

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 24, 2025

1:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Robyn Niayuq Burke, Co-Chair
Representative Maxine Dibert, Co-Chair
Representative Carolyn Hall
Representative Donna Mears
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Julie Coulombe
Representative Bill Elam

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S) : ALASKA RESOURCE EDUCATION

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 117

"An Act relating to commercial set gillnet fishing; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 117

SHORT TITLE: COMMERCIAL FISHING; SET GILLNET COOP

SPONSOR(S) : FISHERIES

02/26/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/26/25	(H)	FSH, RES
03/01/25	(H)	FSH AT 11:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/01/25	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/04/25	(H)	FSH AT 10:30 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/04/25	(H)	Heard & Held
03/04/25	(H)	MINUTE (FSH)
03/06/25	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

03/06/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 03/11/25 (H) FSH RPT 6DP 1NR
 03/11/25 (H) DP: VANCE, KOPP, HIMSCHOOT, ELAM,
 MCCABE, STUTES
 03/11/25 (H) NR: EDGMON
 03/11/25 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
 03/11/25 (H) Moved HB 117 Out of Committee
 03/11/25 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
 03/13/25 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
 03/13/25 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
 03/21/25 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
 03/21/25 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 03/24/25 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

ELLA EDE, Executive Director
 Alaska Resource Education
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the Alaska Resource Education presentation.

TAYLOR BURGH, Operations Manager
 Alaska Resource Education
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the Alaska Resource Education presentation.

REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 117 on behalf of the House Special Committee on Fisheries, sponsor by request, chaired by Representative Stutes.

MATT GRUENING
 Staff, Representative Stutes
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information on HB 117 on behalf of the House Special Committee on Fisheries, sponsor by request, chaired by Representative Stutes.

ADELIA MYRICK, President
 Northwest Setnetters Association
 Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 117.

LOREN LEMAN, representing self
Ninilchik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during the hearing on HB 117.

ERIK O'BRIEN, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 117.

KEVIN FISCHER, President
Allakaket District Setnetters
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 117.

BRYAN BARLOW, Colonel, Director
Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Department of Public Safety
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 117.

ROBERT MURPHY, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony during in support of HB 117.

TOM ROLLMAN, representing self
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony in support of HB 117.

THOMAS WISCHER, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

ALEXUS KWACHKA, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 117.

RICHARD BLANC, representing self
Mount Vernon, Washington

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

ABBY HAUGHEY, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

LAUREN HAUGHEY, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

ALFRED HAUGHEY, representing self
Uvalde, Texas

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

SUE JEFFERY, representing self
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

REBECCA HAUGHEY, representing self
Uvalde, Texas

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 117.

JOE FELKL, Legislative Liaison
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 117.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:01:38 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR ROBYN NIAYUQ BURKE called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Representatives Dibert, Hall, Mears, Coulombe, Elam and Burke were present at the call to order. Representatives Fields, Saddler, and Rauscher arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): Alaska Resource Education

[1:02:19 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE announced that the first order of business would be the Alaska Resource Education presentation.

[1:02:38 PM](#)

ELLA EDE, Executive Director, Alaska Resource Education (ARE), said today's presentation would be focused on workforce development and ARE's efforts to prepare high school students for jobs in the resource industries in Alaska. She directed attention to the PowerPoint presentation, titled "Alaska Resource Education" [included in the committee file], beginning with the organization's mission, vision, and values on slide 2. She stated that ARE's mission is to educate students about Alaska's natural resources. Slides 3 and 4 displayed ARE's Board of Directors and core team.

