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House Bill 162 – Fisheries Rehabilitation Permits

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 162 seeks to augment the fisheries rehabilitation and restoration efforts of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The bill would allow Alaska Native organizations, individuals, environmental nonprofits, and others to apply for a permit to collect fish for egg fertilization and a subsequent reintroduction to the same waters where they were collected. Reintroduced fish would be available to the people for common use and could not be reserved for private users. Applicants could also apply to undertake habitat enhancement projects to aid in the survival of fish.

HB 162 would give the private sector a legal and environmentally sound mechanism to help Alaska's ongoing effort at protecting and preserving wild fish stocks and the commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries those stocks support. Currently, government and universities are allowed similar permits and have multiple ongoing projects. All applications would be subject to approval by the commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Successful applicants would be required to submit an extensive plan outlining their project and would be held to strict guidelines governing how projects are undertaken. Projects would be limited to areas where subsistence and escapement goals have not been met or where stakeholders have identified a decline in the number of fish. HB 162 prohibits applicants from introducing live fertilized eggs, larvae, or fry from non-indigenous fish.

By expanding Alaska's ongoing rehabilitation and restoration efforts, future generations of Alaskans and visitors will be able to experience Alaska's unique and bountiful fish resources. Fisheries enhancement is a worthy goal because fish are at the heart of Alaska's history, culture, and economy.