

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SENATOR LESIL MCGUIRE

SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SENATE BILL 24

“An Act establishing the Sport Fishing Guide Services Board and licensing requirements for sport fishing guide-outfitters, sport fishing outfitters, sport fishing assistant guides, and sport fishing transporters; making conforming amendments; allowing the Department of Fish and Game to collect information on guiding services; and providing for an effective date.”

Sport fishing is a key element of Alaska’s cultural and economic landscape and the sustainable development of our fisheries is one of the Legislature’s fundamental constitutional responsibilities. Each year approximately 460,000 individuals spend roughly 2.5 million days sport fishing in Alaska. Sport fishing and especially guided sport fishing has become an integral part of Alaska’s economy. In 2007 guided sport fishing contributed an estimated \$641 million to Alaska’s economy and supported 7183 jobs. Annual direct expenditures attributed to sport fishing totaled \$1.4 billion or 3.1% of the total gross state product (GSP) in 2007. An average of 1,670 sport fishing business licenses and 1,981 sport fishing guide licenses have been sold annually of which 90% are issued to Alaska residents. The sport fishing guide services industry is also an important source of information for fisheries managers. Sport fishing guides currently provide logbook data to the Department of Fish and Game which provides the department with one of the critical tools required to manage our fisheries.

Senate Bill 24 seeks to achieve two goals, each consistent with the language set forth in the State Constitution which mandates sustainable development for the maximum economic benefit of Alaska. The first goal is to assure that Alaska’s sport fishing services continue to compete favorable in the marketplace with the best in the world. The second goal is to assure that, as the state’s valuable fishery resources are invested in the sport fishing services industry, the State of Alaska is doing so as would a diligent investor in any business. SB 24 achieves these goals by establishing a more accurate, stable and appropriate regulatory framework than currently exists. Also, by shifting regulation of the industry from the Department of Fish and Game to a Sport Fishing Guide Services Board established within the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development SB 24 places sport fishing guides alongside other analogous industry groups. The new board is modeled on a similar board created for big game guides in 2005 and will promote self-regulation, quality control and accountability in the industry.

SB 24 also recognizing the importance of the logbook program by proposing to permanently repeal the logbook’s termination language in the existing statute. The Alaska legislature extended the program’s termination date for one year only in both 2009 and 2010. Data collected through the logbook program provides information fishery managers need. The program also allows Alaska to receive an exemption from the National Saltwater Angler Registry; a federal program that would begin levying fees for registration in 2011.