office of the Commissioner," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Leadership & Direction

- Establishes policy and coordinates agency strategy for the protection, management, conservation, and restoration of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources.
- Executive level oversight of department activities and service.
- Liaisons with the governor's office, legislature, congressional offices, other government agencies, Native tribes and organizations, and Alaska's fish and wildlife resource stakeholder groups.

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$1.2 million
- 6 permanent full-time positions

Boards & Commissions

Pacific Salmon Commission
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game

Wide range of other Boards and Commissions

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG moved to Slide 9, "Division of Commercial Fisheries," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Manage subsistence, commercial, & personal use fisheries

- in the interest of the economy and general wellbeing of the citizens of the state
- consistent with the sustained yield principle
- subject to allocations through public regulatory processes

Core Services

Ensure the conservation of natural stocks of fish, shellfish and aquatic plants based on scientifically sound assessments

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$82 million
- 301 permanent full-time positions
- 387 permanent part-time positions

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said Commercial Fisheries is the largest group at ADF&G and is the central part of the department.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG, in response to a question from Representative Saddler about the meaning of "wellbeing of the state," used the example of urban wildlife: it has a non-economic benefit for hunters but there is a benefit to managers that can prevent bears from attacking children in their front yards.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked which division of ADF&G pays for the cost of fish weirs.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG answered that the Division of Commercial Fisheries primarily pays for weirs, Division of Sport

Fisheries too, as well as other divisions. In response to a follow-up question, he said the Matanuska-Susitna area has a mixture of management requirements.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG returned to the PowerPoint, to Slide 10, "Division of Commercial Fisheries," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Major Fisheries

- Salmon
- Herring
- Shellfish
- Groundfish
- Dive Fisheries
- Personal Use/Subsistence Fisheries Management

Structure

- Houses 5 management regions
 - Southeast, Central, Westward, AYK, Statewide
- Houses two chief fisheries scientists
 - Salmon fisheries research
 - Genetics, Pathology, and Mark, Tag, & Age Laboratories
 - Groundfish and crab research
- Houses the federal fisheries coordination staff and Pacific Salmon Treaty Staff
- Houses statewide aquaculture planning and permitting

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG continued to Slide 11, "Division of Sport Fish," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Protect and improve the state's sport fishery resources

Core Services

- **Fisheries Management:** manage the state's sport fisheries for sustained yield and angler satisfaction

- **Fisheries Research:** perform objective-based research based on sound scientific practices to support sport fisheries management
- **Fisheries Enhancement:** create and diversify sport fishing opportunities for anglers
- **Fish Habitat:** protect and restore fish habitats for the benefit of fish and sport anglers
- **Communication & Outreach:** inform and communicate with the public about sport fishing
- **Internal Operations:** provide leadership and administrative support for the Division's core functions

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$50.6 million
- 177 permanent full-time positions
- 128 permanent part-time positions

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said the majority of the funding is provided by the federal government with matching dollars depicted in the pie chart on the slide.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG identified the major fisheries shown on Slide 12, "Division of Sport Fish," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Major Fisheries

- Salmon
- Freshwater fisheries
- Groundfish
- Personal Use Fisheries

Structure

- Houses 3 management regions
 - Southeast, Southcentral, Interior
- Houses Sport Fish Hatchery Operations
- Houses one chief fisheries scientists
- Houses Department Invasive Species Program
- Houses Sport Fish Access Program

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG showed Slide 13, "Division of Wildlife Conservation," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

**Conserve and enhance Alaska's wildlife and habitats
Provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits**

Core Services

- Maintain and enhance opportunities to hunt, trap, and view wildlife
- Provide opportunities for Alaskans to gain knowledge of and appreciation for Alaska's wildlife, its management, and ways to safely and ethically interact with wildlife

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$63.7 million
- 231 permanent full-time positions
- 50 permanent part-time

