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4/7/17

Representative Louise Stutes
Chair of House Special Committee on Fisheries
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representative Stutes:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Alaska Survival (AS), I take this opportunity to thank you for introducing HB 199 which is a response to the Alaska Board of Fisheries letter. AS is a southcentral Alaska based public interest group that focuses on pollution and land management issues. Our members are dependent on healthy fisheries for jobs, regional economies and quality of life.

The current fish habitat permitting has been inadequate to protect our valuable anadromous streams. Alaska's salmon fisheries are without a doubt one of the world's few remaining truly sustainable anadromous fisheries. Where else can a fishery supply food for all residents who desire it, a viable commercial fishery, and thousands of residents and non-residents jobs?

Two aspects of HB 199 that we particularly focus on:

1. HB 199 legislates a transparent public process for both major and minor permits. With this legislative mandate, the Department will gain a mechanism for valuable local knowledge of the waterway and the area involved in the permit. Our Board particularly likes the requirement posting notice and Commission decisions on the Alaska Online Public Notice which people such as myself depend on to keep up with regulatory actions.

Currently, there is no public notice of applicants for Fish Habitat (FH) permits. Thus, there is no way for the public to even know about the existence of the permit application or even commenting on these permits. Many times the public finds out about the existence of a FH permit only when the applicant applies for a state Land Use Permit.

2. HB 199 legislates the science-based and habitat criteria of the Sustainable Salmon Policy.

Alaska's Sustainable Salmon Policy's is currently not being implemented in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Fish Habitat permits. Permitting practices for heavy equipment moves, construction projects, mining and other potentially habitat and waterway damaging activities are very loose. Oversight inspections and penalties for infractions are rare. Waivers of requirements are commonly allowed. All these problems endanger our world class fisheries, and many long-held livelihoods. I have witnessed these situations in my home neighborhood, and I am aware of other situations.

Becky Long, Secretary-Treasurer
Board of Directors-Alaska Survival