

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

March 13, 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  
Representative Bill Elam

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present.

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1  
Establishing the Joint Legislative Task Force on Sport Fishing  
Service Providers in Southeast Alaska.

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 116  
"An Act exempting from insurance regulation cooperative  
agreements entered into by two or more persons engaged in  
commercial fishing for the purpose of paying claims or losses."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

HOUSE BILL NO. 117  
"An Act relating to commercial set gillnet fishing; and  
providing for an effective date."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HCR 1  
SHORT TITLE: JOINT SPORT FISH SVC PROVIDERS TASK FORCE  
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HIMSCHOOT

01/31/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/31/25 (H) FSH, FIN  
03/13/25 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

**WITNESS REGISTER**

Thatcher Brouwer, Staff  
Representative Rebecca Himschoot  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** On behalf of Representative Himschoot, prime sponsor, discussed the duties and organization of the potential taskforce with HCR 1.

KIMBERLY LANDEEN, Assistant Executive Director  
Southeast Alaska Guides Organization  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HCR 1.

TRACY WELSH, Executive Director  
United Fishermen of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave invited testimony in support of HCR 1.

NORM CARSON, Sportfishing Charter Operator  
Pelican Charters  
Pelican, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

JILL WEITZ, Legislative Liaison  
Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

PAUL JOHNSON, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

MONTE ROBERTS, President  
Kenai River Professional Guide Association  
Kenai, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in opposition to HCR 1.

RUSSELL THOMAS, CEO  
Alaska Sportfishing Expeditions  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

TERRY WIRTA, Sportfishing Charter Owner  
Chicobi Charters  
Pelican, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a public testimony on HCR 1.

JOSH ANDERSON, Owner  
Fireweed Lodge  
Klawock, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

DAVID CREIGHTON, Owner  
Shelter Cove Lodge  
Craig, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

PATRICIA PHILLIPS, Mayor  
City of Pelican  
Pelican, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

DAVID DAYTON  
Sportfishing Charter Operator  
Sitka, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

JAMES KEARNS, representing self  
Gustavus, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in support of HCR 1.

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director  
Kenai River Sportfishing Association  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony in opposition to HCR 1.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[10:02:08 AM](#)

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

**HCR 1-JOINT SPORT FISH SVC PROVIDERS TASK FORCE**

[10:03:11 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1, Establishing the Joint Legislative Task Force on Sport Fishing Service Providers in Southeast Alaska.

[10:03:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT, as prime sponsor, introduced HCR 1. She remarked that she filed the bill because of a long-standing issue in her region. She believes that some of what is impacting her region would be applicable to other regions as well. She heard from subsistence, resident, and non-resident sportfishing and commercial fishing user groups that there is increased pressure on what is an "increasingly finite fisheries resource." She said that fishermen in all sectors are becoming more efficient with their business and user groups have asked the legislature to evaluate the sportfishing services sector.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT remarked that work was conducted with Legislative Research to evaluate bills of this concept all the way back to the Seventeenth Alaska State Legislature. Bills with similar concepts were included in the Seventeenth, Nineteenth, Twentieth, Twenty-third, Twenty-Seventh, Twenty-Eighth, and possibly the Twenty-Ninth and Thirty-First Alaska State Legislatures to address some of the pressures seen in sectors in Southeast Alaska. She said the reason a task force was chosen is because of the history of people that have tried to address this issue through legislation. She said that because the legislature has not found an adequate resolution, there should be a deeper look at things. She said the goal of the legislation is that the taskforce could come back with recommendations that represent all sectors. She remarked that the annual king salmon quota is set through the Pacific Salmon Treaty process and has been trending down since 2014 from nearly 500,000 fish to less than 250,000 fish in recent years. This means that if one user group exceeds its allocation then it gets pulled from another sector.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that when drafting HCR 1, she worked with stakeholders in the sportfishing sector who were worried about the fisheries resources, economic stability, and sustainability of the industry. If the legislation is passed, then recommendations would be put forward to the legislature for

consideration. She said that this could be a "model system" for the rest of the state, and it could be modeled on limited entry that is already done in commercial fisheries. She said the task force could recommend other models as well. She concluded that multiple user groups are asking the legislature to take a "careful look" at things.