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Core Services

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- Provide opportunities for Alaskans to gain knowledge of and appreciation for Alaska's wildlife, its management, and ways to safely and ethically interact with wildlife

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$63.7 million
- 231 permanent full-time positions
- 50 permanent part-time

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG showed Slide 14, a continuation of Slide 13, titled "Division of Wildlife Conservation." He listed the major activities and structure of the division. He reported the management regions have been split up due to the diverse nature of Alaska habitats. He said the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and state defense program are housed in this division. He also said the shooting ranges are

managed by the division in addition to the Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity Program and the Marine Mammal Program.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG highlighted the Habitat Section of the department in Slides 15 and 16, which describe the core services and budget of the section as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Core Services

- Review applications and issue permits for activities in fish-bearing waters and legislatively designated Special areas; provide expertise to protect important fish and wildlife habitat; monitor authorized projects and conduct compliance actions.
- Manage Alaska's Special Areas in accordance with legislative guidelines; prepare and update management plans for these areas.
- Review proposed timber harvest activities; conduct field inspections; work cooperatively with timber operators and other governmental agencies
- Review development projects (e.g., oil and gas, hard rock mining, hydroelectric) authorized under other agencies' authorities.
- Maintain and update the "Catalog of Waters Important for Spawning, Rearing, or Migration of Anadromous Fishes."
- Conduct applied research to develop methods and means to minimize impacts of development projects on fish and wildlife resources
- Seek opportunities to improve and protect habitat in cooperation with state and federal agencies, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and others.

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$5.7 million
- 37 permanent full-time positions
- 2 permanent part-time
- 1 non-permanent positions

Major Activities

- Title 16 permitting
- Special Areas permitting
- Maintenance of the Anadromous Fish Catalog
- Involvement in the DNR Project Management and Permitting Program
- Pipeline Office Liaison

Structure

- Houses 3 management regions and 3 area offices
 - Southeast, Southcentral, Interior
 - Palmer, Kenai, Craig

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG emphasized that this is the smallest section of ADF&G that also reviews hydroelectric development projects for the state.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG related the last section in the presentation on Slide 17, "Subsistence Research Section," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Scientifically gather, quantify, evaluate, and report information about customary and traditional uses of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$6.1 million
- 19 permanent full-time positions
- 22 permanent part-time
- 2 non-permanent positions

Core Services

- Compile and analyze existing data; conduct research to gather
- information on the role of hunting and fishing by Alaskans for
- customary and traditional uses.
- Disseminate current subsistence use information to the public; appropriate agencies and organizations; and fisheries and wildlife management divisions.

- Assist the Board of Fisheries, the Board of Game, and the Joint Board of Fisheries and Game to evaluate customary and traditional uses of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources and amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence uses (ANS) of those resources.
- Assist fisheries and wildlife managers in preparing management plans to ensure information on customary and traditional uses and fish and wildlife harvests is incorporated.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked where the mission statement, specifically on Slide 17, came from and if the language comes from federal mandate or the department.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG answered it's from statute. He moved on to Slide 18, "Subsistence Research Section," in which he described the Southern and Northern Regions. He said the major activities in the regions are the collection of subsistence use information and participation in the board process.

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked how much subsistence data is collected in non-rural areas and/or urban areas.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG answered the distinction between subsistence, personal use, and general hunts is a difficult subject to tackle.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER requested data that shows where Alaskans choose to live in non-subsistence areas.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG described the Boards Support Section on Slide 19, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Facilitates an effective board and public process for the state's fish and wildlife regulatory system

Core Services

- Ensure citizens participating in the fish and game regulatory process have clear and helpful information in advance to engage effectively
- Provide and support an environment for board members to make effective decisions

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$1.2 million
- 6 permanent full-time positions

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said the selection process confirms the commissioner of ADF&G, which is unique in the country. He explained that every citizen has a say and the ability to participate in how the advisory committee votes for their commissioner.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG showed Slide 20, "Board Support Section," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Major Activities

