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House Bill 199 - Sponsor Statement

HB 199 protects interests of subsistence, commercial, sport, and personal use fishermen while creating efficiency and predictability in permitting and enforcement.

House Bill 199, the "Wild Salmon Legacy Act," updates Title 16—Alaska's fish habitat protection and permitting law. This law guides how the State of Alaska permits activities and development projects that may impact wild salmon; however, the law has not been updated since Statehood.

The bill creates a balanced and efficient permitting system that protects Alaska's wild salmon runs, promotes responsible development and gives Alaskans a greater voice in major permitting decisions that impact wild salmon streams. HB 199 provides regulatory certainty for resource development companies while ensuring protection of salmon habitat.

This bill is drafted in response to a letter the Alaska Board of Fisheries sent to the Legislature in January 2017 recommending it modernize Title 16. The Board of Fisheries' action came at the request of a group of Alaskans comprised of commercial, sport, subsistence and personal use fishermen concerned about the future of the salmon they depend on.

Wild salmon are a major part of our culture, economy and identity in Alaska. Alaska is the last state with healthy populations of wild salmon and this bill protects the interests of Alaskans who rely on wild salmon for food, income and recreation."

Given the importance of Alaska's salmon fisheries, the state must ensure that related laws are balanced, predictable and fair in both protecting salmon habitat and encouraging responsible development. HB 199 will create enforceable standards, provide for public input and expand the Department of Fish and Game's authority to protect fish habitat and will safeguard Alaska's salmon fisheries into the future.