

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

May 2, 2025

4:14 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15(CRA)
Urging the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire protection, the Department of Public Safety, municipalities of the state and relevant wildfire planning and response agencies, and the Alaska delegation in Congress to prepare for the 2025 wildfire season.

- MOVED CSHJR 15(CRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 131

"An Act relating to the duties of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute; and relating to the seafood marketing assessment."

- MOVED CSSB 131(RES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 15

SHORT TITLE: WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HOLLAND

03/24/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/24/25	(H)	CRA
04/01/25	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
04/01/25	(H)	Heard & Held
04/01/25	(H)	MINUTE(CRA)

04/03/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
04/03/25 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
04/08/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
04/08/25 (H) Moved CSHJR 15(CRA) Out of Committee
04/08/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
04/09/25 (H) CRA RPT CS(CRA) 6DP
04/09/25 (H) DP: HOLLAND, PRAX, RUFFRIDGE, HALL,
MEARS, HIMSCHOOT
04/25/25 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
04/25/25 (H) VERSION: CSHJR 15(CRA)
04/28/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/28/25 (S) RES
04/28/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/28/25 (S) Heard & Held
04/28/25 (S) MINUTE(RES)
05/02/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

BILL: SB 131

SHORT TITLE: DUTIES OF ASMI BOARD; MEANING OF SEAFOOD
SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

03/14/25 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/14/25 (S) RES, FIN
04/09/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
04/09/25 (S) Heard & Held
04/09/25 (S) MINUTE(RES)
05/02/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE KY HOLLAND, District 9
Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HJR 15.

GREG SMITH, Communications Director
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI)
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 131 on behalf of the Senate
Rules Committee by request of the governor.

ROBERT VENABLES, Executive Director
Southeast Conference
Juneau, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 131.

JASON LESSARD, Executive Director
Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 131.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[4:14:52 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 4:14 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Kawasaki, Hughes, Dunbar, Claman (via teleconference), and Vice Chair Wielechowski.

HJR 15-WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

[4:15:29 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 15(CRA) Urging the Governor, the Department of Natural Resources, division of forestry and fire protection, the Department of Public Safety, municipalities of the state and relevant wildfire planning and response agencies, and the Alaska delegation in Congress to prepare for the 2025 wildfire season.

[4:16:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KY HOLLAND, District 9, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said HJR 15 is the culmination of community work done over the past 4 months to raise awareness and concern for the 2025 wildfire season. HJR 15 would bring greater awareness to state agencies and Alaskans regarding wildfire preparedness and evacuation plans. He said it has been a rewarding process and expressed gratitude to the local and state agencies that helped contribute to HJR 15. He shared that an additional emergency helicopter will be stationed in Anchorage for 100 days, beginning May 15, 2025. This will provide a more rapid response in a critical area for potential fire spread. He acknowledged that many areas across the state are at risk for wildfires and said HJR 15 highlights the breadth of that concern and the work that can be done to reduce wildfires.

[4:18:05 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked why some first-class cities were left off the list in HJR 15.

[4:18:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND replied that this is a work in process. He explained that the list of cities began with communities that could establish the breadth of intent; regions were added later. He stated that, if done again, he would attempt to display the

breadth of the regions without referring to any specific communities. He apologized for leaving any cities out and emphasized that the intention was to convey that HJR 15 is of interest to many areas across the state. He pointed out that the phrasing also indicates emerging fire danger in new areas (e.g. recent rural tundra fires). He reiterated that he did not intend to suggest that fire danger was limited to specific areas and clarified that HJR 15 was meant to be inclusive.

[4:19:29 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES briefly discussed an amendment that she had considered. She directed attention to the wildfire maps and expressed surprise that the Aleutian chain is included, as well as Southeast Alaska. She briefly discussed how the wildfires in Los Angeles, California have raised awareness of the devastation wildfires can cause in urban areas. She noted that the Southeast region has had a dry winter and surmised that the Aleutian chain has also had a dry winter. She noted that the Aleutian chain is not listed in HJR 15; however, the region is covered by the wildfire map.

[4:20:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLAND expressed appreciation and agreed. He referenced a recent devastating wildfire in Hawaii and said that fire was a significant wakeup call. He opined that fires in Hawaii and the recent tundra fires are an indication that increased vigilance is necessary, including in areas not previously considered a wildfire risk.

[4:21:15 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI opened public testimony on HJR 15; finding none, he closed public testimony.

[4:21:33 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI solicited the will of the committee.

[4:21:37 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR moved to report CS for HJR 15(CRA), work order 34-LS0726\G, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[4:21:58 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI found no objection and CSHJR 15(CRA) was reported from the Senate Resources Standing Committee.

SB 131-DUTIES OF ASMI BOARD; MEANING OF SEAFOOD

[4:22:12 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 131 "An Act relating to the duties of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute; and relating to the seafood marketing assessment."

[4:22:40 PM](#)

GREG SMITH, Communications Director, Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), Juneau, Alaska, said that Alaska Statute prohibits ASMI from promoting aquatic farm products (e.g. cultivated oysters or seaweed). SB 131 would remove that prohibition, thus allowing ASMI to promote those products.

[4:23:18 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI solicited a motion.

[4:23:23 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR moved to adopt Amendment 1, work order 34-GS1072\A.2.

34-GS1072\A.2
Bullard
4/30/25

A M E N D M E N T 1

OFFERED IN THE SENATE
TO: SB 131

BY SENATOR DUNBAR

Page 2, lines 9 - 12:

Delete all material and insert:

"(7) "seafood" means finfish, shellfish, **maricultural products**, and fish by-products, including [BUT NOT LIMITED TO] salmon, halibut, herring, flounder, crab, clam, cod, shrimp, and pollock; **in this paragraph, "maricultural product" has the meaning given to "aquatic farm product"** [, BUT DOES NOT INCLUDE AQUATIC FARM PRODUCTS AS DEFINED] in AS 16.40.199."

