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SENATOR KEVIN MEYER
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SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR CSSB 177

"An Act relating to an exception for professional fishing guide services in the Kenai river Special management Area; relating to the licensing and regulation of sport fishing operators an sport fishing guides and licensing and registration of sport fishing vessels; and providing for an effective date."

CSSB 177 will provide a waiver for a mid-season replacement of a fishing guide within the Kenai River Special Management Area and ensure the continuation of Alaska's sport fish guide licensing and reporting program for five years.

This waiver benefits sports fish operating guide businesses—particularly small guide operators who would have to turn away business if they had a sudden and unexpected loss of a guide mid-season because of injury, misconduct or some other unforeseen circumstance.

The licensing and reporting program has proven beneficial to both the sport fishing industry and resource managers. Legislation authorizing the program was passed in 2004 for a number of purposes. The Department of Fish & Game sought more comprehensive and credible information on guide numbers and guiding activities. The Department also wanted to create basic standards for sport fish business operators and guides, including minimum liability insurance coverage, first aid certification, and in some cases U.S. Coast Guard vessel licensing.

Passing SB 177 will provide relief for sport fish operating guides and permit the ADF&G to continue to foster high standards in Alaska's sport fishing industry by enabling the department to carry on collecting important data for management decisions to benefit both fisheries resources and their stakeholders.