

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 12, 2025

3:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair  
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Vice Chair  
Senator Matt Claman  
Senator Forrest Dunbar (via teleconference)  
Senator Scott Kawasaki  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Robert Myers

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

EO 136 ESTABLISH DEPT OF AGRICULTURE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JOHN BOYLE, Commissioner  
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced Executive Order 136 on behalf of the administration.

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Natural Resources  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation on Executive Order 136 - Establish Department of Agriculture.

ROGER VANDERWEELE,  
VanderWeele Farm  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on EO 136.

MIKE MOSESIAN, President  
Mosesian Farms of Alaska (Bell's Nursery)

Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on EO 136.

SCOTT MUSGRAGE, President

Alaska Farm Bureau

Delta Junction

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on EO 136.

BETH VAN SANDT, Scenic Place Peonies

Homer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on EO 136.

INGA PETERSON, Alaska Future Farmers of America

Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on EO 136.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[3:30:49 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Meyers, Dunbar, Hughes, Claman, Kawasaki, Wielechowski and Chair Giessel.

#### **EO 136 ESTABLISH DEPT OF AGRICULTURE**

[3:31:37 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced the consideration of Executive Order 136 Establishing the [Alaska] Department of Agriculture.

[3:32:39 PM](#)

JOHN BOYLE, Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska, introduced EO 136 to establish a Department of Agriculture on behalf of the administration. He emphasized the need to enhance agriculture's role in the state, citing the 2020 pandemic as a catalyst for this initiative. He highlighted the vulnerabilities in Alaska's supply chain, including potential disruptions from global pandemics, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and port infrastructure damage. He underscored the importance of agriculture in ensuring food security and resilience against such threats.

[3:34:57 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE said, historically, Alaska had a rich and cherished agricultural tradition, with significant contributions from regions like Haines and the Matanuska Valley. Despite this, he said agriculture had been neglected for decades, often overshadowed by other industries and economic issues. He

advocated for elevating agriculture to a cabinet-level position to ensure strategic leadership and policy focus. He said establishing an Alaska Department of Agriculture would enhance Alaska's progress toward food security, stimulate economic growth, and create opportunities for new residents to engage in farming and livestock raising, ultimately enriching the state's way of life.

3:38:08 PM

COMMISSIONER BOYLE urged that the time was right for the creation of a new department. He said that it was a pivotal moment of opportunity in energy and agriculture. He expressed optimism about resolving energy challenges through both renewable and non-renewable sources, predicting that the state will recognize the benefits of abundant and affordable energy. He highlighted Alaska's unique ability to expand agricultural land while other states face challenges due to land scarcity. He praised Alaska's abundant fresh water supply, and said it was a significant advantage for agriculture, especially in contrast to water shortages in other parts of the U.S.

3:40:00 PM

COMMISSIONER BOYLE said Alaska's strategic geopolitical position, with the world's third busiest cargo airport and its proximity to major markets, positioned it well for significant agricultural growth. He suggested Alaska could become self-sufficient in food production and a major agricultural exporter, citing the Netherlands as an example. He said key to realizing this potential was solving Alaska's energy issues and coordinating efforts among various state entities. He noted that Alaska possessed unique advantages that provided competitive advantages in the global market. He emphasized the need for the advocacy a Department of Agriculture would provide to ensure Alaska received its fair share of federal agricultural funding and support.

3:43:31 PM

COMMISSIONER BOYLE discussed the lack of a coherent agricultural policy in Alaska over the past 50 years, which he said has hindered the development of crops suitable for northern climates. He highlighted the success of Saskatchewan's agricultural sector, noting the University of Saskatchewan's research on soil mapping, soybean cultivation, gene editing, and crop disease resistance. He emphasized the challenges faced by Alaska farmers who lack state support and must fund their own research. He concluded by advocating for the creation of a new department to coordinate resources and strategies, aiming to

increase food production, attract young farmers, and enhance Alaska's food security and self-sufficiency.

[3:47:02 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL recalled that homesteading was common in Alaska. She mentioned a personal memory from 70 years ago involving a little neighbor girl whose family grew all their own food. She recalled active 4-H clubs and the Cooperative Extension Service, which played a significant role in the community. She expressed a desire to see more young people involved in agriculture and homesteading yet acknowledged that these were very different times.