[1:05:03 PM](#)

TAYLOR BURGH, Operations Manager, Alaska Resource Education (ARE), continued the presentation on slide 5, which outlined ARE's K-12 curriculum: rocks and minerals, renewable energy, and forestry. The curriculum is taught through classroom visits as well as youth programs for deeper explorations. Teacher training is also provided. Slide 6 outlined ARE's three-tiered program plan as follows: spark interest in learning about Alaska's resources; ignite passion for understanding connections to states resources; and launch into the next phase with the knowledge to make informed decisions. Slide 7 showed a graphic that tells the story of Alaska's resources from extraction and development to responsible disposal. In response to a question from Representative Coulombe, she confirmed that the ARE curriculum teaches students how to correctly recycle solar panels and wind turbines.

[1:10:13 PM](#)

MS. BURGH resumed the presentation with a discussion on the mining industry and its contribution to Alaska's economy and workforce on slide 8. Slides 9-11 depicted employment by major energy technologies and power generation, as well as transmission, distribution, and storage employment by sector. She explained that many students do not have an accurate perception of what it looks like to work in the natural resource industries, so ARE spends a lot of time talking about the different jobs available to them. Slide 12 addressed Alaska's oil and gas industry, which continues to be a significant source of jobs, the highest sector of economic impact, and part of Alaska's future. Slide 13 pointed out that labor shortages, skills gap, lack of soft skills, and an aging workforce culminate in a problem that ARE is trying to solve at the K-12 level. To combat this, ARE is creating a pipeline for the next generation of STEM workforce and bridging the gap between

industry and education, as stated on slides 15-16. Slides 16-17 displayed ARE launch initiatives and slide 18 featured ARE launch program data via pre/post student survey. Slides 19-20 offered testimonials from students, as well as a video from an ARE intern who has since graduated and went on to study engineering at university in Canada. She credits ARE's power class for her interest in engineering in the natural resource industry. Slides 21-23 provided statistics on ARE's impact in 2024, as well as a 5-year lookback.

[1:27:00 PM](#)

MS. EDE, in response to a series of questions, explained that ARE works closely with industry partners through student internships and programs, such as the Rockstar program in partnership with Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) in Nome, which introduces students in rural communities to mining jobs in that region. She confirmed that ARE works with placer miners to bring students out to smaller sites. She explained that ARE is funded through a variety of mechanisms: one-third is corporate and individual donors, one-third is federal funding, and one third is state funding. She stated that like many other nonprofits, ARE is facing hurdles on the federal funding side, as several grants are currently paused due to executive orders; however, ARE is working with Alaska's federal delegation to unfreeze those funds.

[1:32:39 PM](#)

MS. TAYLOR, in response to Representative Saddler, explained that ARE fills a much-needed science slot in elementary school. In addition, ARE teaches an Alaska class, economics, and sciences classes. They are slotted depending on need and where it fits into the teacher's curriculum. She said there has been no pushback and no lack of demand in the classroom, adding that ARE could easily be twice its size and it would still be busy with a waitlist.

[1:37:12 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 1:37 p.m.

HB 117-COMMERCIAL FISHING; SET GILLNET COOP

[1:38:12 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 117, "An Act relating to commercial set gillnet fishing; and providing for an effective date."

[1:38:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of the House Special Committee on Fisheries, sponsor by request, chaired by Representative Stutes, presented HB 117. She stated that HB 117 was brought forward in response to concerns from stakeholders in setnet fisheries regarding a new interpretation by law enforcement that would no longer allow the historical cooperative structure for setnetters to take place. The bill would maintain the traditional model of cooperative setnet fisheries that has existed since statehood and seeks to support the livelihoods of many rural residents.

