

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

April 8, 2025
10:03 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

HOUSE BILL NO. 125

"An Act relating to membership of the Board of Fisheries."

- MOVED CSHB 125 (FSH) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 125

SHORT TITLE: BOARD OF FISHERIES MEMBERSHIP

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) JIMMIE

03/05/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/05/25	(H)	FSH, RES
03/18/25	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/18/25	(H)	Heard & Held
03/18/25	(H)	MINUTE (FSH)
03/25/25	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/25/25	(H)	Heard & Held
03/25/25	(H)	MINUTE (FSH)
04/08/25	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

Joseph Felkl, Legislative Liaison
Office of the Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions about HB 125.

REPRESENTATIVE NELLIE UNANGIQ JIMMIE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, briefly spoke during the hearing of HB 125.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[10:03:40 AM](#)

CHAIR LOUISE STUTES called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Representatives Edgmon, Himschoot, Kopp, McCabe, Vance, and Stutes were present at the call to order.

HB 125-BOARD OF FISHERIES MEMBERSHIP

[10:04:38 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 125, "An Act relating to membership of the Board of Fisheries."

[10:05:21 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HB 125, labeled 34-LS0696\A.1, Bullard, 4/3/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, lines 7 - 11:

Delete "[THE GOVERNOR SHALL APPOINT EACH MEMBER 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.]"

Insert "The governor shall appoint each member 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."

Page 2, line 1, following "**fishing**":

Insert "**and have knowledge and experience in the commercial fishing industry**"

Page 2, line 2, following "fishing":

Insert "and have knowledge and experience in sport fishing"

Page 2, lines 3 - 5:

Delete ", from a list of four names submitted by the Alaska Federation of Natives; however, the governor may reject the list and request that another list be submitted"

Insert "and have knowledge and experience in subsistence fishing"

Page 2, line 6:

Delete "who represents"

Insert "of"

Page 2, lines 6 - 9:

Delete ", from a list of three names submitted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; however, the governor may reject the list and request that another list be submitted"

Insert "who has knowledge and experience in fisheries management"

[10:05:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON objected for the purpose of discussion.

CHAIR STUTES said that on page 1, lines 7-9, the amendment would reinsert language currently in Alaska Statute (AS) 16.05.221(a), which read that "the governor shall appoint each member 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." She said the board would have seven members as originally proposed in HB 125, including 2 commercial fishing members, 2 sportfishing members, 2 subsistence members, and one of a scientific background. She said that it removes side boards of having the names submitted by the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) for the subsistence seats and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for scientific appointments and adds the qualification for all seats that members have knowledge and experience in the fishery. The bill, with this amendment, would bring an adequate balance to the board without being overly prescriptive, creating a tie between statute and user groups. She said this would be a small but

important step in balancing the board without unintended consequences.

[10:07:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON spoke in support of Amendment 1 and reflected that the committee had heard through public testimony concerns from stakeholders that support the changes. He said legislation that changes the makeup of the Alaska Board of Fisheries should not be taken lightly and he thinks that the proposed amendment is a well thought out approach. Having participated with the Board of Fisheries endeavors in the past, he noted that changes were complicated and the amendment was positive.

[10:08:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that he liked Amendment 1, as well. He said that he agreed with Representative Edgmon that this is something that has been needed for a long time.

[10:08:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP said that he supported Amendment 1. He liked the reference to NOAA removed and opined that adding the language "people with knowledge and experience in fisheries management" would open up the position to a larger pool of strong candidates in Alaska. He noted that it recognizes that Alaska has lots of great candidates for the scientific appointment to the Board of Fisheries.

