

March 15, 2016

To the chair and members of the House Fisheries Committee:

Thanks for letting me submit testimony today. The following are notes from my remarks in committee today. To be clear, I oppose HB 283, because our family's commercial fishing business is dependent on protection of clean water.

We are members of the Seafood Producers Co-op, Petersburg Vessel Owners Association, Alaska Trollers, and others, and my partner Eric Grundberg has been fishing out of Petersburg for over a decade.

We are starting a direct-market small seafood business here in Petersburg, Schoolhouse Fish Co., and are also part of a new League of Alaskan Direct Market fishermen.

Weakening the state's ability to protect clean water does not help family fishermen like us. We benefit from and are thankful that the state has invested a lot of money and time into marketing Alaska's waters as pure and clean. This bill undercuts that investment.

I was shocked to learn about this bill. It's a big step in the exact opposite direction we need to go. We should be strengthening, not weakening, our ability to protect clean water since fishing is our state's biggest jobs creator and our state's most sustainable industry.

Alaska should be working to implement a clearly non-partisan process for ensuring Tier III waters are considered. These designations should be open to thorough public review by an agency experienced with considering scientific criteria, as would be the case if they are processed by an agency or consortium of agencies led by DNC.

I do not believe that a partisan legislature heavily influenced by mining and oil corporations is the right place to carry out implementation of the Clean Water Act. Alaska's legislature has an uncommonly short session and is neck deep in very serious budget issues that will not be resolved anytime soon. The Clean Water Act should be fully implemented in Alaska by agencies with the experience, scientific expertise and staff bandwidth to do a thorough and non-partisan job.

Despite Commissioner Hartig's failure to properly answer this question when brought in committee today, it is common knowledge that Alaska is one of the last states to avoid implementing this part of the Clean Water Act. This is despite the fact that we have the greatest economic stake in clean water.

Let's remember why we have the Clean Water Act – to ensure our water stays fishable, swimmable, and drinkable for future generations. We should be doing everything we can to support this goal, not weaken it.

Representative Craig Johnson's insinuation in committee that Tier III designations could "lock up water for development forever" is unfactual and disingenuous. Tier III designations only prevent pollution, not development, and I think we can all agree that Alaska welcomes development that does not pollute water. His use of Lake Tahoe as an analogy was a poor comparison lacking in fact and heavy on innuendo.

As a member of United Fishermen of Alaska member groups, I'd have to agree with Mr. Vinsel that a robust public process is the best way to protect Alaska's outstanding waters.

Sincerely,
Malena Marvin
Petersburg, AK 99833