[1:40:02 PM](#)

MATT GRUENING, Staff, Representative Stutes, Alaska State Legislature, said this legislation would preserve the traditional model for salmon setnet operations by continuing to allow small groups (often families in rural Alaska) to work cooperatively, comingle their fish, and allow one permit holder to deliver fish on behalf of their group. He said this bill was brought forward by concerned stakeholders to address a newly applied legal interpretation by law enforcement that has disrupted the way setnet operators have functioned since pre-statehood. The current legal interpretation requires that fish are not comingled and are delivered by each individual permit holder; this legislation would address this interpretation. He remarked that setnetting is unique in Alaska and was Alaska's only commercial shore-based fishery. Historically, fisherman have delivered their fish cooperatively, picked their nets cooperatively, comingled fish, and operated as a group. He said this model of fishing has existed since statehood. He explained that every set net fishery is different depending on the region, and that the new legal interpretation would be particularly burdensome to offroad, rural fishermen. He said HB 117 aims to allow setnet operations to participate in the fishery as they always have. He said that language was left intentionally broad to allow law enforcement, the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), and other stakeholders to have maximum input into how the fish would be delineated. He said that this bill is not only about maintaining the status quo but to support fishing operations in rural communities. He concluded by reiterating that setnetters

should be able to work together and maintain their operating methods.

[1:44:27 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE announced that the committee would hear invited testimony on HB 117.

[1:44:35 PM](#)

ADELIA MYRICK, President, Northwest Setnetters Association, gave invited testimony in support of HB 117. She said that she is a second generation setnetter and currently raising the third generation. She said that the Northwest Setnetters Association supports the bill. Setnetters operate in a fashion that their elders and forefathers taught them, this means mingling fish and operating as a cooperative and often a family unit. She said that the bill would provide the necessary clarification and support setnetters. She said that many setnetters are multigenerational and have a long family history and the bill would allow both youth and elderly alike to participate in the industry. She remarked that keeping youth in the fishery is imperative. She raised concerns about permits exiting the communities and less opportunities overall. She emphasized that Alaska setnetters have among the highest proportions of Alaska resident fishermen and supporting their ability to continue is very healthy for the state. She said that given the current market conditions, setnetters are at the highest risk of extinction. She said that one by one all the smaller processors have shut down and tendering boats are the only option to offload the catch. She remarked that comingling fish can help provide incentives for tendering vessels to continue the purchase and acquisition of setnetter caught fish and a struggling fishery would struggle to attract purchasers. She said that many people who purchase sites often know nothing about setnetting, are "well off" out-of-town folks, and often just look for a remote property to purchase. In conclusion, Ms. Myrick reiterated that the Northwest Setnetter Association supports the bill and the preservation of the status quo.

[1:49:39 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER sought to better understand comingling and what it allows for.

MR. GRUENING said comingling refers to how fish are stored and reported on a fish ticket. Instead of writing a fish ticket for

each person, comingling allows one permit holder to deliver on behalf of a four-or five-member cooperative with the fish comingled, rather than individual nets.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER shared his understanding that all the fish would be delivered in one tub.

MR. GRUENING said, essentially, yes. He said it's a matter of transporting the fish from the fisheries location and getting them to the tender. Current statutes require that the weight and number of fish be delineated on each fish ticket, which is difficult to do with four or five family operated open skiffs. This would allow communal storage of fish, and delivery on behalf of the group. He reminded the committee that the cooperative would have to pre-register with the department and the regulation process would define how to delineate the fish for each permit when registering.

[1:53:20 PM](#)

LOREN LEMAN, representing self, former lieutenant governor, gave invited testimony on HB 117 from written testimony [included in the committee file], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Our family has operated a setnet fishery in Cook Inlet near Ninilchik as a family unit since statehood. We have delivered and accounted for our fish by consolidating them by following our understanding of Board of Fisheries and Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission rules.

Although the setnet fishery from Ninilchik to Nikiski has been shutdown in 2023 and 2024, and will again be closed for the 2025 season, we understand that upon advice from the Department of Law, Department of Public Safety officers have started citing fishermen in other areas who deliver fish the same way we have with multiple permits. Fortunately, we haven't been cited. There's not much reason for an enforcement officer to visit our site these days.

The suggestion that we segregate fish from each net and assign that specific catch to be delivered by the fisherman whose registration numbers are on its buoys is impractical, and perhaps impossible. HB 117 corrects the misguided attempt to change how fishermen

have been reporting their catch for decades—a change that provides no benefit to the State of Alaska.