[3:48:31 PM](#)

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage, Alaska, moved to slide 1, introduced himself and said Executive Order 136 would establish a Department of Agriculture, thereby elevating state agricultural policies and activities to a singularly focused department with cabinet level leadership. He said Governor Dunleavy's overarching goals with Executive Order 136 were to continue to grow Alaska's agricultural base, improve our state's food security and further develop Alaska's agricultural economic sector:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Executive Order 136  
Establishing the Department of Agriculture  
Senate Resources Committee**

Presented by:  
John C. Boyle III, Commissioner  
Brent Goodrum, Deputy Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
February 12, 2025

[3:49:24 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 2. He said Alaska's agricultural sector had long been recognized as crucial for the state's development, as evidenced by its central position on the state seal and the establishment of a Department of Agriculture in 1945. Despite this, the department was absorbed into the Department of Natural Resources around statehood. He emphasized the need for further agricultural development to enhance food security, economic diversity, and independence:

[Original punctuation provided.]

## **Alaska Agriculture: Status Report**

- Robust Alaska agriculture is a long-held vision
- Hardy Alaskans are farming
  - 2022 national census: 1,173 Alaska farms and ranches produced about \$39.7 million in crop value and \$51.2 million in animal production
- So much more potential - with dedicated, focused, expert support
- Why grow agriculture?
  - Greater food security and independence for Alaskans
  - Further develop an important economic sector (jobs, value chain benefits)

[3:51:18 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked whether the food produced in Alaska, apart from seafood, was sold outside Alaska or consumed in the state.

[3:51:38 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM said there were some exports and that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Agriculture participated in the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) working with international markets and in the United States to promote Alaska agribusiness. He offered to provide a list of products exported out of Alaska.

[3:52:02 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN asked [which products] go outside [Alaska] and for percentages of what is consumed in Alaska versus the amount consumed outside.

[3:52:31 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 3:

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **Executive Order 136**

- Establishes the Alaska Department of Agriculture
- Transitions in full the Division of Agriculture from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the new department
  - Statutory responsibilities, functions, do not change

- Provides transitional measures for seamless reorganization
- Effective July 1, 2025

[3:53:14 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 4:

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **Vision**

- Governor's overarching goal: increase focus on agriculture and food security with a dedicated department and leadership
- Focus will help develop a robust, durable state agricultural policy, including a strategic plan with an implementation roadmap
- Continuation of the Governor's budget and legislative policy actions following the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance food security in Alaska
- Aligns with top recommendations of task forces and stakeholders
- New department is first step to provide solid foundation for future growth

[3:54:22 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 5. He highlighted the US Department of Agriculture's role as a major funding partner and the potential for increased federal resources. He said a new Department of Agriculture would enhance legislative focus, oversight, and accountability, ensuring better advocacy for agricultural issues and improved sector performance:

[Original punctuation provided.]

### **Improved Results for Alaskans**

- Robust, durable agriculture policy with implementation plan
- Stronger strategic alignment with stakeholder groups, Alaska agriculture entities
- More consistent, proactive interaction with federal partners
- Cabinet-level agriculture advocacy
- Opportunity for greater legislative focus and attention

[3:56:11 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to slide 6 and said Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed a broad range of activities, including oil and gas operations, state parks, mining, land and water management, forestry, and wildfire response:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Today's Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**

- 1,054 employees (767 PFT, 215 PPT, 72 NP) across seven divisions, two offices
- Led by commissioner supported by two deputies
- Statewide offices, programs and sites
- FY2025 Management Plan budget (all funds): \$173,399.3
- DNR returns \$21 to the state treasury for every UGF dollar appropriated

[3:57:02 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 7, providing a brief overview of the current Division of Agriculture organization:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Today's Division of Agriculture**

- Division Director
- Programs separated into Agriculture Development and Plant Materials Center sections
- Employees: 37 total (32 PFT and 5 PPT)
- FY2025 Management Plan: \$7,176.2 all funds
- Headquarters in Palmer

[3:57:50 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 8:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Today's Division of Agriculture**

- Inspections, certifications
- Farm, production loans through Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund
- Alaska Grown and other promotion (state, national, international)

- Agricultural land sales / leases support
- Administers federal grants to Alaskans
- Future Farmers of America
- Seed storage and production, varietal trials
- Seed cleaning services rendered
- Revegetation and erosion control consulting
- Industrial hemp regulation
- Invasive plant, pest management