10:08:04 AM

THATCHER BROUWER, Staff, Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Himschoot, prime sponsor, discussed the duties and organization of the potential taskforce with HCR 1. He said that it would be primarily an industry taskforce; it would involve one member of the House of Representatives as well as one member of the Senate who are both appointed by leaders of their legislative bodies. The taskforce would also be composed of one member from the Board of Fisheries, a member of the public who is a tribal citizen or leader of a Native corporation, and another member of the public who is a self-guided fishing operator. He said that the intent of the self-guided description is to have representation from the "bare boat" industry. Additionally, there would be three members appointed or nominated by the Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO) and two members from the Southeast Fish and Game Advisory Committee. Lastly, it would include two members of the public with commercial fishing and policy experience.

MR. BROUWER remarked that based on feedback from various stakeholders there is consideration of adding another member as a resident sportfishing seat.

10:10:15 AM

MR. BROUWER said that the taskforce would examine the history of the sportfishing service industry and advise the legislature on the best management practices.

10:11:00 AM

CHAIR STUTES remarked that when Representative Himschoot first began her introduction of the bill, she said that "this is a Southeast issue, but it could be statewide." However, given the organization of the task force, appointees are all predominantly representing Southeast Alaska. She raised concerns about disproportionate regional representation for a group that would serve state interests.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that initially it was looked at from a statewide perspective but during the interim it was determined that it would be positioned as a demonstration project. She said that the thought process was to start small and said that Southeast Alaska has the highest density of guided sportfisherman. She said that she sees it as a statewide issue, but focus was placed on Southeast to see what would work.

CHAIR STUTES said that it concerns her to pass legislation that is locally focused given that it is a statewide legislature.

[10:12:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked how many sportfishing closures have happened in Southeast Alaska in the last two or three years, for example, a King Salmon closure.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT, in response to Chair Stutes, said that she was open to making HCR 1 statewide focused. She directed Representative McCabe's question to Mr. Brouwer.

MR. BROUWER, in response to the question from Representative McCabe, said that he could get the exact number of closures in a follow-up. He said the resident king salmon fishery was recently closed for almost a month to residents and non-residents alike.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said the answer was zero. He said it was temporary but other than shrimp, there are no closures in Southeast Alaska. He said that for Southcentral, virtually every single fishery and many on Kodiak are closed. He said limiting this proposal to the Southeast seems alarming. He said that the Kenai River alone has 700 guides. He said that the legislation is a land-grab for the Southeast. He said that the state needs a new and updated "Economic Impacts and Contributions of Sportfishing in Alaska" study so legislators can know how much money it contributes to the various regions of Alaska. He said many of these areas had world-class fishing, and he said that he agrees with the resolution, but it needs to be expanded.

[10:15:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that one of the invited testifiers can speak about a "Guided Sportfish Study" that was recently completed for Southeast Alaska. She said that this

study helped influence the proposed legislation. She said that she was not opposed to working on a statewide issue but felt that Southeast was prepared to grapple with the subject matters.

CHAIR STUTES remarked that invited testimony would be heard following questions from other committee members.

[10:16:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked Representative Himschoot how many stakeholders across the state her office reached out to and whether it was isolated conversations with Southeast stakeholders.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that her office reached out across the state but minimally to assess a statewide resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked who would be considered a stakeholder in this project.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that virtually everyone in her region was a stakeholder.

