



REPRESENTATIVE JEREMY T. BYNUM

**DISTRICT 1 | KETCHIKAN, SAXMAN, LORING, WRANGELL, MEYERS CHUCK,
METLAKATLA, COFFMAN COVE, WHALE PASS, & HYDER**

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE | Alaska State Capitol, Room 400
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SPONSOR STATEMENT HOUSE BILL NO. 253 – VERSION N

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The Fisheries Enhancement Loan Program has long played a vital role in sustaining commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in our state. The program provides critical access to capital for hatchery infrastructure and operations that strengthen fish stocks and support coastal economies.

HB 253 modifies statutes governing the program by expanding eligibility to include federally recognized tribal organizations that operate fish hatcheries on an Indian reservation or under a federal permit.

Under current law, loan eligibility is limited to qualified regional associations and approved nonprofit corporations. This bill ensures that eligible tribal organizations are treated consistently alongside these entities, recognizing their important role in fisheries enhancement across Alaska.

The bill makes conforming changes to the authority of the commissioner to include eligible tribal organizations and maintains the existing \$1,000,000 loan cap, preserving fiscal responsibility while expanding access.

By incorporating federally recognized tribal organizations in the fisheries enhancement loan program, HB 253 strengthens collaboration, supports hatchery infrastructure, and reinforces the long-term sustainability of fisheries in the State of Alaska.