

# Representative Rebecca Himschoot

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## ***Session***

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## **HOUSE BILL 191**

"An Act establishing the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game; relating to management of invasive species; and providing for an effective date."

### **SPONSOR STATEMENT**

(Version G – 4.30.25)

House Bill 191 will improve the prevention, eradication, and control of invasive species in Alaska and help reduce their long-term impact in the state. Invasive species threaten some of our most important natural resources and infrastructure and have the potential to do significantly more damage in the future if more effort is not put into preventing their spread.

Some of the impacts of invasive species in Alaska currently include:

- Northern pike are devastating salmon runs in Southcentral Alaska.
- Invasive chokecherry trees are spreading across Anchorage and other parts of the state. They are poisonous to moose and can blanket stream banks, resulting in less light and fewer insects for fish to eat.
- Salmon habitat is being degraded by elodea throughout Alaska.
- Invasive European green crabs are spreading in southern Southeast Alaska, impacting important eelgrass beds and feeding on native Dungeness crabs and clams.

Despite these impacts, invasive species are just beginning to spread in the state. Now is the time to act to avoid the significant negative economic impact seen in other states, which amounts to approximately \$26 billion annually in the United States. In a 2019 study, it was estimated that elodea alone could impact the sockeye salmon fishery in Alaska by \$159 million annually.

House Bill 191 will establish an Alaska Invasive Species Council to assist in coordinating the prevention and management of invasive species to minimize their impact in Alaska. Numerous departments, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and others are currently working to manage invasive species in Alaska, and this bill will help ensure their work is coordinated and efficient. In addition, the bill will create an invasive species response fund where grants or other revenue can be deposited and used to improve the prevention and management of invasive species.

The council and response fund will help ensure Alaska entities take the necessary steps to prevent and manage invasive species. With warmer temperatures and an increase in the number of visitors to Alaska, there is an increasing threat of invasive species spreading in the state. House Bill 191 will streamline the prevention and management of invasive species in Alaska before they cause even more damage to Alaska's natural resources and infrastructure.