[3:59:32 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 9:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Tomorrow's Department of Agriculture**

- Responsible leadership, organizational structures
- Primed for build-out over time with increased programming, responsibilities
- Employees: 50 total (45 PFT and 5 PPT)
- FY2026 increment: \$2,734.4 UGF
- Headquarters in Palmer

PFT: Permanent full-time	NP: Non-permanent
PPT: Permanent part-time	UGF: Unrestricted general fund

[Proposed Organizational Chart - adaptive formatting]

Commissioner

Special Assistant to Commissioner

Executive Secretary

Deputy Commissioner

Administrative Services Director

- Financial Services
- Budget
- Human Resources
- Information Technology

Natural Resource Manager 3

- Agriculture Development
  - o Communication
  - o Inspection and Pest Detection Program

- o Land Disposal
- o Grant Services
- Future Farmers of America (FFA)
- Agriculture Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)
- Administrative/Procurement
- Northern Latitude Plant Materials Center
  - o Maintenance and Operations
  - o Revegetation Program
  - o Seed Cleaning Services
  - o Greenhouse Production
  - o Seed Potato Program
  - o Invasive Plant Program
  - o Seed/Pathogen Testing Program
  - o Industrial Hemp Program

[4:00:28 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to slide 10:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Costs - New Positions (\$ in thousands)**

Department of Agriculture, Departmental Support Services

13 New Full-Time Positions - Total: \$2,103.5 UGF

[Slide 10 contains a table detailing the positions and associated costs to staff a Department of Agriculture.]

[4:00:52 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how many of the new administrative and information technology (IT) positions would engage in the new department's main mission rather than provide ancillary support.

[4:01:52 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM returned to slide 9 and highlighted the current positions in DNR that will be placed in the new Department of Agriculture. He said their role will be to continue with the department mission. He emphasized the importance of support services for every department and said it was a lean section of the new department that would handle critical roles such as budgeting, finance, IT, and HR functions.

[4:03:20 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI expressed support for expanding agriculture and acknowledged the importance of support staff. He said he was concerned about costs and asked how much the support positions directly focused on the main mission of the department.

[4:04:17 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE noted apparent redundancy. However, he advocated for the necessity of administrative support professionals for the new department to stand independently. He emphasized the intent to be as fiscally prudent as possible while building the foundation and establishing the foundation and framework for future commissioners to advocate for additional resources to further the department's mission.

[4:06:07 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI characterized [EO 136] as an initial request [for funding]. He asked whether it was likely that more funding would be requested in future budget requests.

[4:06:23 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE said that would be determined by future governors and future legislators, depending on the level of priority placed on agriculture, agricultural initiatives, food security and creating economic opportunities. He anticipated advocacy for additional incremental investments to provide services.

[4:06:55 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether there were statutes or regulations in place that were stopping progress toward agricultural efforts. He suggested that there might be opportunities to commit to improving agricultural support without requiring additional support staff.

[4:07:27 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE said no. He emphasized the importance of having a governor and DNR commissioner who prioritize agriculture. He highlighted the need for a strategic vision to ensure consistent support for agriculture and acknowledged that governors and DNR commissioners may be distracted by other issues. He urged establishing a permanent entity focused on agriculture to ensure it receives ongoing attention and resources, regardless of changes in leadership. He said a Department of Agriculture would prevent agriculture from becoming an afterthought and provide farmers with the necessary support.

[4:09:19 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that DNR support staff were currently performing these functions [for the Division of Agriculture]. He asked whether there would be a decrement to DNR staff. He asked whether DNR would continue to have the same level of support staff needs [when the Division of Agriculture is no longer under Department of Natural Resources (DNR)].

[4:10:05 PM](#).

COMMISSIONER BOYLE said there would not be a reduction to DNR's support staff. He returned to slide 6 and pointed out that DNR had a budget of approximately \$173.4 million with 1,000 employees. He pointed out that reducing DNR's staff by 37 employees would not significantly reduce the workload for DNR support staff except to possibly make it more manageable.

[4:11:11 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN expressed skepticism about the governor's commitment to establishing a Department of Agriculture, noting that he had not initiated the effort until the last two years of his eight years as governor. He asked why the governor had not prioritized agriculture earlier in his administration.