[10:17:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE told Representative Himschoot that this was a bold move. She said that she has already received e-mails about this and echoes the same questions as previous testifiers. She asked if Representative Himschoot could give some history for what brought this legislation forward. She remarked that she had sympathy for the struggles experienced in Southeast and because the state is so large, the struggles are regionally distinct. She said Representative McCabe outlined some very pertinent issues and people are frustrated with closures in the Cook Inlet since everything is managed around king salmon. She said that one thing in her understanding is the non-guided sportfishing growth in Southeast. She asked whether this was part of the need for HCR 1. She said that non-guided sportfishing is not as large in Southcentral and asked Representative Himschoot to speak about this concept. She was trying to understand why this had come to the forefront of discussions.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that she would be the first to say that she was not looking to do this since it is a "big bite into a snarled issue" but it is the first time in a long history of evaluating best management practices that the

sportfishing industry came to her to ask for support. She said that the August sportfishing closure in Southeast riled up her constituents. She said the driver of HCR 1 was that these industry members came in to work at this and bill concepts have been in discussion for 30 years. She said that after considering statewide implementation it was determined that Southeast affiliates could handle Southeast matters better.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that regarding bare boats, there is a bit of a "back and forth." You can't regulate them because there is no definition, and it can't be defined because there is no data; "it is circular." She said that it is a growing sector, but this information is anecdotal. She said that it would be important to include this user group in the taskforce.

[10:22:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said that she appreciated the answer and that this was an inflammatory issue across the state. She asked whether someone on the taskforce would be able to understand the Pacific Salmon Treaty obligations.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT directed the question to Mr. Brouwer.

MR. BROUWER responded that on page 4, line 13 of HCR1, there is not a member on the taskforce, but the taskforce could request support from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC).

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT added that there would be a member of the Board of Fisheries on the taskforce as well.

[10:23:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that on page 1, line 14, he disagreed with the "whereas" based on his previous question, he said it seems that the highest population is in Southcentral and faces almost complete closures for sportfishing. He said that the problems would likely show up where the greatest population is. He said this would need to change before he could support the proposed legislation. Second, he asked why HCR 1's proposed members represented commercial fisheries but there were none representing the ADF&G.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that part of the issue was the inability to direct the administration for what it can and cannot do. She said that there was a lot of expertise in the

commercial fishing sector. She said that they could get advice from ADF&G but not seat the department. She said that she was not opposed to a statewide effort, but Southeast was ready to do the work. She recognized that these things were not just a Southeast issue.

[10:25:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM said that on the Kenai River ("the Kenai"), this is a huge issue. The closures have frustrated and disappointed many residents in the area. He asked whether the taskforce would be limited in scope, such as all Southeast, saltwater vs. freshwater, or simply sportfishing in general.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT responded that the duties of the taskforce start on page 2, line 28, and there had been saltwater versus freshwater discussions. She forwarded the question to Mr. Brouwer.

MR. BROUWER added that as it is worded, HCR 1 includes both freshwater and saltwater sportfishing. He said currently it is limited in scope to Southeast Alaska, but the proposed resolution is open to conversation regarding expanding the scope.

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if there would be limitations with regards to harvest types. He said that there is an array of methods used to capture fish.

MR. BROUWER responded that it would not be limited by any type of sportfishing.

[10:27:26 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES announced that the committee would hear invited testimony on HCR 1.

[10:28:10 AM](#)

KIMBERLY LANDEEN, Assistant Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Guides Organization, gave invited testimony in support of HCR 1. She said that she has become familiar with many of the concerns surrounding Alaska's sportfishing industry. She said that the Kenai River is the gem of the state, and the damaged king salmon run is something in which everyone wants to see a solution. She remarked that Southcentral Alaska's fisheries are like a "canary in a coal mine" for many of Southeast's fisheries. She said

that this canary was a reason for many early pushes in legislation to address the diminishing fish returns. She said that the idea of a healthy king salmon stock was a dream for many people in Alaska. She remarked that the idea of letting a fishery crash before responsive action is taken is something concerning.

MS. LANDEEN said that economics play into the equation as well and the SEAGO has gone to the state multiple times requesting economic studies pertaining to sportfishing, but to no avail. She said that the SEAGO funded its own study in lieu of a statewide study. The most recent study was completed in 2024. A couple notable findings determined that \$202 million of outside revenue enter Southeast Alaska annually. This supports 1,750 jobs and contributes over \$11 million in local tax revenue. She said that these are more than figures but tell the stories of families who are trying to make a living in Southeast Alaska. She said the sportfishing industry supports these households and nobody wants to see it leave or become impaired like the Kenai.