- Support of the Boards of Fisheries and Game process
- Includes 7-10 in-person, multi-day regulatory meetings.
- Very involved, open public process

Structure

- Houses 2 executive directors
 - 1 Board of Game (BOG)
 - 1 Board of Fisheries (BOF)
- 2 administrative positions
- 2 publication specialists

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG defined the Advisory Committee Support Section on Slide 21, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Core Services

- Ensure citizens participating in the fish and game regulatory process have clear and helpful information in advance to engage effectively

- Provide and support an environment for board members to make effective decisions

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$0.6 million
- 0 permanent full-time positions
- 5 permanent part-time positions

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG said the Advisory Committee is paid from general fund dollars and comes under scrutiny every year.

[1:46:47 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG showed Slide 22, "Administrative Services Section," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Provide efficient, cost-effective and customer oriented administrative services to department programs

Core Services

- Centralized administrative support services to programs and projects conducted by the ADF&G, including accounting, fiscal management, procurement, property control, contract administration, budget services, information technology services, capital construction, facility maintenance and repair, office space planning, and workforce development
- Administration of the fish and game licensing program
- Provides direct administrative support to the other components in the Administration and the Commissioner's Office

FY 2023 Authorized Budget

- \$14.7million
- 39 permanent full-time positions
- 4 permanent part-time positions
- 2 non-permanent positions

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG expressed pride in the way ADF&G handled the COVID-19 pandemic with continued "fisheries and hunts." He highlighted the accomplishments of 2022 on Slides 23 and 24, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Department worked to ensure we had the necessary research and management infrastructure in place to safely conduct fisheries and hunts

- We continued to provide a return on investment of over \$12.5 billion dollars on a GF investment of about \$65 million.
- Involved in numerous lawsuits defending the state right to manage our resources.
- With some exceptions, commercial fisheries across Alaska were conducted according to sustained yield principles, allowing commercial fishermen to fish their permits and thereby make a living and contribute to the state and local economies through collected fish taxes.
- Sport and personal use fisheries operated, allowing anglers an opportunity to fill their freezers, feed their families, and get outside.
- With some exceptions, subsistence fisheries and hunts occurred, allowing subsistence harvesters opportunities to feed their communities and pass on traditions.
- Hunts occurred throughout Alaska giving Alaskans opportunities to hunt, fill their freezers and pass on traditions.
- Charter fishing and guided hunting operated, providing needed recreational opportunities and economic boosts to the state and local economies.
- Area offices remained open to serve the public.
- BOG and BOF and many local fish and game advisory committees resumed in-person meetings.
- We continue to permit important projects in a timely manner to Alaska while conserving fish habitat that are vital to the conservation of our fish populations and the economy of the state.
- ADF&G mobile application developed to improve services for people who hunt and fish in Alaska went live. The mobile app is available as a free download from the Android and Apple App stores.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE inquired as to the genesis and reason behind the federal government suing the State of Alaska, and he invited Commissioner Vincent-Lang to comment on how the lawsuit affected the peoples of the Upper Kuskokwim River.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG answered the lawsuit was requested of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) by the Federal Subsistence Board, within the U.S. Department of the Interior. In response to a follow-up question, he indicated that the request originated with the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. He compared the Yukon River to the Kuskokwim River management efforts. He said subsistence should be protected for the Lower Kuskokwim communities as well as the Yukon River communities. He also disclosed the state caribou hunt was shut down by the Federal Subsistence Board recently in Northwest Alaska specifically for non-federal subsistence use hunters. He contended that ADF&G meets the needs of caribou hunters in Northwest Alaska and will continue to keep those hunts open for subsistence users. He also said the state has the ability to restrict Tier II hunts when there is not enough of the resource to provide for locals.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked whether there is similar regional conflict in Northwest Alaska like the one in the Lower and Upper Kuskokwim River communities related to the fishery.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG responded Northwest Alaska is not the only region being targeted by the Federal Subsistence Board; he said the board is also closing deer hunting except for federally qualified users in the Tongass National Forest.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG informed the committee that salmon returns met the harvest goals of 2022 with the exception of the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. He lauded all offices for having stayed open during the pandemic, and he said in-person meetings continued, which proved to be more productive than remote meetings. He said ADF&G also launched the hunting and fishing mobile application ("app") for users.