[4:12:01 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE discussed the demands of a governor's transition period as they take office in Alaska. He reflected on the impact of COVID-19, noting the stress and uncertainty it caused and the lack of a playbook for managing such a crisis. He highlighted the importance of reforming other departments and the Governor's commitment to creating a Department of Agriculture, which he described as a sustainable and responsible initiative amidst budgetary constraints. He said the convening of a new legislature was seen as an opportune time to progress the idea.

[4:13:52 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN commended Commissioner Boyle's knowledge and advocacy for agricultural issues in Alaska, despite his background in oil and gas. He praised the effectiveness of the current system, which allocated 4.1 percent of the DNR budget to agriculture. However, he expressed concern over the proposed 35 percent increase in personnel and 38 percent increase in budget for a new Department of Agriculture. He struggled to justify this to education advocates, who were pressing for more funding for schools, and he questioned the necessity of the new department, especially when it could divert \$2.7 million from education.

[4:15:57 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE noted the limited shelf life of commissioners and said it was a lucky thing he cared about agriculture. He said future commissioners would have varying levels of commitment to agriculture in Alaska.

[4:16:36 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE acknowledged the difficult decisions appropriators face in budgeting and highlighted the critical need for food security, especially in the context of national disasters or global pandemics. He underscored the necessity of a strong agricultural sector for Alaska's resilience and economic growth, suggesting that initial investments in agriculture, even at the expense of other priorities, would yield long-term benefits, including greater food security and economic activity, and opportunities for future generations.

[4:18:56 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN questioned the urgency of creating a Department of Agriculture at this time. He addressed the energy issues in the state and the potential pipeline construction, suggesting that significant progress may be several years away. The speaker suggested that prioritizing funds for the new department over education or [permanent fund] dividends now might be premature, as the energy sector's growth was speculative. He proposed waiting until the energy issue was more certain.

[4:20:27 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE emphasized the importance of acting now due to the current alignment and will [to promote agriculture] and he discussed ever-changing priorities. He highlighted energy's broad impact on all sectors of the economy, including agriculture. He suggested strategic planning to integrate vertical farming with server farms, leveraging waste heat for efficient vegetable production. He said this approach would utilize the power grid and natural gas pipelines to create a self-sustaining system. He advocated for the preparation of a capable leadership team [in a Department of Agriculture] to capitalize on future energy abundance and affordability, ensuring a smooth transition and effective departmental readiness.

[4:23:08 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL said she intended to leave time for invited testimony and would limit the remaining presentation to fifteen minutes.

[4:23:22 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES expressed her support for agriculture and acknowledged concerns about funding and timing raised by Senators Wielechowski and Claman. She highlighted the significant need for education funding in the hundreds of millions of dollars compared to the few million dollars for agriculture. She mentioned the likely nutritional superiority of locally grown foods over imports and said the Mat-Su schools spent nearly \$200,000 [on Alaska grown foods] in the 2023-2024 school year and planned to increase that spending.

SENATOR HUGHES discussed the need to diversify Alaska's economy, with agriculture being a significant contributor and compared Alaska's latitude with that of the Netherlands and Saskatchewan, indicating similar agricultural opportunities. She highlighted testimony by producers from other states who understand the importance of a Department of Agriculture to support agricultural producers.

SENATOR HUGHES stressed the importance of food security and recalled the potential impact of the Port of Seattle's strike threat in 2023. She argued that delaying action [to establish a Department of Agriculture] was not a viable option, as it was a life and safety issue. She said funding should be kept in perspective relative to other needs.

SENATOR HUGHES questioned whether the current commissioner could manage advocating for the 34 recommendations prepared by the [Alaska Food Security and Independence] Task Force while also advocating for other industries like oil, gas, mining, and forestry. She suggested the need for a cabinet-level position to effectively grow the agriculture industry and increase food security.

[4:28:22 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE expressed confidence in his ability to advocate for the multiple missions of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), including agriculture, and acknowledged he could manage agricultural initiatives more effectively if it were his sole focus. He noted that he had oversight for a wide range of responsibilities, including forestry, wildland firefighting, state parks, oil and gas, mining, and land management, with a team of over 1000 employees. He said a dedicated Commissioner of Agriculture could do more for the state.

[4:29:42 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked whether there were any vacancies among the 37 Division of Agriculture positions. He asked whether all the positions were classified permanent and full-time.

[4:30:04 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM offered to get back to the committee when he could provide complete and accurate information.

[4:30:15 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced invited testimony on EO 136.