[10:31:04 AM](#)

MS. LANDEEN said that Southeast currently faces some real challenges that threaten the sustainability of the industry, both economically and socially. She said that the tension between sportfishing and commercial fishing has increased in Southeast Alaska. This has been from resource limitations, shifting regulations, volatile international regulations, and shifting consumer demands. With regards to current halibut regulations, she said they are at an all-time low. She said that regulations for guided halibut fishing trips permit only a single fish under 37 inches, with a halibut specific fishing closed on Tuesdays. She opined that this is not Southeast Alaska fishing, and a single 37-inch "chicken" was not adequate. She said that she understood that resources were low but raised concerns that current limitations in the sportfishing industry could drive visitors from the state. She discussed the time-consuming logistics for visiting some of the fishing locations in Southeast and compared it with fishing limitations. She said that a minimum travel time of two days is required to get to some of the fishing locations and given the limits, it may not be worthwhile. She said that British Columbia is buying up many commercial quotas and putting them into their sportfishing quota. Consequently, many of the previous sportfishing clients in Southeast Alaska are opting for travel to British Columbia, or even Washington or Oregon, for lower-cost participation. She

said the current King Salmon limits do not appear well for prospective visitors in the Lower 48 states.

MS. LANDEEN concluded by saying that HCR 1 is about getting everybody together and creating a statewide long-term plan. She said that until everyone comes to the table, Alaska resources and communities will not be able to succeed. She said that preventing over-capitalization would be needed to support the viability of fisheries and additionally, HCR 1 could help ease tensions between commercial and sportfishing members. She said that sportfishermen can learn from commercial counterparts and look at the CFEC for problem solving solutions. She said this is not about halting opportunity but about creating a stronger industry. She said that sportfishing is a growing industry and an economic lifeline to Southeast. She said that while she never wants to see commercial fishing leave Southeast, a stronger look at regional market capitalization may be warranted for best use of the state and region.

[10:36:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that what he was hearing based off the e-mails that he has received is that limited entry would be the goal. He asked whether this was the wish of the Southeast Alaska Guides Organization. He asked whether Ms. Landeen could describe what the goal is.

MS. LANDEEN responded that the wish of SEAGO is to understand the resources more concisely. She said she was hesitant to use the words "limited entry." The intent is not to limit any participation but that the stocks could be rebuilt with increased participation. She remarked that SEAGO also wants a preservation of the resources and for folks "not to battle each other" as they have been in some communities.

[10:38:40 AM](#)

TRACY WELSH, Executive Director, United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), Gave invited testimony in support of HCR 1. She said the UFA represents 35 various member groups across the state who participate in both state and federal fisheries across Alaska. She expressed support from the UFA Board for the adoption of HCR 1. She said that the board had a lengthy discussion about this issue and was impressed that this legislation was driven by the sportfishing sector. She remarked that UFA looks forward to working with colleagues associated with sportfishing. She said that at the end of the day, sustainability and management of the

resource is the utmost priority for everyone and UFA has a breadth of experience regarding CFEC regulations.

[10:40:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON remarked that this was a good introduction to issues facing sportfishermen in Southeast Alaska. He said that having just served as a member of the Joint Legislative Seafood Taskforce, one thing he understood was the commitment of time. He said that he looks at this taskforce and sees people from "every stripe and sector" in Southeast in particular. He asked whether time was available to accomplish what the group intended. He asked whether the proposed taskforce could get 12 people together in time and if it may be smarter to have a smaller working group.

MS. WELSH responded that Representative Edgmon makes a valid point and there was a lot of work that went into the Joint Legislative Seafood Taskforce behind the scenes with both the public and various stakeholders. She said that it is "a big bite of the apple" and if anything, a great start to the conversation. She said that she was not sure whether the goals proposed under with HCR 1 would be accomplished but it would start dialogue.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON said the intent of the bill is laudable, well-served, and well-intended, but looking at the surface, he did not believe the work could be accomplished fully in the short time it has. He said that getting a consensus with the various viewpoints would be difficult. He said that working groups had been established in other areas of Alaska. He asked if it may be better served to have a smaller group that would get to a starting point, and it could grow into a larger conversation. He said that he has not seen any taskforces tied into one area of the state and bringing regionalism into fishing is not good.

