

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FEDERAL AREAS

FACT SHEET

- A 12-member commission established to “*consider, research and hold hearings on the consistency with federal law and congressional intent on management, operation, planning, development and additions to federal management areas in the state and...the effect of federal regulations and federal management decisions on the people of the state.*” (AS 41.37.220)
- Six commissioners appointed by the Governor and six by the Legislature. The Senate President and the House Speaker each appoint three members, including one member of the House and one member of the Senate. Public members represent the diversity of users and uses of federal land in the state.
- The Commission meets at least three times per year. Meetings are open to the public, both present and attending by phone, and multiple opportunities for public testimony are provided at each meeting. A monthly newsletter is distributed electronically.
- The Commission routinely reviews and submits comments and recommendations on planning documents, policies, regulations and proposed legislation affecting federal lands in Alaska. The primary focus is on actions in and affecting designated units created or expanded by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.
- The Commission monitors and works on land use planning and management issues regarding federal public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, as well as National Forests managed by the U.S. Forest Service under the National Forest Management Act and related statutes.
- While operating independently, the Commission is dedicated to consistent and productive cooperation with each department and agency of the State, as well as with other state boards and commissions. Commission staff are in frequent contact with those entities on discrete and general matters, including presentations at meetings and conferences, verbal and written updates and participation in collaborative efforts and aligned interests.
- The Commission considers the views, research and reports of any individuals or groups, including those of any advisory groups it establishes. Commissioners and staff are routinely contacted by the public, both formally and informally, about urgent and/or longstanding issues related to federal land management in Alaska.
- The Commission may request the Attorney General file suit against a federal official or agency if the Commission determines that the federal official or agency is acting in violation of an Act of Congress, Congressional intent or the best interests of the state.

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COMMISSIONERS

Rod Arno, Wasilla (S) – registered guide, outfitter and pilot with 35 years experience throughout Alaska; well-known advocate for sportsmen's rights; served on the board of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association from 1991 to 2003; currently serving as President of the Alaska Outdoor Council. Commissioner since 2007, former Chairman and currently serving on the Executive Committee and Access Subcommittee.

Senator John Coghill, Fairbanks (S) – third-generation Alaskan, born in Fairbanks and raised in Nenana; served as a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Air Force. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1998, appointed to the Senate in 2009; Senate Majority Leader, former House Majority Leader. Commissioner since 2013.

Mark Fish, Big Lake (G) – a 30-year Alaskan; retired from a 20-year career in aviation with the Alaska Army National Guard; passionate advocate for outdoorsmen's rights; love for the outdoors, hunting and shooting his handcrafted black powder rifles. Commissioner since 2007, currently serving on the Executive Committee.

Teresa Hanson, Fairbanks (G) – Ph.D. student working to preserve Native language and increase awareness through education, introducing new curriculum at all levels; eager to inspire and enable the next generations to protect and advocate for the Alaskan lifestyle, subsistence activities, access to resources and maintaining a traditional connection to the land. Commissioner since 2013, currently serving on the Outreach Subcommittee.

Representative Wes Keller, Wasilla (H) – a 45-year Alaskan; former pilot in the Alaska Air National Guard; building contractor and craftsman; appointed to the House of Representatives in 2007. Commissioner since 2007, currently serving on the Executive Committee and as Chairman of the Commission.

Charlie Lean, Nome (G) – fisheries biologist with the State of Alaska for over 20 years; worked on subsistence issues for the National Park Service in Nome; extensive knowledge and experience with federal land use issues on the Seward Peninsula; Fish & Game Advisory Committee member; currently working as a fish research and development biologist for the Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation. Commissioner since 2007, currently serving on the Executive Committee and Access Subcommittee.

Kathleen Liska, Anchorage (G) – life-long Alaskan; proud and driven to carry the baton handed off by her grandmother, former State Senator Irene Ryan, who was involved in the establishment of both the Commission on Economic Development and the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission; provides an abundance of history, practical knowledge and passion. Commissioner since 2013, currently serving on the Outreach Subcommittee.

Gail Phillips, Anchorage (H) – life-long Alaskan, born in Juneau and raised in Nome; Alaskan legislator 1991-2000, House Majority Leader 1993-94 and House Speaker 1995-98; founder and former co-chair of the Western States Coalition; 2015 inductee to Alaska Women's Hall of Fame and named four times as one of the Top 25 Most Powerful Alaskans; miner, long-time Iditarod volunteer and active community leader. Commissioner since 2015.

Warren Olson, Anchorage (S) – arrived in Alaska six months after statehood; active in outdoor politics since 1977; former President of North American Wild Sheep, Alaska Chapter; former President of the Alaska Outdoor Council, in which capacity he traveled to Washington D.C. in 1980, raised funds to form the Alaska Constitutional Legal Defense Conservation Fund and was instrumental in filing the Gulkana case in 1981. Commissioner since 1983.

Ron Somerville, Juneau (H) – life-long Alaskan, moving to Craig at age one; avid outdoorsman; undergraduate and graduate degrees in wildlife management; retired from 24 years with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game; worked on Governor Hammond's committee on d(2) legislation, the Federal State Land Use Commission and the Board of Game; currently Executive Director for the Alaska Outdoor Council. Commissioner since 2011.

Susan Smith, Chokosna (G) – a 17-year resident inholder within the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, living a subsistence lifestyle near Chokosna Lake off the McCarthy Road; Chairman of the "Residents of the Wrangells", a McCarthy-based organization of inholders dedicated to improving relationships between federal authorities and private landowners. Commissioner since 2007, currently serving on the Outreach Subcommittee.

Frank Woods, Dillingham (G) – traditional hunter and commercial fisherman; Forestry Program Coordinator for Bristol Bay Native Association; father of ten; strong, respected advocate for Native rights and responsibilities through the Qayassiq Walrus Commission, the Bristol Bay Marine Mammal Council, the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Choggiung Limited and the State's winter trails council. Commissioner since 2007.