I offer an amendment that will help the Board of Fisheries as it adopts regulations. Revise the last sentence in Sec. 2 to read: "Fish harvested collectively by the cooperative may be sold by a single or multiple permit holder members of the cooperative or by a transporter acting as the cooperative's agent."

The reason for this is that we, and likely many others, often spread our catch over multiple permits if each permit holder is present when the delivery is made. We do not want this practice to be disallowed. However, we do want it clear that as few as one permit holder (or transporter) could make the delivery.

[1:58:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE asked for clarification on the suggested amendment.

MR. LEMAN said he was proposing an amendment that would insert "or multiple permit holders" after "single" on page 2, line 5 of the bill to allow more than one permit holder to deliver and sign for the fish.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES said she would consider that a friendly amendment and would be happy to incorporate the suggested language into the bill.

[2:01:11 PM](#)

ERIK O'BRIEN, representing self, gave invited testimony in support of HB 117. He said that he echoes the previous testifier's comments and concerns. He said that he is part of a multi-generational fishing family. He said the first permit was purchased in 1977 and the second in 1988. He said that his brothers and extended family have always been part of fishing operations. He said in 2002 his parents transferred their permits to the children, and more were purchased later. He said that there were seven permits in total, shared by three grown brothers and three elderly parents. He said they maintain a single-family fishing operation. He said family members all work on the permits. He said that they could not operate without full family support and that shore-based support allows

participation in the fishery. He said that it is a physically hard season and doesn't always fit with concurrent schedules in the setnet fishery. He said it is not feasible to consider each permit as a separate business, especially given the age of some permit holders. In closing, Mr. O'Brian stated that HB 117 would correct a misinterpretation and allow setnetters to operate as they always have, as a cooperative business venture primarily executed along family lines.

[2:04:59 PM](#)

KEVIN FISCHER, President, Allakaket District Setnetters, gave invited testimony in support of HB 117. He said that he has been a setnet fishermen for 35 years and for the entire time set-net fishermen have comingled fish. He said it is his understanding that setnetting has been this way even before statehood. He did not understand the current upheaval in setnetting practice and the lack of communication with fishermen on this issue. He said HB 117 would allow setnetters to fish as they always have. He said if the new legal interpretation that prevents comingling fish remains then it would negatively impact Alaska fishermen, particularly the small family operations. He said that last year one of the fishermen in his district was issued a felony level citation; the officer did not know the issue; nor did the judge understand the issue well either. He said the court offered a plea deal and dropped it to a misdemeanor and issued a \$500 fine. He said that this caused a great deal of concern amongst fishermen in his district. He asked why only one citation was issued when everyone practiced this way and why it was suddenly being enforced now. He asked what happened to warnings prior to citations, he said it feels like an attack on small fishing operations. He said that he was 100 percent confident that if someone said there was an issue then fishermen could have solved it. Issuing a felony level charge is not acceptable and none of his neighbors want to do anything illegal. He said it simply is not viable to separate fish by permit when fishing as a coop. He said that someone, for some reason, thinks that setnet fishing should be different than it has been.

[2:07:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether there had been an effort to address this issue with the Board of Fisheries.

MR. FISCHER explained that a change request was submitted in September/October, but access was denied by the board and a legislative fix was recommended.

[2:09:03 PM](#)

MR. GRUENING recalled that when the sponsor first approached ADF&G about this change, a regulation fix was being considered. However, through discussions with the department, it became clear that there were a variety of conflicting statutes; specifically: AS 16.43.990(11), AS 16.05.680(b), and AS 16.05.670(a). He said the issue turned out to be a larger issue than the first carveout, which was an attempt by stakeholders to have it addressed on the Board of Fisheries level. The department advised the legislative route due to conflicting statutes and specifically, the definition of "unit of gear" in AS 16.43.990(11). The mix of statutory and regulatory issues that conflict with the interpretation made a legislative fix the best option.