[10:44:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP echoed Representative Edgmon's comment that the timeline was an issue and if they extended that date, then it might be more helpful. He said that as much as he would like to see Upper and Lower Cook Inlet fisheries be part of this, those areas would be better suited to their own individual taskforce. He remarked that one thing that becomes clear is that a lot would be learned going through the exercises in a regional area. The exercises could support discussions in other

regions. He said that it is inconceivable that one taskforce could support all the various fisheries. He said that there is support for the idea and how important it is to Alaska.

[10:45:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked Ms. Welsh whether UFA has sportfish membership and during board deliberations whether the focus was Southeast specific or included Statewide issues.

MS. WELSH responded that UFA does not have any sportfishing members or charter operators on the board. She said that deliberations were not specific to the region, but UFA was hopeful that its members could be part of the process. She said that UFA views HCR 1 as sportfishing driven.

[10:47:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that the SEAGO sportfishing study was to be uploaded to Alaska's Bill Action and Status Inquiry System (BASIS). She said the study is what led her to believe that HCR 1 would be doable, even with a tight timeline.

[10:48:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that he was interested to know the cost of the taskforce, that way an idea of the prospective expenses could be discussed. He said that he was unsure who would know that information.

[10:48:51 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES opened public testimony on HCR 1.

[10:49:18 AM](#)

NORM CARSON, Sportfishing Charter Operator, Pelican Charters, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that he first became involved in the fisheries when he started commercial trolling, and after he "saw the writing on the wall," he changed fisheries and became involved in sportfishing charters. He said that he has been a charter operator for 30 years now. He said there is "a lot more gear in the water than there ever was." He said that he sees the size differences in the fish such as king salmon, and groundfish between now and then. He said that charter operators cannot even keep Yelloweye Rockfish anymore and asked where they went. He said that

questions regarding what has happened to the resource can be answered with a taskforce.

10:50:56 AM

The committee took an at-ease from 10:50 a.m. to 10:52 a.m. [Chair Stutes handed the gavel to Vice Chair Edgmon during the at-ease.]

10:52:30 AM

JILL WEITZ, Legislative Liaison, Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska ("Tlingit & Haida"), gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. She said that for nearly 20 years she has worked alongside tribes, sport and commercial fishermen, and other stakeholders associated with natural resources. The tribes maintain that the management of Alaska's natural resources must be improved, and this is why they support HCR 1. She noted there have been closures that disproportionately affect tribal citizens. She said that multiple communities with Tlingit & Haida populations rely on natural resources and fishing activities. She said that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has allowed non-resident retention of king salmon in excess of 30,000 fish and discussed the concerns. She said that currently the king salmon in Southeast are not sustainably managed. She said that Tlingit & Haida are "big fans" of collaborative management and the proposed taskforce would foster collaboration. She said that Alaska needs to capitalize on this opportunity to ensure support for Alaska's coastal communities.

10:56:32 AM

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked Ms. Weitz if she could describe any tribal fisheries. She asked what this was like in Southeast, specifically regarding sportfishing, and how this interfaces with tribal fisheries.

MS. WEITZ responded that tribes do not manage or co-manage fisheries, but the tribes have worked closely in the management of fisheries. She said that subsistence fishing access is important and an important aspect to many tribal communities. She could not speak specifically to any specific tribal fisheries.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said that in Cook Inlet, the Ninilchik Tribe had a small permit within the entire fishery. She asked

if Tlingit & Haida had many permits in Southeast proportionate to non-tribal permits.

MS. WEITZ responded that it does not.

10:58:25 AM

VICE CHAIR EDGMON asked if Tlingit or Haida Tribes would be interested in being hosts for some of the proposed taskforce meetings.