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COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG listed the current issues facing ADF&G on Slide 25, "Issues/Concerns," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Federal intrusion into state management authority
- Reduced marine survivals of salmon and crab resulting in restricted or closed fisheries
- Intercept and Bycatch
- Poor winter survival affecting big game populations
- Food Security
- Urban wildlife management issues
- Impacts associated with implementation of the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act
- Recruitment and retention issues

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG described federal overreach of management has never been as bad as recently. In-river fisheries of salmon have been proven to be linked with declined marine mammal populations. He said crab fishery declines have been temperature-driven. He said the intercept and by-catch report is the basis for how the department is moving forward. He described how winter habitat has affected sheep, deer and moose across the state. He noted ADF&G learned predator/prey interactions are dynamic in heavy snow years. He also said food security is another major issue. The governor has asked if bison stocking would be beneficial for the state. He said wildlife issues in the urban areas have become a problem across Alaska. Commissioner Vincent-Lang said ADF&G built up an Urban Wildlife Management Team that handles urban wildlife conflicts. He explained the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and federal agencies to halt proposed projects. He said those groups petitioned to add bees and bullwhip kelp to the ESA list. He said the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) was also used by NGOs to add polar bears to the MMPA list. He said ADF&G used predictive modeling to manage North Slope polar bear populations; however, data showed flaws in the model. He admitted the department struggles to recruit and retain qualified staff.

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VICE CHAIR RAUSCHER asked for examples of urban subsistence issues.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG distinguished between federal regulations and state, and as to what constitutes rural or urban status.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about the department's mission in regard to non-shellfish mariculture, for example, kelp development, as well as the issue of invasive species.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG admitted that kelp and invasive species should have been in Slide 25. He said the department looked extensively into mariculture projects, and the Sport Fish division is looking at invasive species.

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REPRESENTATIVE ARMSTRONG asked if the Marine Science Program at ADF&G has any report(s) on marine mammal survival declines. She also asked if there are studies to address recruitment and retention issues.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG advised that those reports are on the department's website.

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VICE CHAIR RAUSCHER asked the commissioner to get back to the committee regarding subsistence Tier 1 and 2 hunts and the trend of hunter numbers over the past 10 years.

CHAIR MCKAY thanked the Commissioner Vincent-Lang for his overview.

PRESENTATION(S): University Efforts and Status of Land Grant

[2:14:25 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY announced that the final order of business would be a presentation on University Efforts and Status of Land Grant.

[2:14:35 PM](#)

CHAD HUTCHINSON, Director of Government Relations, University of Alaska, co-offered the presentation on University Efforts and Status of Land Grant. He said the program has been decades in the making and has gone through significant changes. Historically, the University of Alaska (UA) has had bipartisan support from the legislature, for which he expressed gratitude. He began the PowerPoint [hard copy included in the committee

packet], on Slide 2, "University Land Grant," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- University of Alaska is Alaska's state designated land grant institution
- Historical legacy is the Morrill Act of 1862 which created a mechanism for providing land to support higher education
- However, UA received only portions of lands Congress originally reserved for it
- Recent movement, federally, allows the state (DNR) and the UA to move forward with land selections. This is a positive step, but actual monetization will be many years in the future and will not solve all financial need

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked what advantages there are to being a land grant university versus other types of universities. He inquired why this status was chosen and whether it is working.