[2:11:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether family setnetters have been operating illegally with their traditional practices.

MR. GRUENING said they have been operating according to enforcement and interpretation of statutes. Further, in looking at the plain wording, there is some ambiguity. He added that the bill is an attempt to bring things back to the status quo of operation.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER sought to better understand the background of why this has changed.

[2:13:17 PM](#)

BRYAN BARLOW, Colonel, Director, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Department of Public Safety (DPS), shared his belief that the change was triggered by an uptick in the types of behaviors that were in conflict with the requirements of current statutes. He added that he is not aware of any felonies associated with this particular fishery, noting that a lot of education is provided ahead of any enforcement mechanisms.

[2:15:18 PM](#)

ROBERT MURPHY, representing self, provided invited testimony in support of HB 117. He offered remarks from his written testimony [included in the committee file], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is Bob Murphy, and I live in Kodiak and am representing myself. I am a set gillnet fisherman where I fish in Port Moller located on the Bering Sea side of Alaska Peninsula. I am in support of HB 117. This bill will allow set gillnet permit holders that fish as family groups, which many set gillnet operators are, to continue doing what they have been doing since statehood or even prior. Adoption of this bill into law will have no change to long-standing practices.

As you know the commercial fishing industry has been through some difficult times in the last few years. Long-time seafood processors going out of business or large-scale consolidation is occurring. Commercial seafood processors and fishermen are struggling with high costs to run their businesses, and the volume of fish and inflation are not helping matters. I have concern that if this bill is not adopted and under the current interpretation of how set gillnet salmon fisheries are to be conducted with multiple permit holders in a family setting, that it may negatively disrupt the way these operations have occurred for decades. If the current regulations are not changed, it very well may break up or eliminate some of these family fishing groups which may force some to no longer find it financially worthwhile to fish which will impact local communities through lost income to individuals and lost tax revenue to local municipalities as well as the state. I think we could all agree that this is not in anyone's best interest for this to occur.

Without HB 117, there are issues such as safety by trying to keep fish separate in small skiffs by adding additional fish totes which may have ice or slush ice and the added weight of the totes if space is even available which it isn't on many skiffs is a concern, and significant additional time spent completing fish tickets often in difficult sea conditions while tied alongside a large tender vessel can be dangerous.

There is no biological concern to the resource the way fisheries have been managed in the past and the state will still manage fisheries the same way. These are just a few reasons that support the passage of HB 117. There are some family groups in the area which fish around where I fish in the Village of Nelson Lagoon. Set gillnet fishing is prominent in Nelson Lagoon and extremely important to the community as salmon fishing is the main source of income for the community and HB117 would help them practice the way they have fished for many years.

For 35 years I have been involved in the commercial fisheries in this area and most of that was as a biologist working for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game until I retired. I am truly thankful for how this process has worked so far. Where a group of stakeholders were told what they were doing for a very long time is no longer legal, the stakeholders then working with the Departments of Fish and Game and Public Safety to help write the language that would fix the issue, and then the State Legislature seeking to correct the issue. This is a great example of how the government works for the people and I sincerely thank all those involved with this issue to this point and in the near future to get it corrected prior to the 2025 commercial salmon fishing season.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and hope you will support HB 117. Thank you all for your service, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

[2:19:08 PM](#)

