

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 28, 2025

1:04 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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bill Elam

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 125

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

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 125

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

- HEARD & HELD

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
04/08/25 (H) Moved CSHB 125(FSH) Out of Committee
04/08/25 (H) MINUTE(FSH)
04/09/25 (H) FSH RPT CS(FSH) 4DP 2NR
04/09/25 (H) DP: KOPP, EDGMON, MCCABE, STUTES
04/09/25 (H) NR: VANCE, HIMSCHOOT
04/28/25 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

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)
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04/09/25 (H) DP: KOPP, EDGMON, MCCABE, STUTES
04/09/25 (H) NR: VANCE, HIMSCHOOT
04/28/25 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE JIMMIE
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, introduced HB 125.

RACHAEL GUNN, Staff
Representative Jimmie
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Jimmie, prime sponsor of HB 125, presented a PowerPoint and answered questions.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:04:27 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR BURKE called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Representatives Coulombe, Fields, Rauscher, Hall, Mears, Dibert, and Burke were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 125-BOARD OF FISHERIES MEMBERSHIP

[1:05:08 PM](#)

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

[1:05:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JIMMIE, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor of HB 125, introduced the legislation to the committee. She explained the bill proposed changes to the Board of Fisheries so that it would have two seats for subsistence users of Alaska fisheries, two seats for commercial users of Alaska Fisheries, and two seats for sports users of Alaska fisheries. Representative Jimmie said this change would help all Alaskans and give equal say to the stakeholders working for the recovery of salmon.

[1:06:10 PM](#)

RACHAEL GUNN, Staff, Representative Jimmie, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Jimmie, presented a PowerPoint, titled "HB 125 Establishing Structured Stakeholder Balance in Alaska's Fisheries Management" [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She showed slide 2, titled "Alaska's Board of Fisheries," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

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

[1:06:16 PM](#)

MS. GUNN explained that HB 125 proposed a structural reform to the composition of Alaska Board of Fisheries to ensure that the decision-making body reflected the full spectrum of fisheries

expertise in Alaska. She pointed out that board appointments have been governed by broad language, leading to imbalance and polarization. This has been occurring during a time of ecological stress, diminishing salmon returns, disruptions, and emergency closures of certain fisheries in Alaska. She said science shows that resilient management systems are those which integrate diverse ecological knowledge, commercial realities, traditional harvest practices, and sports-based economic drivers. She showed slide 3, titled "Designated Seats on the Board of Fish," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- 2 x Commercial
- 2 x Sportfishing
- 2 x Subsistence
- 1 x Scientific Community

She explained that restructuring would embrace two core principles. First, no single user group would have outsized influences on state resource management, and second the inclusion of both empirical science and community-based knowledge would strengthen the board. She noted that the bill does not limit the governor's appointment power but ensures representation of all stakeholders.

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REPRESENTATIVE JIMMIE responded to a question from Representative Fields regarding where personal use fisheries fit into the proposed changes. She pointed to the similarities in personal use and subsistence use fisheries.

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MS. GUNN responded to several questions from Representative Fields. She described input from multiple user groups and stakeholders. She pointed out that the definition of subsistence use in Alaska statute differed substantially from the federal subsistence definitions. She referenced potential changes that might occur as a result of decisions at the federal level and emphasized the importance of protecting the oldest user groups in Alaska. She pointed out that any voices in the subsistence seats would also protect personal use fishing. She discussed various scenarios illustrating conflict of interest and said that if the definitions of the seats were codified, the legislators could determine whether appointees fit those definitions when they were presented for ratification.

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MS. GUNN responded to a question from Representative Rauscher regarding personal use fisheries by explaining that a person might fit into more than one category such as subsistence and personal use. She addressed his concern that the board might end up with all sportfisherman or all commercial fisherman by explaining that codifying the seats as two commercial, two sports fish, two subsistence, and one science would help the legislators when they consider the governor's appointees to the board.

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MS. GUNN addressed questions from Representative Mears by explaining the importance of having board appointees representing a specific focus as well as a diversity of interests. She discussed situations that have occurred in Representative Jimmie's district where at least 90 percent of protein for the residents came from fish. Because of climate change, by-catch, and other issues, there are fish camps on the Kuskokwim River that have sat empty for years. It is increasingly important for the Board of Fish to address the imbalance created by the emphasis on commercial and sports fishing and ensure that the subsistence voices are heard.

1:20:05 PM

MS. GUNN responded to a question from Representative Saddler who asked whether there should be a priority for Alaska natives to fill the subsistence seats. She reiterated that the governor would present his appointees, and the decision would fall to the legislature.

1:21:40 PM

REPRESENTATIVE JIMMIE, in response to a question from Representative Saddler regarding whether it was her intent that there be a designated seat for Alaska natives, pointed out that it would be up to the governor to pick the right person for the seat.

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MS. GUNN answered a question from Representative Coulombe by explaining that the predominant conflicts on the board have been

between commercial and sports fishing, and subsistence fishing has not had a voice. She explained that one of the intents behind the bill was to give subsistence an equal voice. She pointed out that people who relied on subsistence should not have to go hungry, positing that the two subsistence seats might not prevent the conflicts that have been occurring, but it would be a step in the right direction for preserving an important cultural heritage in the state.

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MS. GUNN responded to a question from Representative Saddler by saying that HB 25 as presented was the end destination of the policy, and Representative Jimmie did not have other motives for running the bill.

[1:25:34 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR DIBERT explained that people have not been able to fish on the Yukon River for seven years. She described her memories of fish camp and her father cutting fish, and how the knowledge of preparing and drying fish had been passed down for generations. She pointed out the importance of subsistence users having a voice on the board.

MS. GUNN responded to Co-Chair Dibert's question about the subsistence position at ADF&G by explaining they were in the early steps of hiring for the position. She said that ADF&G was neutral on HB 125. She noted that they were not saying there was no native or subsistence representation on the board but rather that they were looking for a balance of user groups. She pointed out that subsistence does not have a giant lobbying voice. The intent was to preserve cultural history and promote food security.

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CO-CHAIR BURKE stated that due to time constraints the committee could not hold public testimony. She announced that HB 125 would be held over.

[1:29:07 PM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease at 1:29 p.m.

[1:30:07 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.