[4:31:06 PM](#)

ROGER VANDERWEELE, VanderWeele Farm, Palmer, Alaska, testified by invitation on EO 136. He introduced himself and his family's farm, which grew primarily potatoes, but also carrots, lettuce, and broccoli. He highlighted the Alaska Grown program and said it clearly increased consumer identification and sales of their products within the state.

MR. VANDERWEELE said the farm had always seen potential for growth and emphasized the need for consistent demand to expand operations. He discussed the significant increase in orders during COVID-19, which was three to four times the normal demand and said, despite the strain on their farm's capacity, they prioritized meeting the increased demand to serve the community. He reflected on the importance of being prepared for unexpected surges in demand in the future.

[4:32:54 PM](#)

MR. VANDERWEELE emphasized the cleanliness of Alaska produce and said Alaska was an ideal place to grow seed potatoes, which could be exported. He said policy and politics complicated the process of growing the seed potato industry, but it had the potential to significantly benefit the farming sector and he expressed a desire for more support and understanding of those challenges.

[4:33:43 PM](#)

MR. VANDERWEELE noted growing consumer interest in Alaska-grown products, particularly in meat and dairy. He described the conundrum of the timing of supply and demand, focusing on meat production. He suggested a parallel with the demand for a Department of Agriculture and the growth of the agriculture industry in the state and advocated for a proactive approach.

MR. VANDERWEELE concluded that there was potential for growth [in the agriculture industry] in the state. He said farming was what his family chose to do and they hoped to see it succeed.

[4:36:02 PM](#)

MIKE MOSESIAN, President, Mosesian Farms of Alaska (Bell's Nursery), Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on EO 136. He emphasized the importance of establishing a market before planting crops. He described his experience building personal relationships with produce managers in Anchorage, getting feedback on the product's marketability and the generosity of retailers running ads for his farm's produce.

[4:37:12 PM](#)

MR. MOSESIAN described the difficult transition when Safeway entered the market and highlighted the importance of cooperation from stores like Safeway, Walmart, and Fred Meyer to give Alaska farmers more shelf space and support local produce. He mentioned the high markup on locally grown products, which made them a luxury item for consumers, affecting sales.

[4:38:39 PM](#)

MR. MOSESIAN also shared his concerns about escalating energy costs in Alaska, raising doubts about the sustainability of his business, especially the production of tomatoes and cucumbers. He said he produced about half a million pounds of tomatoes and a quarter million pounds of cucumbers annually, and he emphasized the superior quality and nutrition of fresh Alaska produce.

MR. MOSESIAN urged political advocacy and the governor's support to promote local produce and ensure its availability to consumers.

[4:40:52 PM](#)

SCOTT MUSGRAGE, President, Alaska Farm Bureau, Delta Junction, gave invited testimony in support of EO 136, emphasizing his personal and professional stake in the agriculture industry. He urged that the transition from Division of Agriculture to Department of Agriculture would enhance Alaska's commitment to food security, economic diversity, and agriculture growth. He acknowledged potential concerns about increased government, explaining that the Farm Bureau believes this step is essential for sustainable food security.

[4:41:53 PM](#)

MR. MUSGRAGE explained that increased visibility and a focused commitment to agriculture would help expand farm production and attract new farmers. He said the new department would prioritize agricultural needs without competing with other sectors like oil and gas. He emphasized the importance of reducing Alaska's dependence on imported food through improved access to land,

research investment, and the development of diverse crops and he said a strong agriculture sector would create a more resilient and diversified economy, reducing Alaska's reliance on oil, gas, and mining.

[4:42:38 PM](#)

MR. MUSGRAGE asserted that Alaska's agriculture commodities were superior and that focusing on yield improvements and increased production would expand exports, leading to a more balanced trade environment, and potentially lowering the cost of imports.

[4:43:03 PM](#)

MR. MUSGRAGE envisioned an Alaska with greater food security, a stronger economy, and the ability to produce high-quality, clean food in a pristine environment. He urged support for EO 136, emphasizing the opportunity to be a global leader in agriculture production.

[4:44:27 PM](#)

BETH VAN SANDT, Scenic Place Peonies, Homer, Alaska, testified by invitation on EO 136, emphasizing the emotional and mental benefits of her crop. She discussed the challenges and successes of the Alaska peony industry and reported that, despite limited resources and no dedicated research, the industry grew from \$940,000 in sales in 2017 to over \$2.35 million by 2022. She said there was potential for continued and unlimited growth, explaining that Alaska's climate offered growers the unique position of growing peonies from June to September offering significant export potential.