TOM ROLLMAN, representing self, gave invited testimony in support of HB 117. He shared that his family has been setnetting since the 1970, while now operating several family businesses in Cook Inlet, Nushagak, and Bristol Bay. He said setnetting has always been about family. He explained that HB 117 would not change operations or business, it would simply allow setnetters to fish traditionally and legally as they always have. Traditionally, family setnet operations consist of multiple permits and fish multiple nets in order to be profitable. One or more skiffs tend to pick the nets and deliver the fish to the beach or tender where they are comingled, and the proceeds are pooled to pay everyone in the group. He pointed out that to effectively tend to nets and

provide a quality product, crews are necessary to monitor and work the nets around the clock. He said it's very difficult for a permit holder to get enough sleep and deliver every fish caught from their net without pulling their gear periodically. Other cooper members need to be able to legally pick all the nets in the group and legally deliver them to the tender. The bill would allow them to continue to do this. An unintended consequence of this new interpretation, he said, is that it devalues the contribution of the shore support folk, because it makes it illegal to own and fish their limited entry permits without picking their gear and making deliveries. These people are absolutely essential to the success of setnet operations. He reiterated the importance of the bill as it would maintain the status quo and allow family setnet operations across Alaska to operate as they have for generations.

[2:22:40 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE opened public testimony on HB 117.

[2:23:07 PM](#)

THOMAS WISCHER, representing self, gave public testimony in support of HB 117. He said that he has been a setnet permit holder on Kodiak since 1976. He said his family operation currently has three active permits. He said HB 117 would make statute and regulations consistent with the way set netting has always been done. He said the fisheries were struggling right now and the Kodiak setnet fishery was especially challenged. He said that fishermen are not asking for anything new and if the current interpretation remains, it would destroy the family set net fishery. He said many families would be forced out of the fishery.

[2:26:31 PM](#)

ALEXUS KWACHKA, representing self, testified during the hearing on HB 117. He said he neutral on the bill and described himself as a skeptic. He opined that if up to 10 permits are allowed, the transfers and any associated litigation need to be tracked. He said he has no problem with the bill as proposed, but he took exception with further consolidation. If that's the reality of the bill, he said there needs to be solid trends provided on the impact of the bill.

[2:28:33 PM](#)

RICHARD BLANC, representing self, testified in support of HB 117. He stated that he runs a family operation and would not be able to continue to fish if the bill is not enacted.

[2:30:00 PM](#)

ABBY HAUGHEY, representing self, testified in support of HB 117. She said the bill would write traditional practices into state law. For family operations, comingling is essential and helps keep operating costs at a level that enables them to continue setnetting, she said. Additionally, setnetting is a shore-based operation that encourages lasting family business and relationships. She reiterated her strong support for HB 117 because it preserves the status quo for her family's operations and allows them to continue to work together as they have for 60 years and share the viability of their livelihood for future generations.

[2:31:59 PM](#)

LAUREN HAUGHEY, representing self, testified in support of HB 117. She said the bill would ensure her family's setnet operations can continue to operate as they have for the past 60 years. Growing up, her mother, a permit holder in her family's multi-permit operations, spent the majority of time onshore raising the next generation of salmon setnetters while also providing the onshore support that the on-water fishing crew required to function safely and efficiently. With her serving in this role, her parents would have had to hire a nanny or forfeit the fishing that provides income to support her family. She spoke more to this dynamic and said the bill would help them continue this way of life and enable her to give her future family the same opportunities.

[2:33:43 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 2:33 p.m.

[2:34:31 PM](#)

ALFRED HAUGHEY, representing self, gave public testimony in support of HB 117. He said that he has fished on the west side of Kodiak since 1965. He said that there is always someone trying to change something to the detriment of setnetters. He said that four permits are in operation with his group. He explained the team dynamic associated with setnet fishing. He

echoed the testimonies of the previous testifiers and stated that HB 117 would reduce hardships for setnetters.

2:37:48 PM

SUE JEFFERY, representing self, gave public testimony in support of HB 117. She said that she and her husband are both full-time Kodiak residents and the family has been fishing at their setnet site since 1987 and that they have run their setnet operation like a family. She echoed previous testifiers by stating that the comingling of fish has been done since before statehood. She said that the status quo has never caused any conservation or other concerns. She opined that requiring a setnet operation with more than one permit to separate fish would generate additional expenses. She concluded that the new interpretation would make many families unable to make it.

