

Good afternoon. My name is Dan Gilson and I am with the Prince William Sound Regional Citizens Advisory Council. The Council is a non-profit whose mission is promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers. The Council's 18 member organizations are communities in the Exxon Valdez oil spill impact region, as well as business, recreation, tourism, commercial fishing, Native and aquaculture groups.

Because of our concerns regarding invasive species arriving in the ballast water attached to the hulls of tankers, we are here today to support HB 12, the bill to create an invasive species council.

This legislation is vital in helping to help protect Alaska environments and economies from the threat of invasion by harmful non-indigenous organisms. We must act now in order to avoid a potential catastrophe.

The purpose of the council would be to provide a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach for addressing the potential risks of harmful invasive organisms and agents throughout the state and to work toward preventing the future introduction of other new invasive organisms and agents to the state.

The minor amount of money spent annually on a council could save us billions of dollars in lost economies, environments and industries in addition to costs associated with controlling invasions. Just look at the situation with the zebra mussels in the Great Lakes. The government estimates that economic losses and control efforts cost the United States about \$5 billion each year.

A more immediate threat to Alaska Coastlines is the European Green Crab. Green crabs eat clams, oysters, mussels, marine worms and small crustaceans that are important foods for native species. This invasive crab has marched its way up the west coast of the United States and has invaded Vancouver Island most recently. It is not a matter of "if" we get green crabs, but "where and when." To give you an idea of the economic devastation posed by the green crab, which is also invasive to the East Coast of the United States, the estimated total losses due to the green crab on the East Coast during 1975–2005 range from \$719 to \$806 million. Although economic impacts to the West Coast are negligible under current conditions, the West Coast impacts could increase to almost a million dollars per year if the green crab were to spread up to Alaska. And we do expect this spread to make its way to Alaska. We know the crabs can survive and establish themselves in our waters.

There are numerous threats to Alaska in terms of invasive species and just as many horror stories of these species taking over environments in other states. Another real threat to Alaska is Purple Loosestrife which has been found in the Westchester Lagoon area in Anchorage. This plant can produce up to 2.7 million seeds per plant yearly and spreads across approximately 1 million

additional acres of wetlands each year, with an economic impact of millions of dollars. A coordinated local effort in Anchorage has been on top of that infestation, but one can easily see how a broader coordinated effort is needed to proactively deal with these issues.

At this moment in time, Alaska is relatively free from invasive species. Contrary to a popular myth, Alaska is not isolated as it receives significant amounts of air, water, and land traffic. Also, climate change is making conditions in Alaska more favorable for harmful invasive species.

Unless Alaska takes a proactive stance, Alaska will suffer the same fate as other states dealing with the management of harmful invasive species. Formation of a council to develop a strategic plan, coordinate efforts, and share information is essential to be able to take advantage of funding opportunities only available to such coordinated entities. The minor amount of money spent on a council annual will pay dividends in the significant amount of money not spent on managing weeds, pests and other critters.

I urge you to support this bill.