Riutta Updates House Fisheries on ASMI Actions

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The move by Alaska's major salmon packers away from the Marine Stewardship Council certification was a major topic during a meeting of the House Special Committee on Fisheries last week. Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute Executive Director Ray Riutta told the committee that his organization was asked by the processors to provide alternative certification.

-- (ASMI MSC 1 52 sec "This is the bottom line on that ... control access to the market.")

The alternative ASMI is providing is certification through standards set by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, or FAO.

Riutta said Alaska processors were concerned about the potential for MSC to divide Alaska salmon certification into regions:

-- (ASMI MSC 2 45 sec "There was a move to sort out ... marketplace is problematic.")

A couple of the House members on the committee were unfamiliar with the ins and outs of Marine Stewardship Council versus FAO certification. Representative Scott Kawasaki of Fairbanks asked about the relative reputations of the various certification programs:

-- (ASMI MSC 3 40 sec "Is MSC the gold standard of ... that's a problem.")

Riutta said the dropping of MSC certification will have different ramifications depending on the country:

-- (ASMI MSC 4 41 sec "It's a problem for us in Germany ... eco logos on their boxes.")

In response to a question from committee chair Representative Steve Thompson of Fairbanks, Riutta said it educating foreign and domestic markets about the new Alaska salmon certification system could

be a financial challenge for ASMI in the upcoming fiscal year.

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