

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 18, 2023

4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel, Co-Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Vice Chair
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Senator James Kaufman
Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senator Matt Claman

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF RESOURCE TOPICS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

No witnesses to report

ACTION NARRATIVE

[4:00:02 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CATHY GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kawasaki, Claman, Kaufman, Wielechowski, Dunbar, Co-Chair Bishop and Co-Chair Geissel.

INTRODUCTIONS AND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF RESOURCE TOPICS

[4:02:06 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL pointed to the references available to the committee for the purpose of education and orientation to

current topics relevant to the committee's focus on resources in Alaska. She asked the members to introduce themselves to the public and discuss their interests in state resources. The intention is to inform Co-Chair Bishop and herself about the items and legislation the committee might want to prioritize.

[4:02:39 PM](#)

SENATOR BILL WIELECHOWSKI, District K, introduced himself and stated that he had served on the Senate Resources Committee for nearly a decade. He described his interests in Alaska's resources, specifically fisheries including dip netting, sport fishing and commercial fishing. He also highlighted oil taxes and development and his support for deriving the maximum value for the resource. He expressed interest in carbon sequestration, carbon offset, and carbon credits. He favors resource plans that increase state revenue while protecting Alaska's industries and economy.

[4:04:29 PM](#)

SENATOR MATT CLAMAN, District H, introduced himself and expressed his interest in sitting on the Senate Resources Committee. He spoke about his legal experience with the fisheries industry where he became more acquainted with aspects of the commercial fishing industry. He mentioned additional experience over the last decade working with a small timber company as an in-house lawyer. His initial introduction to Alaska was as an employee in a remote mining camp. He pointed to the critical role the oil industry plays in the current economy and his concern for a continued strong resource development presence.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL acknowledged the legal backgrounds of Senator Claman and Wielechowski, which will enrich the committee conversations.

[4:06:42 PM](#)

SENATOR SCOTT KAWASAKI, District P, introduced himself and mentioned his extensive past service on both the House and Senate Resources Committees. He highlighted the City of Fairbanks, which was incorporated as a mining town. He reminded the committee about the huge natural gas reserves on the North Slope as well as the highly important Prudhoe Bay oil development. He wishes to preserve Alaska's fisheries to ensure that citizens and commercial fishers continue to yield a healthy resource. He spoke about timber harvesting in his district and highlighted the committee's responsibility to work toward the preservation of clean water and air.

[4:09:12 PM](#)

SENATOR JAMES KAUFMAN, District F, introduced himself and explained his history with various capital projects related to resource development in the state. He expressed interest in the responsible development of resources. He sought an optimal interface between government and industry. His professional history included experience with quality, risk, and project management.

[4:10:50 PM](#)

SENATOR FORREST DUNBAR, District J, introduced himself and agreed with the sentiments the committee members had expressed. He voiced support for the responsible development of oil and gas. He stated that while he represents a very densely populated Alaskan district, he grew up in rural Alaska. He mentioned his experience with the mining and fishery industries. He expressed concern about the dwindling natural gas supply in Cook Inlet, especially as it relates to serving the needs of the Municipality of Anchorage. He highlighted alternative energy and its potential to deliver more affordable energy in both rural and urban areas of the state. He spoke about his experience working to restore the Eklutna River fishery that had been destroyed.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL reminded the committee that Senator Dunbar also has a legal background.

SENATOR DUNBAR noted that he worked primarily in military law as a judge advocate.

[4:13:21 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP, District R, introduced himself and expressed his appreciation for the committee members. He noted Senator Wielechowski's interest in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and public cabin use. He relayed that he has served on the Resources Committee since his election to the Senate. He highlighted his interest in mining and wolf trapping. He mentioned the stringent permitting system in Alaska and stated he supports this as long as it is fair and equitable across all people and disciplines. He hopes to work with the mining industry to expand Rare Earth Element (REE) exploration in this state, which is under-explored. He highlighted the importance of working toward more affordable energy for all Alaskans and thoroughly vetting the Governor's proposal regarding carbon sequestration and carbon credits. He mentioned fisheries and his large district's challenges with subsistence fishing. He looks

forward to robust committee discussions about the importance of culture and subsistence fishing.

[4:19:39 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL, District E, introduced herself and highlighted her experience as a Registered Nurse (RN) and Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP). She detailed her history with the legislature and her desire to serve on the Resources Committee despite having a professional history in health care. She mentioned an article from a medical journal titled "Inequities in Life Expectancy Among US Counties 1980-2014" that was in the packets. She made the connection in Alaska between quality of life, increased life expectancy, and natural resource development. She noted that the article identified possible drivers of this connection including: jobs, clean water, wastewater removal, access to education, income, and increase in income. She highlighted that all of these areas benefitted greatly from the development of natural resources in Alaska.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL recalled her parents debating the issue of statehood in Alaska. Her father was a pilot and she was able to ride along to rural villages and witness the profound poverty in the subsistence lifestyle. She pointed out the beneficial changes she'd seen with schools and healthcare in small rural villages. She said she appreciated the discussion about fisheries and the relationship to food security for Alaskans. She reminded the committee that agriculture also falls under the committee's purview and said she has a keen interest in its development. She referred to the Resources Committee as most important, second only to the Finance Committee.

[4:26:17 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL stated that the University of Alaska finally received its land acquisition, and she hopes the committee will hear the important details in future meetings.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP talked about an upcoming presentation from the Idaho National Laboratory related to a discussion about nuclear power. He stated that Idaho National Laboratory certifies all new nuclear generation technology prior to commercial production.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL advised the committee about a presentation from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) about the Yukon River fisheries.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP added that the ADF&G presentation would also include information about the Kuskokwim River.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL referred to an earlier presentation from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the Senate Finance Committee. She highlighted the discussion about oil assets on the North Slope. She would like the department to provide detailed information about those assets. She pointed out that natural gas contracts are limited, and prepared the committee for a DNR presentation about Cook Inlet's resources. She asked the committee for requests related to upcoming hearings and planned presentations.

SENATOR CLAMAN requested a better understanding from DNR about state-owned timber resources, particularly related to carbon credits.

[4:30:23 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL expressed appreciation for Senator Dunbar's earlier comment about the black spruce and his experience as a fire fighter.

SENATOR DUNBAR asked if she had a sense for when the Governor's legislation on carbon sequestration would be introduced.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL said she did not have a sense at this time.

SENATOR DUNBAR inquired about trail projects and potential presentations for the sake of committee education.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL said she appreciated the discussion and suggestions for future presentations.

[4:32:23 PM](#)

SENATOR KAUFMAN discussed carbon sequestration and his interest in the topic. He wondered about managing under-explored land and the risk that legislative conservation efforts might unknowingly limit resource extraction.

VICE-CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI expressed curiosity about the natural gas pipeline discussed in previous legislative sessions. He highlighted the state's opportunities for future exploration. He also saw value in learning about REE and the underutilized opportunities.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL discussed a project that involved exporting natural gas directly off the North Slope. She stressed her

interest in agriculture and the Division of Agriculture in DNR. She wished to know more about the land near Nenana that the Governor designated as agricultural.

4:35:09 PM

CO-CHAIR BISHOP voiced appreciation for the committee members and their areas of professional expertise. He expressed excitement about the work the committee will accomplish this session.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL concluded the preliminary discussion about natural resources in Alaska.

4:37:29 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Giessel adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:37 p.m.