

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 14, 2023

3:30 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 Matt Claman

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Forrest Dunbar

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR APPOINTEES

Big Game Commercial Services Board
Michael Flores - Soldotna

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

Board of Fisheries
Gerad Godfrey - Eagle River
Greg Svendsen - Anchorage
Michael Wood - Talkeetna

- CONFIRMATIONS ADVANCED

SENATE BILL NO. 92

"An Act relating to state ownership of submerged land underlying navigable water within the boundaries of and adjacent to federal areas; and providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

MICHAEL WOOD, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Talkeetna, Alaska

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

GARY HOLLIER, representing self

Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries.

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director

Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA)

Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries.

KEN COLEMAN, representing self

Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries.

GREG SVENDSEN, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Anchorage, Alaska

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

GARY HOLLIER, representing self

Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries.

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director

Kenai River Sportfishing Association

Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries.

GERAD GODFREY, Appointee

Board of Fisheries

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Anchorage, Alaska

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

GARY HOLLIER, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Gerad Godfrey to the Board of Fisheries.

KEN COLEMAN, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Gerad Godfrey to the Board of Fisheries.

MICHAEL FLORES, Appointee
Big Game Commercial Services Board
Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified for reappointment to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

KEN COLEMAN, representing self
Kenai, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the appointment of Michael Flores to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:43 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CLICK BISHOP called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kaufman, Wielechowski, Claman, Kawasaki, Co-Chair Giessel, and Co-Chair Bishop.

At ease from 3:31:45 p.m. to 3:31:53 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNOR APPOINTEES **BOARD OF FISHERIES** **BIG GAME COMMERCIAL SERVICES BOARD**

[3:31:53 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP reconvened the meeting and announced the committee would hear from governor appointees to boards and commissions, starting with the Board of Fisheries.

He provided the following context:

The board consists of 7 members appointed by Governor on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge, and ability in the field of action of the board, and with a view to providing diversity of interest and points of view in the membership. Members must be residents of the state, appointed without regard to political affiliation or geographical location of residence. The Commissioner of the Dept. of Fish and Game is not a member, but serves as ex-officio secretary. Appointments must be made by April 1st. Terms begin July 1. The Joint Boards of Fish and Game select and nominate the Commissioner of Fish and Game to the governor for appointment.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked Michael Wood to provide his testimony.

3:33:54 PM

MICHAEL WOOD, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Talkeetna, Alaska, testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He stated that he has a commercial set net permit at the mouth of the Susitna River. Because of his interest in fish and fish habitat, he joined the MatSu Fish and Wildlife Commission 10 years ago. He also serves on the Upper Susitna Advisory Committee, the Chase Community Council, and the Susitna River Coalition. He spoke about issues related to habitat, the economics of sport fishing, invasive species, and allocation of resources. He described the Board of Fisheries as a very democratic process. He looks forward to serving on the board, if confirmed, and has begun to familiarize himself with the different fisheries.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP noted that there were technical difficulties with the audio.

3:39:49 PM

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked if he feels that subsistence has been allowed enough voice to have a democratic representation on the board.

MR. WOOD answered that subsistence has priority by law, but he wasn't sure it had gotten its due at the board level.

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked to what degree he considers himself a subsistence fisherman.

MR. WOOD answered that he lives on the road system and has access to grocery stores, so he doesn't consider himself a subsistence fisherman, but he eats wild food every day. When he commercial fishes it's for people who can't dipnet for themselves; the extra goes to local tribal entities.

[3:44:59 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP commented on the continuing absence of Chinook in the Yukon River and that this was the main source of protein for people living along the river. He asked Mr. Wood if he intended to listen to the people when they come before the board because this cultural lifestyle is in jeopardy.

MR. WOOD said he very much looks forward to speaking to the people who live on the river system and along the coast to understand how their lives are being impacted by the lack of Chinook and chum.

[3:47:05 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP opened public testimony.