MR HUTCHINSON answered that monetizing lands is a beneficial revenue source for the UA system. He said potential buyers are interested in harvesting timber, mining minerals, and pursuing carbon off-sets. He said the proceeds benefit the students by way of the UA scholarship program.

MR. HUTCHINSON showed Slide 3, "UA Lands - Potential Revenue to Help Higher Education," which showed the job sectors students work in: administration and finance; aviation; construction; fisheries and marine science; health; information technology; mining; oil and gas; and teacher education.

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MR. HUTCHINSON provided more history on Slide 4, "University Land Grant," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Only Delaware Hawaii rank below Alaska in higher education land grants

- UA only received ~111,000 acres of its federal land grant entitlement
- This grant makes up the bulk of UA's current 1 49 ,000 acre holdings
- Remaining land received from state municipal sources, private gifts and bequests, and UA land acquisitions

UA's Land Grant deficit is 360,000 acres

MR. HUTCHINSON showed a pie chart on Slide 5, "UA Land Holdings," with the types of investments: sales/leases; forest resources; mining and materials; mitigation management; and oil, gas, and coal.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked what the terms "forest resources" and "remote" mean.

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ADRIENNE STOLPE, Chief Lands Officer, University of Alaska, responded that forests have been developed mostly in Southeast Alaska. She said most of the remote lands are for recreational purposes and not resource extraction. She said UA has also worked with Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc. to develop coal.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked about unsold lands and how they can be developed. He said there is an issue of who can purchase UA lands in his district, and he asked how the process works and how much land is left.

MS. STOLPE explained there were negotiated sales in the past with public notice. She also said there is a bidding process for parcels and an over-the-counter process from the UA website.

[2:25:41 PM](#)

MR. HUTCHINSON moved to Slide 6, "UA Land Grant Acreage Comparison," to answer a question regarding missing lands by Representative Saddler. The slide compared the University of

Texas; UA; and Alaska Mental Health Trust revenue from land sales.

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MR. HUTCHINSON narrated Slide 7, "Land Grant History," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Pre-Statehood Federal Laws for UA Lands

- 1862 Morrill Act: Each state upon admission was to receive 30,000 acres per member of Congress (90,000 acres for Alaska) dedicated to higher education. Congress in the Alaska Statehood Act said that the State's large general land selections were to be "in lieu of" Morrill Act lands, so Morrill Act was "declared not to extend" to Alaska.
- 1915 " Land Grant Statute: Reserved an estimated 336,000 acres in Tanana Valley area. Lands remained largely unsurveyed and less than 5% were ever conveyed to UA.
- 1929 " Land Grant Statute: Congress grants 100,000 acres for UA. Left intact at Statehood, and acreage was conveyed to UA, where it makes up most of current land holdings.

[2:30:10 PM](#)

MR. HUTCHINSON gave the background of prior legislation in Slides 8 through 10, "Land Grant History," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Following Statehood, the Alaska Legislature tries to provide UA's land. In 1959 a bill reserving 1 million acres, passes both Houses, but is vetoed
- Alaska Legislature in 2000 passes bill, and overrides gubernatorial veto, to grant UA 260 000 acres
- In 2004, Alaska Supreme Court rules land conveyance is not an appropriation, but declines to address

dedication clause issue

•2005: Legislation identifies specific lands for transfer to UA (HB 130)

•2007: Environmental group sues arguing land transfer violates Constitution's anti dedication clause (Article 9, Section 7)

•2009: Alaska Supreme Court agrees and strikes down the 2000/2005 legislation. State can't make a land grant to UA that "would operate in a manner similar to the way that the University's federal land grant has operated since before statehood."

Important: Dedications are constitutionally allowed when required by federal government for state participation in federal programs.

In other words: There was a need for state participation in federal program.

•2010: UA begins transferring land back to the state

•2020: Sen. Murkowski, Sen. Sullivan and Rep. Young introduce bills for the "University of Alaska Fiscal Foundation Act" (UAFFA). Sets up federal program. However, Congress adjourns without passing the bill.

