



April 28, 2025

Representative Rebecca Himschoot
State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Himschoot,

I am writing in support of HB191—An Act Establishing the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game. Since the discovery of Alaska's first aquatic invasive species, *Elodea spp.* (Elodea) in 2010, I have studied the management and economic impact of Elodea on Alaska's economy. This work has been published in ten peer-reviewed scientific journals and informed on-the-ground resource management decisions.

Not addressing the biosecurity threats to Alaska has far reaching but often hidden economic consequences associated with reduced food security, reduced property values, commercial fisheries loss, and impacts on energy infrastructure, to name a few. Since 2010, the cumulative loss to commercial sockeye salmon fisheries from not eradicating Elodea in Alaska is estimated to exceed \$1 billion in 2025. In contrast, since 2010, only \$6.9 million has been spent on Elodea response, 72% funded by federal agencies, 21% by non-profit organizations, and 7% by the State of Alaska.

Over the past ten years, the time to respond to new Elodea infestations has grown from less than 1 year in 2015 to 2.5 years on average in 2024. Of the 49 currently known Elodea-infested waterbodies, Elodea has been eradicated from only 20. Thirteen are currently being managed, not all of which have funding for herbicide applications in 2025. A total of 16 waterbodies have not had any treatment.

The reasons for Alaska's failure to eradicate Elodea are complex. First, the arrival of new invaders is on an exponential trajectory, pulling away limited resources to manage ever more complex infestation in remote locations. Additional challenges include inconsistent management goals across agencies, lack of implementing a formalized statewide strategy, inconsistent application of best management practices, and the fragmentation of jurisdiction, response, and funding. For Elodea, these challenges resulted in inefficient allocation of resources estimated at \$0.9 million (13%). The establishment of the Alaska Invasive Species Council will enable a more formalized and more efficient use of public and private resources for Alaska's response to an increasingly challenging biosecurity environment.

Sincerely,

Tobias Schwoerer
Research Assistant Professor of Natural Resource Economics



www.pwsrcac.org

Citizens promoting the environmentally safe operation of the Alyeska terminal and associated tankers.

Members:

Alaska State Chamber of Commerce

Chugach Alaska Corporation

City of Cordova

City of Homer

City of Kodiak

City of Seldovia

City of Seward

City of Valdez

City of Whittier

Community of Chenega

Community of Tatitlek

Cordova District Fishermen United

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Kodiak Island Borough

Kodiak Village Mayors Association

Oil Spill Region Environmental Coalition

Oil Spill Region Recreational Coalition

Port Graham Corporation

Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation

Anchorage

3709 Spenard Rd, Ste 100
Anchorage, AK 99503
O: (907) 277-7222
(800) 478-7221

Valdez

P.O. Box 3089
130 S. Meals, Ste 202
Valdez, AK 99686
O: (907) 834-5000
(877) 478-7221

April 29, 2025

Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Rep.Rebecca.Himschoot@akleg.gov
State Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99810

Re: Support for House Bill 191

Dear Representative Himschoot:

The Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (PWSRCAC) is a federally mandated, independent nonprofit corporation whose mission is to promote the environmentally safe operation of the Valdez Marine Terminal and associated tankers. Our work is guided by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and our contract with Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. PWSRCAC's 19 member organizations are communities in the region affected by the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, as well as commercial fishing, aquaculture, Alaska Native, recreation, tourism, and environmental groups.

We are writing to express our support for House Bill 191. The PWSRCAC appreciates your continued interest in prevention, early detection, and rapid response to invasive species in Alaska. As you know, invasive species have the potential to cause significant adverse impacts to the environment, the economy, and the lifestyle and culture of all Alaskans.

HB 191 will establish an invasive species council comprised of a diverse and modest number of members to serve in an advisory role for invasive species management across agencies and jurisdictional boundaries. We appreciate that the bill addresses both prevention and response, requires the preparation of a 5-year strategic plan, and establishes an invasive species response fund. We note that previous efforts to establish an Alaska invasive species council received strong bipartisan support.

PWSRCAC has over a 25-year history of working to prevent the introduction of invasive species into the marine environment in the Exxon Valdez oil spill region, which includes Prince William Sound, lower Cook Inlet, and the Kodiak archipelago. Our primary concern is the introduction of invasive species from ballast water and biofouling as a result of Trans-Alaska Pipeline System tanker operations. We have been successful, along with partners in Alaska, in addressing this issue by funding research projects to sample the ballast water of tankers, engaging in various working groups, and supporting changes in Federal regulations such as the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA). In addition, PWSRCAC maintains an active early detection monitoring program for marine invasive species, including European green crab, in the communities of Valdez, Cordova, and Kodiak.

Thank you again for sponsoring House Bill 191. Please contact us if you have any questions or if there is anything further we can do to assist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Donna Schantz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Donna Schantz
Executive Director