[10:09:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON removed his objection. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[10:09:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HB 125, labeled 34-LS0696\A.4, Wallace/Bullard, 4/3/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1, following "**Fisheries**":
Insert "; **and providing for an effective date**"

Page 1, line 3, through page 2, line 9:
Delete all material and insert:

"* Section 1. AS 16.05.221(a) is amended to read:

(a) For purposes of the conservation and development of the fishery resources of the state, there is created the Board of Fisheries composed of seven members appointed by the governor, subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the legislature in joint session. In making appointments to the Board of Fisheries, the governor shall consider prospective appointees who have previously served on an advisory committee established under regulations adopted by the department and shall select members

(1) who have interest and experience in public affairs, demonstrate good judgment, and have knowledge and experience in the field of fisheries;

(2) with a view to providing balanced representation of the diverse fishery interests of the state as follows:

(A) four members who are regional representatives, who have demonstrated knowledge of the fishery resources and needs of the region the member represents, and who will prioritize the sustainability of the fisheries and the economic and cultural needs of the region the member represents, appointed as follows:

(i) one member who represents Southeast Alaska and Yakutat;

(ii) one member who represents Bristol Bay;

(iii) one member who represents Southcentral Alaska, Cook Inlet, and Prince William Sound; and

(iv) one member who represents the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim and Western Alaska;

(B) three members who are fishery user group representatives, who have demonstrated expertise and engagement in the fishery the member represents, and who will advocate for the interests of the fishery user group the member represents across all regions of the state, appointed as follows:

(i) one member who represents the commercial fishing industry;

(ii) one member who represents subsistence fishing; and

(iii) one member who represents the sport fishing industry

[THE GOVERNOR SHALL APPOINT EACH MEMBER 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. THE APPOINTED MEMBERS SHALL BE RESIDENTS OF THE STATE AND SHALL BE APPOINTED WITHOUT REGARD TO POLITICAL AFFILIATION OR GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF RESIDENCE. THE COMMISSIONER IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF FISHERIES, BUT SHALL BE EX OFFICIO SECRETARY]."

Page 2, following line 15:

Insert a new bill section to read:

"* **Sec. 3.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2025."

CHAIR STUTES objected for the purpose of discussion.

[10:09:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE noted that she had considered making this as a separate bill just for conversation purposes since over the years, she has heard that more regional representation was needed on the Board of Fisheries, not just user group representation. She said that this amendment would make the Board of Fisheries a hybrid model that would combine the best of both worlds, based upon the four fishery regions and working with current fisheries management and keeping with the number of members currently on the board. She said that she wanted to open this bill topic up to conversation so that the public knows that the legislature is being very deliberative about the makeup of the Board of Fisheries and that they understood the requests for regional representation. She wanted the public to know that when advancing HB 125, they had considered a variety of options, instead of one singular path. She wanted stakeholders and members of the public who feel that they are not being represented and who have requested regional representation to know that their voice is being heard in this process.

[10:11:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON said that he appreciates the spirit of the amendment and what everyone was trying to achieve was regional representation and an element of fairness and that everyone had a voice. He said that the one thing that gives him pause was that there was another piece of legislation that had passed regarding conflict of [interest]. He said there are times when [a board] would want someone to participate without getting "conflicted out." He said that two names coming through the committee had support from his region despite not being from his region.

[10:12:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE said that last year there was a talk about the Joint Legislative Seafood Taskforce and a debate over the size of the taskforce. He inquired whether there was a better way to do things. He said that he loved the idea of regional representation but asked whether potential advisors could be considered. These would be non-voting members that could be appointed by their community or region. He said that there were regional advisory committees (RACs), and they could appoint an advisor to advise the committee and attend the Board of Fisheries meetings. He said that this way, it may prevent things from getting "unwieldy." He said that he feels that Amendment 2 is "too big a bite" at this moment and he could not support it but liked the idea and the discussion.

[10:14:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that she liked Amendment 2 since regional representation has been missing from her community. She said that having regional representation would be wonderful but she was worried about how exactly regional representation would be defined. She concluded that she cannot support the amendment today but likes the idea.

[10:14:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP said that he likes the idea of regional representation, but Amendment 1 was much better for bringing balance to the board. He said that if he was the governor, he could pick someone with solely a commercial fishing, sportfishing, or subsistence background out of all four of these regions. He said that he could easily stack the board with whatever interest he had. He said that the first amendment does a much better job striving for balance and for this reason, he was opposed to Amendment 2.