MS. WEITZ responded that she could not speak to this without confirmation from leadership. However, leadership was open to fostering collaborative efforts.

10:59:08 AM

PAUL JOHNSON, representing self, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that in 1995 there was a 13-member taskforce on guiding and game in which he had the opportunity to be a member. He said that the taskforce settled a lot of the issues that were like the current issues discussed regarding sportfishing. He said that many of the regulations and statutes from this taskforce were still in place, more than 25 years later. He sat on another taskforce that was exclusively for Southeast regarding bears. He said there were 22 members on this taskforce and there needed to be a consensus. He said that he understands that it's difficult especially considering the timeline. He said after the Southeast taskforce on bears, Kodiak Island followed suit shortly after by developing a taskforce. He said that HCR 1 could be used as a template like these previous taskforces. He said taskforce recommendations are needed statewide and nobody would deny that. He said that as a previous taskforce member, they do work.

11:00:51 AM

VICE CHAIR EDGMON said that if he remembered right, the bear taskforce in 1995 was statewide.

MR. JOHNSON confirmed that it was statewide. He said that work was done around the state to get four different areas represented so the public could get comments in. He said that it is a struggle but one of the things that he has learned about taskforces is that people get to know each other and learn from other members. He said that he grew up here and he doesn't want to see Alaska end up like Washington, Oregon, and California but

it appears to be heading that way. He told Representative McCabe that Southeast has experienced closures as well, "big time." He said that something needs to be done, somehow or some way. He echoed Representative McCabe's comment that this is an issue statewide but said he does not know if the state can address all its fisheries at once.

[11:02:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked Mr. Johnson, given his experience on the bear taskforce and the need to focus the taskforce on Southeast, why this should be at a legislative level rather than dealt with by a regional advisory committee.

MR. JOHNSON responded that he thinks the taskforce would generate some new definitions and statutes that could be applied statewide, including new things the Board of Fisheries could address, as well as other communities. He said multiple stakeholders would benefit.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE remarked that while a bear and sportfishing taskforce were different subjects in nature, the process of a taskforce was similar. She asked what Mr. Johnson thought of the makeup of the proposed taskforce and whether it was like his previous taskforce experiences.

MR. JOHNSON said that he thinks a sportsman should be on the taskforce, with example groups like, the Outdoor Council, Territorial Sportsman, etc. He said that it is helpful on these taskforces to have a legislative person to support discussions. Generally, the legislators are the chairs of the taskforce.

[11:04:39 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR EDGMON commented that time was constricted, and nine other testifiers were on the call. He thanked Mr. Johnson for the testimony.

[11:05:21 AM](#)

MONTE ROBERTS, President, Kenai River Professional Guide Association, gave public testimony in opposition to HCR 1. He said that he has appreciated the conversations and understood the desire to grab a piece of the resource. He said there have been issues on the Kenai for a long period of time. He said that the state has gone through this before and the resource will dictate whether people come or not. He said that if there

are fish then people would come. He said that comparing the structure proposed under HCR 1 to the big game guiding industry is a disaster in his opinion. He said that the bear taskforce placed barriers to participate, and it made no sense to apprentice for three years just to potentially get denied bear guiding access. He said that HCR 1 looks like this, and it grabs a public piece of the resource and regulates it. He said that it is a bad idea.

[11:06:57 AM](#)

RUSSELL THOMAS, CEO, Alaska Sportfishing Expeditions, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that he understands the desire to operate a taskforce statewide, but he would hate to see a statewide approach get "high-centered" because solutions might be unique to a region. He remarked that some of these differences could include the ratio of non-resident to resident fishermen, the ratio of guided to unguided trips, or even treaty implications. He said that Southeast has seen consistent changes in king salmon and halibut regulation, and it is causing pressure on additional stocks such as lingcod and rockfish. He said the rise of cruise ships and diversification of business models have changed things. He said he did not know whether limited entry was the best solution, but he supports a taskforce being put together and having difficult conversations with a variety of user groups.

