

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES**

February 25, 2025

10:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Louise Stutes, Chair
Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Sarah Vance

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bill Elam

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S);

Fishermen's Fund Advisory and Appeals Council

Mary Swain - Naknek

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission

Rick Green - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record.

WITNESS REGISTER

MARY SWAIN, Appointee
Naknek, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory & Appeals Council.

RICK GREEN, Appointee

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as appointee to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[10:02:46 AM](#)

CHAIR LOUISE STUTES called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. Representatives Vance, Kopp, Himschoot, Edgmon, and Stutes were present at the call to order. Representative McCabe arrived as the meeting was in progress.

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

FISHERMEN'S FUND ADVISORY AND APPEALS COUNCIL

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES ENTRY COMMISSION

[10:03:38 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES announced that the only order of business would be confirmation hearings on the governor's appointments to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory & Appeals Council and the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission.

[10:03:50 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES explained that the fishermen's fund was established in 1951 to provide treatment and care to Alaska's licensed commercial fishermen who have been injured while fishing offshore in Alaska.

[10:04:19 AM](#)

MARY SWAIN, Appointee, Fishermen's Fund Advisory & Appeals Council began by explaining that for the past several years, she has served as the executive director and chief executive officer for a community health center located in Bristol Bay. She said that in this capacity, she has led significant expansions and enhancements in health care services with a strong emphasis on fiscal responsibility, community engagement, and strategic planning. She said the health care center is dedicated to serving a diverse community, including those involved in Alaska's vital fisheries.

MS. SWAIN explained that her connection to Alaska's Fisheries is not only professional but deeply personal. She said that she has worked closely alongside people who depend on the fisheries as their livelihood. She said understanding their challenges and advocating for solutions has been a major part of her leadership approach. She said that the fishermen's fund is a critical resource for fishermen and provides necessary support in time of injury, and ensures the workforce is protected. She said this appointment aligns with her work background and she had previous work experience navigating both state and federal compliance requirements. She said she was eager to take her background to the fishermen's fund and believes her experience in healthcare management, community leadership and regulatory compliance would contribute significantly to the council's mission.

[10:06:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON commented that he could not think of a better candidate for the board. He said Ms. Swain's background is exemplary and thought the committee should quickly approve her and move forward with business.

[10:07:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP said that his son did part of his medical internship at the clinic Ms. Swain was affiliated with. He said that she helped keep the Bristol Bay Fishery alive during the COVID-19 pandemic and talked about the critical and central work that she did to help accommodate workers. He said this is one of many examples of her service to the state.

[10:08:34 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES opened public testimony for the confirmation hearing of Ms. Swain to the Fishermen's Fund Advisory & Appeals Council. After ascertaining that nobody wished to testify, closed public testimony for the confirmation hearing.

[10:09:03 AM](#)

RICK GREEN, Appointee, Commercial Fishing Entry Commission (CFEC), said that he recently finished six years of employment with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). He shared his long history in Alaska, including work experience that included a job with the late Senator Dennis Egan, fish guiding, project management for engineering and environmental firms, and

serving as special assistant to Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang at the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. He personalized his testimony by speaking about his children and sharing that a heart attack seven years ago prompted him to assess his life and make the decision to serve the people of Alaska and his desire to serve on CFEC.

10:14:22 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked what optimization studies had been completed recently and how [CFEC] prioritizes them.

MR. GREEN responded that optimization studies are initiated by proposals and can come from the public, the Board of Fisheries or "wherever". He said that currently one is being worked on regarding Kodiak herring. He said that the Limited Entry Act is now 50 years old and suggested that some modernization may be required to optimize the studies. He said the optimization studies are just numbers and math, and said he was very comfortable with this type of analytical work given his previous project management background. He said that there is an incredible staff at CFEC, and the lead researcher does these studies and presents them to him and Commissioner Glenn Haight. He said it comes down to who wants them done, who needs them done, at which point CFEC would provide and review them.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked who Mr. Green replaced when initiating work with ADF&G.

MR. GREEN answered that he did not know who he replaced. He said that he joined ADF&G following a group that had been "let go" and was assigned as a special assistant to the commissioner.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if Mr. Green had any suggestions to where fishing limitations might be needed.