[4:47:14 PM](#)

MS. VAN SANDT emphasized the need for research on suitable varieties and pest management, cold storage solutions, and better marketing. She highlighted the Homer Peony Celebration, which began as a July event, now extended into August, noting that the festival significantly boosted the local economy.

MS. VAN SANDT advocated for the creation of the Alaska Department of Agriculture and for a commissioner in Juneau to keep farmer voices present.

[4:50:13 PM](#)

INGA PETERSON, Alaska Future Farmers of America (FFA), Fairbanks, Alaska, testified by invitation on EO 136. She highlighted the importance of a Department of Agriculture for the future of aspiring young farmers and ranchers in Alaska and mentioned the significant growth of Alaska FFA since 2023, with

increased membership and chapters under the Division of Agriculture.

[4:52:05 PM](#)

MS. PETERSON shared her experience with FFA over the past four years, including working on a peony farm and aspiring to become an agriculture teacher. She expressed her excitement about the potential impact of agriculture education on shaping Alaska's future. She acknowledged the challenges faced in Alaska but also the incredible resource of the next generation and highlighted their resilience and determination.

MS. PETERSON concluded by stressing the importance of food security and sustainability for the future of Alaska. She shared her belief that a Department of Agriculture would help write a sustainable legacy for future generations.

[4:54:26 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL concluded invited testimony on EO 136 and directed Commissioner Boyle and Deputy Commissioner Goodrum to continue the presentation on EO 136.

[4:54:39 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 12:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Timeline**

Jan. 21, 2025	Executive Order 136 introduced
March 22, 2025	Legislature has 60 days to disapprove
March 2025	Begin implementing transition plans
July 1, 2025	Department of Agriculture is official

[4:55:23 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to and narrated slide 13:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Transition work includes:**

- Stakeholder engagement / education
- Employee town hall

- Prepare and submit documents for position reclassifications
- Post, hire and train new positions
- Governor appoints new commissioner
- Public-facing website updated and launched
- Update signage, public-facing access points on buildings
- Work with the Division of Finance on changes to Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS)
- Information Technology transitions
- Plan inter-departmental coordination with DNR / lands
- July 1, 2025 - Department of Agriculture is legal operating entity

[4:55:48 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM moved to slide 14:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Executive Order 136 - Sectional Analysis**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Pg</b>	<b>Provision</b>
1	1	Uncodified law with Governor's findings in support of establishing a new department
2-21	2-8	Amendments to Title 3, Agriculture, Animals, and Food, effectuating the reorganization
22	8	Amendment to Title 9, Code of Civil Procedure, effectuating the reorganization
23	8	Amendment to Title 37, Public Finance, effectuating the reorganization
24-29	8-12	Amendments to Title 38, Public Land, effectuating the reorganization
30-36	13-15	Amendments to Title 41, Public Resources, effectuating the reorganization
37-40	15-17	Amendments to Title 44, State Government, effectuating the reorganization

41	17	Repeal of 3 statutes, effectuating the reorganization
42	17	Revisor's instructions to conform titles and catchlines
43	18	Transition measures to ensure division employees, board members, legal proceedings, contracts, regulations, records, equipment and so forth are carried forward to the new department
44	18	Sets a July 1, 2025, effective date

[4:56:12 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES complimented Ms. Peterson and enthusiastically noted the growth in student participation with FAA.

[4:56:58 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL invited closing remarks by the commissioner of Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

[4:57:01 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE summarized the presentation and testimony advocating for a Department of Agriculture, emphasizing its importance for rural Alaska's access to fresh produce. He highlighted the challenges faced by remote communities in obtaining fresh food and the potential benefits of government support for local agriculture. He cited an example of Alaska Range Dairy, which transitioned from waste to supplying Walmart with fresh milk through state support. He advocated for government intervention to create market opportunities for local dairies, farmers, and producers, arguing that this would boost the state's economy, food security, and allow for economies of scale, ultimately benefiting consumers and producers alike. He thanked the committee for the discussion.

[5:00:38 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL held EO 136 in committee.

[5:00:49 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL noted that the Arctic Affairs Committee would be hearing about off-grid farming.

[5:01:19 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Giessel adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 5:01 p.m.