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Representative Garen Tarr
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 126
Juneau, Alaska 99801

March 18, 2017

Representative Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representatives Tarr and Kawaski,

Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) is a private, non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Alaska, engaged in salmon enhancement work throughout the Cook Inlet Region. We are strong proponents of protecting and preserving salmon resources and the habitat these fish rely upon. The purpose of this letter is give our support to HB 177 Aquatic Invasive Species, a bill that would allow the State of Alaska to swiftly address outbreaks of aquatic invasive species.

This bill takes advantage of lessons learned in other states and regions—it allows the State of Alaska to take a coordinated effort to deal with harmful aquatic invasive species before they spread and cause ecological and/or economic impacts to our valuable resources, especially salmon.

Compared to other areas in the country, Alaska has the opportunity to deal with aquatic invasive species threats that are still in their infancy such as the current *Elodea* infestations found in different areas around the state. *Elodea* is the first invasive submerged aquatic weed discovered in Alaska waters and it was commonly used and sold in pet stores for use in aquariums. This weed is a typical harmful invasive species because left unchecked, it will establish itself and dominate habitats, choking out native vegetation and fish, such as salmon.

The swift and rapid response by a partnership of government and private organizations to this threat on the Kenai Peninsula shows that eradication can be successful and is much more cost effective then letting this threat grow into very real economic and ecologic impacts on our resources (fish) and landscapes. Unfortunately, the lack of an early, coordinated effort with access to funding caused an *Elodea* infestation in Alexander Lake to spread from 10 acres in 2014 to over 500 acres in 2016. The cost for treatment has expanded greatly because the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources was forced to apply for grant funding to treat the initial 10-acre infestation, and delay the treatments until funding and permits were secured—a two-year delay. This is precisely the reason why HB 177 needs to be passed.

Salmon enhancement today means better salmon fishing tomorrow.

In an economic climate where funding is stretched thin, there is no bigger bang for the buck than by funding an early detection and rapid response fund to address harmful aquatic invasive species in Alaska. Ultimately such efforts will save the State of Alaska millions if not billions of dollars. For example, it is estimated that the State of California spends at least \$82 million every year addressing major impacts of invasive plants (www.cal-ipc.org). This is not a position the State of Alaska wants to be in and we have the foresight to avoid these costly mistakes, with HB 177 a significant step in the right direction.

Thank you for introducing HB 177, and please let us know if there is anything we can do to support your work.

Sincerely,



Gary Fandrei
Executive Director

Cc: Governor Bill Walker
Commissioner Sam Cotten
Commissioner Andy Mack
Representative Dean Westlake
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative Justin Parish
Representative Chris Birch
Representative DeLana Johnson
Representative George Rauscher
Representative David Talerico
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Gary Knopp
Representative Paul Seaton
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Peter Micciche