MR. GREEN replied that he does not necessarily look at this as his responsibility because CFEC responds to proposals and acts as the avenue to get proposals forward. He said if there are issues that need to be brought up, an optimization study could be completed.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that when it was created, CFEC had three commissioners and now it has two. She said he had a split vote from the other commissioner on a limited fishery. She asked for elaboration.

MR. GREEN clarified that this is with reference to the Prince William Sound Shrimp Fishery. He told her that he and the other commissioner split on the decision. He felt that the open access was an opportunity for Alaskans and something that needs to be guarded and protected for all Alaskans until one of two things happen. The first being a threat to the conservation of the resource, which he said is the highest priority. The second pertains to the economics for the fishermen; when the proposal came, there had been no increased effort to suggest it needed to be limited. He said he was the "no" vote on this issue.

[10:18:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON remarked that a story had been published by the Northern Journal regarding the "last man standing." He said this involved a 76-year-old permit holder who was the last individual fishing out of his community. He said after a conversation with Mr. Haight regarding the budget numbers, it was revealing that the travel budget was \$28,000 and from what he recalled, up from \$17,000. He asked Mr. Haight who the ambassador was for this community, and who was advocating for keeping permits local. He wanted to give the opportunity to Mr. Green to demonstrate how he would approach this ambassador position and what perspectives he had.

MR. GREEN confirmed that increasing CFEC presence was something that both Mr. Haight and him discuss. He said CFEC was starting to increase its presence but there had been some cutbacks. He opined that the outmigration of permits goes against the intent of the Limited Entry Act. He said that it is a deep concern that everybody needs to address and there are legal hurdles that would need to be faced. He asked, "How do we honor the Limited Entry Act to keep these economic engines in the small communities?" He advised that it would require work with legislators. He said that both him and Mr. Haight were concerned about this issue and interested in addressing it.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON that it is striking to him that there is no centralized voice on this issue. He said Representative Kopp is the only current commercial fisherman in the House of Representatives. He said that it is quite depressing to think about this topic and that nobody was leading the charge on it. He said Mr. Haight was doing a wonderful job on this and he expects that Mr. Green would be "right alongside him." He said the issue is growing in prominence and the state needed to do more.

MR. GREEN responded that he agrees "wholeheartedly." He said that the intent of part of the Act was to keep these economic engines ([fishing jobs]) in small places without a lot of opportunity.

[10:23:24 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES complimented Representative Edgmon's comment, and that this topic was "so critical" and considering the fishing situation now and the whole seafood industry that they had an opportunity to "drill down on it and hopefully make a difference." She expressed hope that he and the CFEC would be a critical part in helping put this together.

[10:24:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP remarked that he was proud to support the nomination of Mr. Green, and that he "brings a lot." He said that as someone who has interfaced with CFEC, he always found the commission to be incredibly responsive. He said when it comes to responsiveness and various jobs, the CFEC is an amazing team. He said the background in fishing was refreshing and great to see.

MR. GREEN noted that the executive director of CFEC was in the audience, and she brought 17 years of experience to the table. He expressed his optimism and intent to work with her and other CFEC staff.

[10:25:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked where he was located.

MR. GREEN responded that his office was in Anchorage and noted that 3 people with CFEC are in Southcentral Alaska. He said it gives an opportunity not to expand the travel budget but to do a lot of work while in Southcentral. He said that he sees it as an advantage.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that given a Sitka tribal citizen in Mr. Green's home that she hopes to see him more in Southeast.

[10:26:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that he knows Mr. Green well and is convinced he will do a fabulous job.

[10:26:57 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES opened public testimony for the confirmation hearing of Mr. Green to the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. After ascertaining that nobody wished to testify, she closed public testimony for the confirmation hearing.

[10:27:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON stated that the House Special Committee on Fisheries has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees and recommends that the following names be forwarded to a joint session for consideration: Mary Swain, Fishermen's Fund Advisory and Appeals; and Rick Green, Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. He said that signing the report regarding appointments to boards and commissions in no way reflects an individual member's approval or disapproval of the appointee, and the nomination is merely forwarded to the full legislature for confirmation or rejection.

[10:28:13 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 10:28 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

[10:30:04 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES discussed the upcoming committee schedule and the bills pertinent to upcoming committee meetings.

[10:30:42 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.