

Alaska State Legislature

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Session: (Jan-May)
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 403
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REPRESENTATIVE JOHN HARRIS

MEMORANDUM

April 14, 2009

TO: Senator Bert Stedman

FROM: Representative John Harris

SUBJECT: HB 134, Commercial Passenger Vessel Wastewater Permits

Please consider this request to schedule HB 134 for a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee. An updated sponsor statement is attached for your review.

HB 134 would address wastewater discharges from commercial passenger vessels. My office, as bill sponsor, has worked with all interested parties on it. Under the bill:

- Cruise ship companies would be provided time and opportunity to develop technology that allows them to meet water quality standards at the point of discharge.
- The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation would have the authority to issue wastewater discharge permits that attempt to incorporate the best available technology for effluent treatment.
- A science advisory panel would be created to assist DEC and provide the legislature with reports about wastewater treatment technology development and cruise ship discharge activities.
- Large commercial passenger vessels that cannot meet water quality standards at the point of discharge would have permits limited to two years – rather than the normal five-year period for all other permits.
- The Senate Resources Committee placed a sunset provision of January 1, 2015 for the provisions in the bill that give DEC authority to issue permits to vessels that cannot meet standards at the point of discharge.

I believe we have done our best to make sure that all viewpoints have been considered, and we have drafted a bill that would be good for Alaska.

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Sponsor Statement

SCS for CS for House Bill No. 134 (RES)

An Act relating to terms and conditions of commercial passenger vessel permits for wastewater discharges

The Senate Resources Committee Substitute for HB 134 represents a continuing effort to reach a compromise to address the issue of permits for wastewater discharges from large commercial passenger vessels known as cruise ships.

In 2006, Alaska voters approved the cruise ship initiative that amended the law to require vessels to meet water quality standards at the point of discharge. Municipal wastewater systems and discharges from other commercial entities commonly use mixing zones, and smaller-sized vessels in Alaska are exempt.

In 2008, the Department of Environmental Conservation issued a general permit for all large cruise ships that provided a two-year period for vessels to meet standards at the point of discharge. DEC has also conducted a cruise ship technology conference on available treatments for discharges of ammonia and dissolved metals.

All sides on this issue agree that technology is unavailable now for onboard treatment of wastewater that allows vessels to meet all water quality standards at the point of discharge.

This bill addresses how the agency will permit wastewater discharges from vessels to allow for the time it takes to get the technology developed and installed onboard. It is important to keep in mind that cruise ships discharge cleaner wastewater than most municipalities, commercial entities, and all other Alaska vessels.

The Senate Resources Committee version of HB 134 places a sunset date of January 1, 2015 on the provisions in the bill that provide an exception to the "point of discharge" requirement for meeting water quality standards.