[11:10:25 AM](#)

TERRY WIRTA, Sportfishing Charter Owner, Chicobi Charters, gave public testimony on HCR 1. He said that he has run his charter business since the late '80s and has seen a lot of changes since then. He said that one change that he is concerned about is the "bare boat fisheries." He said that it is not fair to charter operators since bare boat fishermen don't need a logbook and other regulatory standards. He said that he understood that it is all a money game. He said that he has seen people trying to come up and take advantage of things and fishing is getting worse over time. He said maybe the state should move towards a limited entry program.

[11:11:55 AM](#)

JOSH ANDERSON, Owner, Fireweed Lodge, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that he is in support of establishing a limited entry program. He said that his kids are growing up in the industry much like he did, and they will not have

opportunities like he did. He said this is not a new idea, but something that locals, business owners, and commercial fishermen have been requesting. He said limited entry would give support and structure to the industry. If growth is left unchecked, then the state risks damaging both the fish stocks and communities.

[11:13:36 AM](#)

DAVID CREIGHTON, Owner, Shelter Cove Lodge, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He remarked that as a family, they are major contributors to the community, whether tax revenue or community involvement. He said that given the loss of some industries on Prince of Wales Island, sportfishing has become one of the leading industries. He said over the last couple of decades he has watched client satisfaction decrease due to dwindling resources. He said that the pie has been cut down so much that people are reduced to catching "baby fish" and nobody comes to Alaska to catch a baby. The reduction in harvest opportunities has impacted the lodge's marketability. He said a unique aspect of the sportfishing industry is the reliability of revenue since unlike commercial fishing, it was not tied directly to the resource. He said that as a member of the Craig Advisory Committee, managing the number of sportfishing businesses has been a frequent topic of discussion. Some sort of control has been asked for by user groups for "quite some time." He said much like Southeast Alaska's participation in the pilot program for electronic logbooks, the region could operate as a pilot program for HCR 1.

[11:17:37 AM](#)

PATRICIA PHILLIPS, Mayor, City of Pelican, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. She said that the outcome of HCR 1 would prevent economic distress to communities like Pelican. She said that the taskforce would provide resources and help for making good recommendations. She remarked that the "bare boat" systems have caused issues in the state. She recommended that a taskforce member be familiar with north pacific fisheries management issues. She said that sportfishing growth has been impacting resources close to the community and it has caused concerns.

[11:20:05 AM](#)

DAVID DAYTON, Sportfishing Charter Operator, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that he has been a

charter captain since 2009, and clients have seen diminishing returns. He said that with reduced limits and no retention of yelloweye rockfish, charter operators want to see everyone come together and address the issues. He remarked that Alaska needs to give clients an opportunity and how important tourism is, especially for residents of small communities. He hopes for a resolution and says that although the timeline is short, "if not now then when?" He added that the state must start somewhere, so why not Southeast Alaska?

[11:21:58 AM](#)

JAMES KEARNS, representing self, gave public testimony in support of HCR 1. He said that it is time to do something to limit the increasing number of fishermen but something worth thinking about is that Alaska has always been impacted by outside interests. He said that Alaska needs to look at non-residents participating in the fishery. This would ensure that locals have the opportunity to provide these businesses and services. He said that he would be delighted to work on the taskforce and thinks that it is a great idea and if started in Southeast, then it would "snowball."

[11:23:32 AM](#)

SHANNON MARTIN, Executive Director, Kenai River Sportfishing Association, gave public testimony in opposition to HCR 1. She said that the Kenai River Sportfishing Association opposes HCR 1. She said that it could potentially limit the public's access to a public resource. She asked the committee to take pause when considering this legislation. She said often legislation prepared for one region can "grow legs and walk into someone else's backyard."

[11:24:52 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR EDGMON commented that the bill sponsor for HCR 1, Representative Himschoot, and her staff Thatcher Brouwer were available for contact if anyone wished to discuss the bill topic.

VICE CHAIR EDGMON announced that HCR 1 was held over.

[11:26:00 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.