[3:47:22 PM](#)

GARY HOLLIER, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries. He stated that he met Mr. Wood at board meetings and found him very easy to talk to. He has a lot of energy and has spent countless hours volunteering in different venues on fish issues. He expressed hope that his name would be forwarded to the full body for consideration.

[3:48:40 PM](#)

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association (KRSA), Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries. She opined that he will be an active listener and bring a balanced view of subsistence, personal, sport, and commercial fishing to the board.

[3:49:46 PM](#)

KEN COLEMAN, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Michael Wood to the Board of Fisheries. He stated that he met Mr. Wood at several board meetings and echoes Mr. Hollier's comments. Mr. Wood has also spent a lot of time and effort on the MatSu Commission on Fish and Wildlife. He's fair and balanced and will serve the public well. He highly recommended Mr. Wood's confirmation.

[3:50:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony on Michael Wood.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked Board of Fisheries appointee Greg Svendsen to provide his testimony.

[3:50:51 PM](#)

GREG SVENDSEN, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, testified as appointee to the Board of Fisheries. He recounted his personal history, educational achievements, and professional experience as a teacher. He has some experience serving on private boards and has fished extensively throughout the state. He said Alaska has been good to him and he wanted to give back, so he put his name forward.

[3:55:23 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked how he would make decisions as a member of the seven-member Board of Fisheries.

MR. SVENDSEN said he believes the board's responsibility is to conserve and develop resources for all Alaskans, but subsistence is the number one bylaw. He said he feels badly for the people who rely on fish that aren't returning. He believes in a terminal fishery where the fish return to the streams where they were born. He continued to say that if subsistence fishers receive what they need, then an allocation to an intercept fishery would be something to consider.

[3:57:15 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked what his approach would be when he perceives the board is divided on an issue.

MR. SVENDSEN said his approach would be to listen to the information, talk about it, and make the best decision he can. Each board member is entitled to their opinion.

[3:58:50 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked him to discuss his background in sport fishing.

MR. SVENDSEN said he's sport fished throughout the state and he'd like to have the opportunity to see his grandsons catch a Chinook salmon.

[3:59:39 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked if he'd ever had a hunting violation.

[4:00:22 PM](#)

MR. SVENDSEN thanked her for bringing it up because he meant to speak to that. He recounted that in 1996 he and others were hunting caribou in the Lake Clark area. They looked at the regulations and considered harvesting a brown bear. The pilot agreed that bear hunting was open in that area. He subsequently harvested a brown bear and took it to fish and game to have it sealed. The next day ADF&G called to inform him that brown bear hunting in that area was only open for subsistence. He was offered a \$500 fine and disposition of sentence if he had no other violation in a year and he agreed. The judge subsequently agreed that the regulations were unclear, but said she was bound by the \$500 fine that he had agreed to pay. She waived the community service and the regulations were rewritten the next year so it is easier to understand. He noted that some of his friends at ADF&G told him they refer to it as the Greg Svendsen regulation.

[4:03:26 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP opened public testimony on the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries.

[4:03:43 PM](#)

GARY HOLLIER, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries. He said he's participated in board processes for five decades and some members vote the party line relating to sport, subsistence, and commercial fishing. His hope is that every board member under consideration today will come with an open mind. He said he hopes Mr. Svendsen will use the available data to make decisions. He stated support for his appointment.

[4:05:01 PM](#)

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries. She stated that his six decades of knowledge from participating in fisheries throughout Alaska make him ideal for this role. He is very approachable and KRSA believes he will consider input from all stakeholders and fishery managers when weighing these important decisions. He has said that the resource comes first, which is important to KRSA. She asked the committee to move his name forward.

[4:06:31 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony on the appointment of Greg Svendsen to the Board of Fisheries.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked Gerad Godfrey to provide his testimony.

4:06:53 PM

GERAD GODFREY, Appointee, Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, recounted his personal history and work experience. This includes commercial fishing with family in the Kodiak Island fisheries, working on the Trans Alaska Pipeline, and work on fisheries matters during the Walker administration. After that he was appointed and served one term on the Board of Fisheries. He acknowledged that the learning curve for this board was steep, but he feels he has an understanding of the issues and the various stakeholders. His family situation has changed and he would like to return to the board.

