



Sponsor

Statement

CSHB143(FSH): No Repeal of Sport Fish Guide Licensing

SPONSOR'S INTENT

CSHB 143 (FSH) will ensure the continuation of Alaska's sport fish guide licensing and reporting program, which has proven beneficial to both the sport fishing industry and resource managers. Also, the amended license fee schedule included in the legislation will generate funding for the program to pay for itself.

Legislation authorizing the program was passed in 2004 for a number of purposes. The Department of Fish & Game sought more comprehensive and credible information on guide numbers and guiding activities. The Department also wanted to create basic standards for sport fish business operators and guides, including minimum liability insurance coverage, first aid certification, and in some cases U.S. Coast Guard vessel licensing.

Many stakeholders who were initially skeptical of these measures now acknowledge their role in advancing the guiding profession. This increased level of professionalism has helped raise the standing of the sport fish industry across the state.

Many also agree that data collected through the program is an important tool in ADF&G's mission to develop and sustain healthy sport fisheries. The data is of great value not only to the Department's fisheries biologists but also to the Alaska Board of Fisheries, the International Pacific Halibut Commission, and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Sport fish data collection also contributes to Alaska's exemption from the recently instituted National Saltwater Angler Registry. NOAA exempts states from this federal registry and data collection system if they have programs in place to provide angler information. Sport fishers would otherwise be required by 2011 to purchase a certificate of registration for \$15 to \$25.

Passing CSHB 143 (FSH) will permit the Department of Fish & Game to continue to foster high standards in Alaska's sport fishing industry. It will also enable the Department to carry on collecting important data for management decisions to benefit both fisheries resources and their stakeholders. And it will increase license revenues to a level that will allow the program to operate without need of a funding subsidy.