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SPONSOR STATEMENT/ HB 304 Ver. A (34-LS1375\I)

"An Act relating to the duties of the commissioner of fish and game; establishing the sport fishing angler access account; establishing the sport fishing angler access surcharge; and providing for an effective date."

Alaska's sport fishing industry is a cornerstone of our state's economy. It supports thousands of jobs, generates substantial state and local revenue, and brings visitors from around the world to experience Alaska's fisheries.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game last produced a comprehensive statewide economic impact report on sport fishing in 2007. Nearly *two decades* later, Alaska's population, tourism activity, infrastructure, and fisheries management challenges have changed significantly. Policymakers are making decisions affecting access, allocation, conservation, and infrastructure without updated statewide economic data.

HB304 requires the Commissioner of Fish & Game to produce and disseminate a biennial report on the economic impacts of sport fishing in Alaska. The report will follow the model of the Department's 2007 Professional Publication No. 08-01 to ensure consistency and credibility in methodology.

To fund this work without relying on unrestricted general funds; the bill establishes a \$1 sport fishing angler access surcharge on sport fishing licenses. The \$1 minimal surcharge per license and must be clearly disclosed. Individuals eligible for reduced-cost or free licenses are exempt.

The surcharge revenue is intended to function as program receipts to be deposited to the fish and game fund, remain fully subject to annual legislative appropriation, and provide funding support for the production and dissemination of the biennial report.

The proposal has received support from the Department of Fish and Game, the Kenai River Sports Association, and other stakeholders. It reflects a well-vetted effort to update critical economic data while reinvesting directly in Alaska's anglers.

The bill includes a repeal date of January 1, 2032, ensuring the legislature has the opportunity to review its effectiveness before continuing the program. HB304 ensures Alaska has reliable, current economic data on one of its most important renewable resource industries, at minimal cost and with clear legislative oversight.