

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## **SPONSOR STATEMENT**

### **HB 12 ESTABLISHING THE ALASKA COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES**

HB 12 establishes the Alaska Council on Invasive Species. A 14 member board would be established in the Department of Fish and Game with four other departments included as ex-officio members; Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Department of Health & Social Services. The Commissioner of Fish and Game would appoint the other 9 members.

Invasive species are a relentless problem. These harmful, non-native plants, animals and microorganisms impact our economy and environment. The overall economic impact of invasive species in the U.S. was estimated in the range of tens of billions of dollars per year in 2000. The potential economic harm that invasive species could cause in Alaska is difficult to estimate. However, if just a few invasive plant species that are of known concern were to become wide-spread, they alone could cost the State's economy tens of millions of dollars annually.

Alaska is in a unique position to avoid the enormous costs associated with the widespread introduction and establishment of invasive species. Early intervention in Alaska can prevent the deterioration of the state's resources.

Formation of a unified Council for invasive species management is an important step in coordinating existing resources within Alaska and for improving our capacity for effective collaboration well into the future. The Alaska Council on Invasive Species will conduct a coordinated and comprehensive effort to keep invasive species out of Alaska and to eliminate, reduce, or mitigate the impacts of invasive species already established in Alaska.

Prevention and timely management is important for controlling the detrimental impacts of invasive species. Early detection programs and rapid response plans can help to cost-effectively mobilize resources from participating agencies.

Coordination between the organizations and agencies in Alaska is vital to identify shared priorities and avoid duplication of efforts, to promote compatibility of the collected research data, and to enhance the education and outreach activities associated with invasive species.

The State of Alaska and its partners can more strongly support regulation and enforcement efforts to protect our vital natural and economic resources. The recent actions of the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Game toward regulating such invasive species as rats, freshwater fish (non-native pike), and detrimental plant species (purple loosestrife and orange hawkweed) are positive steps toward invasive species prevention.

Effective prevention is both economically and ecologically efficient, and often more practical, than eradicating species after introduction has already occurred. Improved monitoring, inspection, and enforcement along all pathways for invasion into Alaska are needed.