2:40:30 PM

REBECCA HAUGHEY, representing self, testified in support of HB 117. She shared her personal experience as part of the beach crew in her family's setnet business. She said she supports HB 117 because it supports small family agriculture and families that are the future of Alaska. She asked the legislature to allow these operations to operate as they always have.

2:41:54 PM

CO-CHAIR BURKE closed public testimony on HB 117.

2:42:24 PM

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE sought clarity on current limits placed on comingling.

MR. GRUENING said there's no limit right now. He added that in discussions with ADF&G, there are some groups as large as 12, but 10 people seemed like an appropriate average. He offered to share the statistics of these groups across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE shared her understanding that statute and regulation do not match. She asked whether this would create a problem for "populating" regulations.

MR. GRUENING answered no, this is typical for this type of legislation and would allow stakeholders to discuss group size,

as it differs by area and economics of each fishery. He opined that public input would provide the best result.

[2:45:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked whether the department is looking at these regulations differently now that more fish are being caught in an effort to slow the process down.

[2:46:00 PM](#)

JOE FELKL, Legislative Liaison, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), said that is not a consideration from the department's perspective. Further, he clarified that enforcement actions are the responsibility of the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers, not ADF&G.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER sought to confirm whether there is communication between DPS and ADF&G on this matter.

MR. FELKL answered no, discussions have been had with DPS. He added that when the bill was proposed, fishery managers were not aware of enforcement actions taken by DPS.

REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked whether this breakdown in communication would be addressed.

MR. FELKL said ADF&G is always open to discussions with the troopers if its expertise is needed.

[2:48:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES, in response to Representative Rauscher, stated that his seems to be a new interpretation by DPS, so legislation would be the best way to address it for clarity and the avoidance of misinterpretation.

[2:49:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER opined that the problem needs to be more thoroughly understood before determining a solution. He questioned the legal parameters of the traditional practice of cooperatives in setnet fishing.

MR. GRUENING reiterated that as described in the testimony, cooperatives involve multiple permit holders fishing together on a site with multiple skiffs. The fish sometimes go back and

forth between the skiff and there are beach crews that support the operation. In summary, he said, there are multiple permit holders working together to execute the fishery.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER sought to confirm that there is no legal construct or definition for "cooperative."

MR. GRUENING answered no, not in this context. He noted that there is joint venture permit, which involves two permits that fish together, but its more about the type and configuration of the gear. In response to a series of follow up questions from Representative Saddler, he confirmed that venture permits are an option for setnetters; however, it would require that groups of 15, for example, would have to split into 5 separate joint venture permits and lose the nature of the traditional cooperative model.

[2:52:38 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DIBERT asked whether there is an established timeline.

MR. GRUENING referred to page 1, lines 12-13, which addresses the regulation process and the registration requirements, including time limits.

[2:53:57 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COULOMBE asked whether the bill sponsor would support a limit of 3-5 groups, rather than 10.

MR. GRUENING acknowledged that there are different opinions on the correct limit, adding that 10 was a suggestion from ADF&G. He said there has been a consideration to establish adaptive limits based on the administrative area in which the fisheries are located.

[2:55:50 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked why the interpretation changed and what law is at issue.

COLONEL BARLOW stated that from an enforcement standpoint, nothing has changed. He added that long-terms practice can be difficult to enforce, and the comingling can make it difficult to track and enforce reasonably. He said the troopers are always interested in education garnering compliance, but when

there's an uptick in a type of behavior, there has to be some enforcement action to be in compliance.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned the meaning of uptick.

COLONEL BARLOW clarified that he's speaking in broad generalities based on input from troopers in the affected areas. He added that he would need more time to report on quantities and speak to the specific types of issues that are being encountered.

[3:00:20 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE announced that HB 117 would be held over.

[3:00:34 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.