[10:15:50 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES said that she appreciates the proposed amendment and the conversation it fostered as "food for thought." However, she felt that it may make the Board of Fisheries too prescriptive and eliminate some potentially good candidates for the board. For this reason, she was unable to support Amendment 2.

[10:16:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said that Alaskans deserve this robust conversation. She said that she brought this conversation forward to let Alaskans know that the legislature has done the work regarding this type of proposal. She said that she believed the amendment may have too many points of concern, the largest being that the board could be stacked towards one user group under the wording of this amendment.

Representative Vance [moved to withdraw] Amendment 2. [There being no objection,] Amendment 2 was withdrawn.

[10:18:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE moved to adopt Amendment 3 to HB 125, labeled 34-LS0696\A.5, Bullard, 4/8/25, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 7, following "session.":

Insert **"In making appointments to the Board of Fisheries, the governor shall give preference to prospective appointees who have previously served on an advisory committee established under regulations adopted by the department."**

[10:18:12 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES objected for the purpose of discussion.

[10:18:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said that when talking about regional representation and people with experience, Amendment 3 would add language for the governor to use when making considerations of appointments to the Board of Fisheries. It would require the advisory committees to be utilized as a source of potential appointments. She said that these are people who are already involved in the process and understood pertinent issues discussed on the Board of Fisheries. She noted that preference is a broad interpretation, and it would not prohibit the governor from choosing whomever they felt was the best candidate. She said that the intent behind the amendment is to have as much localized experience and insight into the fisheries as possible and it also would let people serving on the regional advisory committees know that their voice is important. This would just point the governor "in the right direction."

[10:20:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON said that HB 125, which was offered by Representative Jimmie, proposes to change the Board of Fisheries in a significant way. He opined that when thinking about people that greatly qualify as a subsistence user, they may not necessarily be affiliated with the regional advisory committees. He said that he appreciated the discussion but would not support Amendment 3 at this time.

[10:21:12 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES observed that the amendment states that "the governor shall give preference" and noted that this suggests that preference would be given to advisory council (AC) members. She said that an AC member is usually localized and focused on local issues, and they might come to the Board of Fisheries with ideas on how to manage fisheries that are rooted in their region. She said that the board needs to look at doing good for the state, not just their districts. She said that the wording "shall give preference" is disconcerting and could limit board accessibility of good people.

[10:22:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT said that she has engaged with her AC and asked Representative Vance whether the AC's have appointed seats such as subsistence seats.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE responded that in her district the AC has a variety of people involved in various fisheries, but she was not sure about subsistence representation. She said that Amendment 3 was a way to acknowledge AC members as potential candidates for Board of Fisheries appointments.

[10:24:07 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES noted that Mr. Felkl, from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, could help answer this question.

[10:24:20 AM](#)

JOE FELKL, Legislative Liaison, Office of the Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, answered questions related to HB 125. He said that there is nothing that requires advisory councils to have designated seats, and they determine the composition of members.

[10:24:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked how many advisory councils were currently active.

MR. FELKL responded that he would follow up with an answer, but he recalled that there were around 80 ACs in total with around 70 being active.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked how many ACs are affiliated with coastal communities.

MR. FELKL said that he did not know how many but noted that non-coastal ACs exist, as well. He said that he could follow up with a concise answer.

[10:26:14 AM](#)

CHAIR STUTES maintained objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 3.

[10:27:11 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives McCabe, Vance, and Himschoot voted in favor of Amendment 3 to HB 125. Representatives Kopp, Edgmon, and Stutes voted against it. Therefore, Amendment 3 failed to be adopted by a vote of 3-3.

[10:27:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NELLIE UNANGIQ JIMMIE, Alaska State Legislator, as prime sponsor of HB 125, thanked committee members for their consideration of the bill.

[10:28:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON moved to report HB 125, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 125(FSH) was reported out of the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

[10:29:11 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 10:29 a.m.