4:10:15 PM

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if he stands by his statement in 2020 during the upper Cook Inlet deliberations on the salmon management plan and the conservation of king salmon. He quoted:

Conservation of King Salmon is tantamount to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic from the standpoint that you're foregoing sockeye harvest in exchange for delaying the inevitable.

MS. GODFREY said his philosophy is that it's not the best approach to manage for a single species when the net benefit is far outweighed by the detriment, such as not harvesting sockeye when they far exceed the escapement goals of that stock in that stream. He said he didn't recall what he was referring to specifically but such decisions are case-by-case and based on the data at the time. If a stock and stream has historically underperformed and all management efforts to that point have failed, it's a question of when to cut your losses and focus on other species. He said subsistence is the priority and it's an extreme measure to shut down an entire fishery for a river that hasn't historically had large numbers of a specific species such as Chinook salmon.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked Mr. Godfrey to comment on a similar statement he made last summer during the upper Cook Inlet meeting when he voted in support of liberalizing the set net fishery. That statement was that, "Slowing commercial activities to conserve streams was akin to stepping over dollars to pick up

pennies." He asked Mr. Godfrey if he thought there was anything fish managers could do to preserve Chinook salmon and if he thought they were worth preserving.

MR. GODFREY gave an example to show that he's talking about a smaller benefit at the expense of a larger benefit. In that case, 34,000 sockeye could have been harvested by the east side set netters but that didn't happen because 11 king salmon could have been caught as a non-target species. He said he would have viewed it differently if 50 kings could have been caught, but that wasn't the case. He also mentioned the subsequent request for an emergency meeting when the majority vote was not to pivot mid-season; he voted in the minority.

[4:18:27 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if he believes that the Board of Fisheries made the right decision when it rejected proposal 140 for the area M fisheries.

MR. GODFREY said he wasn't there to hear the discussion or see the data so it would be presumptuous to make an assessment on that decision. He acknowledged that it would have been a difficult decision. It's of utmost concern that a culture, history, and way of life is on the brink of never returning. He reiterated that the BOF has to use the data that's available to make decisions.

[4:20:51 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP said he represents the people on the Yukon from the Canadian border to Holy Cross, and this will be the third year running with no kings and this year no fall chums. He asked Mr. Godfrey if he would be willing to entertain the idea of an emergency BOF meeting to look at the most recent data for this fishery.

MR. GODFREY said yes, but the bar to qualify for an emergency meeting is new data that was not available to members at the time of their previous vote.

[4:23:32 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked him to talk about his thought process when he's weighing the interests of thousands of years of cultural subsistence on a river versus several hundred commercial permit holders. In Cook Inlet, hundreds of thousands of Alaskans rely on the fish for personal use versus several hundred commercial permit holders.

MR. GODFREY said subsistence users have priority. He believes the Yukon is a unique example because it's not on the road system so not a lot of sport or commercial fishers get a "bite at the apple" other than in Area M. In Cook Inlet and the Copper River there are other user groups that get a chance at the salmon before they make it into the river where there's subsistence fishing. What's going on in the federal waters is also a factor. He said that if a threatened stock or conservation is of the highest order, he favors shutting fisheries down to let the stock rebound. He said a decision to shut down all the northern bound sockeye on one side of Cook Inlet or the other in the hope that a few king salmon will make it up the river should be based on the data and then balance the interests. Each decision is made on a case-by-case basis, but subsistence comes first.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP asked the nominees to consider that the board members would benefit by taking a field trip on the Yukon River to talk to the people.

MR. GODFREY said he was open to that suggestion.

[4:30:06 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked what his approach is to deal with a board that often has conflicts.