•2021 Sen. Murkowski, Sen. Sullivan and Rep. Young introduce bills in the Senate and House for the UAFFA. State legislature passes SJR8 supporting the federal delegation's effort.

•2022 Newly elected Rep. Peltola announces her support for the UAFFA. The Senate incorporates the provisions of UAFFA into the Omnibus Appropriations bill which passes both chambers and is signed into law.

•Today: UA owns ~149,000 acres, most from 1929 Sutherland Act, private party donations, as well as from local governments.

[2:32:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked which environmental group sued the state.

MR. HUTCHINSON identified the group as the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council.

[2:33:10 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what programs created a loophole for a constitutional issue.

MR. HUTCHINSON responded an act of congress that requires the Bureau of Land Management to set up a program for land transfers from federal to state is the exception to the dedicated funds clause.

[2:35:19 PM](#)

MR. HUTCHINSON explained the provisions of the University of Alaska Fiscal Foundation Act (UAFFA) on Slide 11, "What did the provisions of the University of Alaska Fiscal Foundation Act (UAFFA) do?," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- The bill **establishes a program** directing the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to identify and convey available federal land in Alaska to the University of Alaska for a land grant to support higher education.
- The bill also permits the BLM or the Department of Agriculture to acquire by purchase or exchange, with the university's consent, university-owned inholdings within conservation system units.
- Any land exchanged shall be of equal value.
- No later than **four years** after enactment of the bill, Alaska and the university may jointly identify no more than 500,000 acres of land for inclusion in the program, of which not more than 360,000 acres may be conveyed and patented to the university.
- Upon the request of Alaska and the university, the BLM shall provide technical assistance in the identification of land.
- If Alaska and the university notify the BLM in writing that Alaska and the university jointly concur with the conveyance of all or a portion of the land identified for conveyance, and that Alaska

relinquishes its selection rights to the land covered by the notification, the BLM shall convey the land to the university, to be held in trust for the exclusive use and benefit of the university.

- The BLM shall notify Congress of the land conveyed and patented.

[2:37:46 PM](#)

MR. HUTCHINSON advanced to Slide 14, "Where are we now?," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- The UA Lands office already has selected approx. 200,000 acres and provided the selection to DNR for review
- The acreage ultimately transferred to UA would be deducted from Alaska's outstanding statehood lands entitlement and managed by the UA for the benefit of our students and to further meet our mission of teaching, research and workforce development for Alaska

[2:38:19 PM](#)

MS. STOLPE covered Slide 15, "Land Batches - UA Land Office WHO/WHAT/WHEN/WHERE/WHY," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- The UA Lands office has already been working with DNR
- Support from Governor's office
- Timeline**
 - UA began identifying potential lands in 2019
 - DNR provided informal feedback on initial land batches, allowing UA to modify and resubmit ~200,000 acres to DNR
 - DNR and other state agencies are reviewing the revised batches
 - UA and DNR are meeting monthly to review requested lands
 - UA is identifying lands valuable to mineral potential, carbon sequestration potential, and remote land sales, to provide short, medium, and long term revenue streams to the endowment

MS. STOLPE added that the remaining unselected lands are mainly on the Kenai Peninsula and the Interior.

[2:39:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if federal legislation acts as a means to speed up the land conveyance process from federal to University of Alaska.

MS. STOLPE answered that 360,000 acres will be subtracted from the 1.5 million acres owed to the state.

[2:40:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked why the University of Tennessee pays for all of the university from revenues from land sales and nothing from the legislature.

MR. HUTCHINSON responded UA doesn't generate enough revenue from land sales to fund the system, and the general fund is necessary to sustain the system.

[2:42:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MEARS asked how UA plans to develop a carbon credit program.

MS. STOLPE responded UA plans to move forward with carbon credits using 21,000 acres of available land.

[2:43:53 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [2:44] p.m.