[4:23:29 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI objected for purposes of discussion.

[4:23:34 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR referred to SB 131, page 2, line 11, which includes the phrase "aquatic farm products." He noted that "mariculture" is the term used in the seafood industry now rather than "aquatic farm product." He acknowledged that "aquatic farm product" is defined in Alaska law and explained that Amendment 1 seeks to better reflect current industry terms.

[4:24:50 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked whether Amendment 1 should say "mariculture" rather than "maricultural."

[4:25:07 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR agreed that "mariculture" is a more appropriate term.

[4:25:26 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI moved Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 for SB 131.

CONCEPTUAL AMENDMENT 1 TO AMENDMENT 1

Page 1, line 3:

Delete "maricultural"

Insert "mariculture"

Page 1, line 5:

Delete "maricultural"

Insert "mariculture"

[4:25:36 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI sought confirmation of his understanding that Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 would change "maricultural" to "mariculture" on lines 3 and 5 of Amendment 1.

[4:25:53 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI replied that this is correct.

[4:25:59 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI found no objection and Conceptual Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 for SB 131 was adopted.

[4:26:04 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI returned to discussion of Amendment 1 for SB 131.

[4:26:09 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked why Amendment 1 removes the language "but not limited to."

[4:26:39 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR said that removing this was not his intention. He surmised that "including" and "including, but not limited to" have the same legal force. However, he reiterated that this was not the intention of Amendment 1.

[4:27:49 PM](#)

MR. SMITH said he was reviewing the original version and contrasting this with Amendment 1.

[4:28:14 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES commented that "including" means it is not limited and surmised that "not limited to" may have been removed to clean up the language.

SENATOR DUNBAR agreed that this is likely the case.

[4:28:26 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI agreed that this is a possibility. He invited comment from Mr. Smith.

[4:28:32 PM](#)

MR. SMITH agreed. He opined that the sponsor's intent is reflected in the wording of the amendment.

[4:28:58 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether ASMI has objections or concerns about Amendment 1, as amended.

[4:29:16 PM](#)

MR. SMITH replied no. He shared his understanding that Amendment 1 is aligned with the original intent of SB 131.

[4:29:45 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI asked if ASMI supports Amendment 1 as it is currently written.

[4:29:50 PM](#)

MR. SMITH replied that Amendment 1 introduces a term that is commonly used in the industry and references the statutory definition of "aquatic farm product." He said this achieves the intent of SB 131, which is to allow ASMI to promote mariculture products.

[4:30:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI removed his objection to Amendment 1, as amended. He found no further objection and Amendment 1, as amended, was adopted.

[4:30:31 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI opened public testimony on SB 131.

[4:30:44 PM](#)

ROBERT VENABLES, Executive Director, Southeast Conference, Juneau, Alaska, testified in support of SB 131. He said he has heard some concerns regarding the potential for an assessment on some products. He shared his understanding that SB 131 is a much-needed definition change and would not result in an assessment. He briefly discussed Southeast Conference's work and financial investment in the industry. He emphasized that Southeast Conference has invested in industry infrastructure statewide and has funding for marketing. He stated that ASMI is the gold standard for marketing worldwide but cannot mention products. SB 131 changes this. He encouraged support and pointed out that Southeast Conference can provide 12-18 months of additional funding.

[4:32:54 PM](#)

JASON LESSARD, Executive Director, Alaska Mariculture Alliance (AMA), Anchorage, Alaska, testified in support of SB 131. He provided a brief overview of AMA. He said ASMI marketing mariculture products has been a topic of discussion since before the creation of AMA and discussions have become robust in recent years. He briefly discussed those discussions. This issue was put to a membership vote and passed with 87 percent of members supporting the motion. He read the motion and said SB 131 falls within the scope of that motion. He acknowledged that more work would be needed in the future, particularly related to defining relationships between ASMI and the industry, and assessments. He said SB 131 would have an immediate positive effect on the industry. He said this legislation would allow ASMI to market mariculture products - and would allow ASMI to receive money to support that work. AMA considers SB 131 a positive force for industry growth.

[4:36:32 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked whether any members gave a reason for voting against the motion related to ASMI marketing mariculture products.

[4:36:42 PM](#)

MR. LESSARD said there was some difference of opinion along sector lines. He explained that the shellfish industry is well-defined, particularly oyster farmers, who have worked for decades to grow their market. He shared his understanding that oyster farmers are concerned about additional assessments. He said that seaweed farmers have been supportive of the ASMI marketing mariculture products. However, he clarified that the vote was captured anonymously and therefore did not provide sector-specific data. AMA felt that 87 percent provided a wide enough margin to continue to pursue the change.

[4:38:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI closed public testimony on SB 131.

[4:38:18 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR briefly discussed an amendment that was not offered. He emphasized that SB 131 is not intended to apply to farmed finned fish products. He surmised that Alaskans do not desire to advertise farmed finned fish products, which are illegal in Alaska. He further surmised that ASMI is aware that SB 131 is not intended to apply to farmed finned fish products. He emphasized that this legislation would support the development and advertising of other mariculture products in the state.

[4:39:14 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI solicited the will of the committee.

[4:39:21 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR moved to report SB 131, work order 34-GS1072\A, as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). He gave Legislative Legal Services authority to make any technical and/or conforming changes.

[4:39:46 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR WIELECHOWSKI found no objection and CSSB 131(RES) was reported from the Senate Resources Standing Committee.

[4:40:06 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Vice Chair Wielechowski adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:40 p.m.