MR. GODFREY said he assumes that every member's motive is to serve the state, preserve the resource, and honor the stakeholders. He recalled that when he served previously and there were 5:2 votes, he was in the minority more often than other members. His approach on contentious issues was to not reveal his position to the stakeholders because doing so inhibits compromise. When there's compromise, nobody walks away completely happy or completely unhappy, but they can live with it.

SENATOR CLAMAN asked what the biggest lesson was that he would take to his second term, assuming he's confirmed.

MR. GODFREY answered that it's to be accessible and also seek out the people who are reluctant to talk their position on an issue.

[4:34:02 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP opened public testimony on the appointment of Gerad Godfrey to the Board of Fisheries.

[4:34:18 PM](#)

GARY HOLLIER, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Gerad Godfrey to the Board of Fisheries. He stated that board members have a steep learning curve so once they have that expertise, they should be appointed to a second term. He described Mr. Godfrey as a "top shelf" board member. He made himself available before, during, and after meetings. He listened to peoples' input, looked at and analyzed the data, and voted accordingly. He's the type of board member that the state needs.

[4:35:54 PM](#)

KEN COLEMAN, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, echoed Mr. Hollier's testimony. Mr. Godfrey is open and transparent, he does his homework, he looks at the history and the economics of a situation, and he relies on data and science to make informed decisions. Mr. Coleman said he's attended upper Cook Inlet meetings since 1977 when the salmon management plan was promulgated, and many of those meetings have been contentious. But it helps when board members listen thoughtfully, rely on data and science, and make sound decisions. Everybody won't leave happy but they know they've been heard, and that's a premium.

[4:37:29 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony on the appointment of Gerad Godfrey to the Board of Fisheries.

CO-CHAIR BISHOP transitioned to the Big Game Commercial Services Board and asked Michael Flores to provide his testimony.

[4:38:01 PM](#)

MICHAEL FLORES, Appointee, Big Game Commercial Services Board, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Soldotna, Alaska, testified for reappointment to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. He recounted his personal history and his service on other boards and commissions, primarily fishery related. He relayed that he currently holds the marine transporter seat on this board and has chaired the transporter subcommittee for the last three years. He noted the growing concern about too many transporters on Kodiak Island and certain areas in Southeast. More work on that needs to be done, but bringing back the transporter sticker is a step in that direction because it will more readily identify the transporters.

[4:41:06 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked him to speak to the possibility of his having a financial conflict of interest serving on this board.

MR. FLORES answered that he makes his living as a marine transporter, but he has always put the resource first and has been willing to downsize when it's warranted to protect the resource. He mentioned the Board of Game meeting when there was a motion to reduce the harvest for nonresidents to one deer. He testified that most nonresidents are looking for a trophy so there was no reason for them to shoot a doe or spike on these hunts. The board adopted the buck only rule.

[4:43:10 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP opened public testimony on the appointment of Michael Flores to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[4:43:35 PM](#)

KEN COLEMAN, representing self, Kenai, Alaska, testified in support of the appointment of Michael Flores to the Big Game Commercial Services Board. He said he knows more about fisheries than big game, but he knows Mr. Flores is fair and equitable, a conservationist, and the right guy for the job. He wholeheartedly endorsed the reappointment.

MR. FLORES mentioned his work on the salmon task force and commented that if there had been s task force ten years ago, the king salmon run on the Yukon would be in better shape.

[4:45:12 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL asked where he stands on guide concessionaries.

MR. FLORES said it's a good idea.

[4:46:17 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP closed public testimony on the appointment of Michael Flores to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

[4:46:28 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR GIESSEL stated that the Senate Resources Committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends the following names be forwarded to the joint session for consideration:

Big Game Commercial Services Board

Michael Flores - Soldotna

Board of Fisheries

Michael Wood - Talkeetna
Greg Svendsen - Anchorage
Gerad Godfrey - Eagle River

Signing the reports regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects individual members' approval or disapproval of the appointees; the nominations are merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[4:47:11 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BISHOP stated that the names would be forwarded to the joint session.

[4:47:47 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Bishop adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:47 p.m.