

3415 Wentworth St.
Anchorage AK 99508

February 19, 2011

Dear Representative Gara:

I support increasing the amount and quality of publicly accessible land for fishing. The area's which are now publicly accessible are often overcrowded which leads to conflict between users, reduces the quality of the experience and results in the degradation of the land. For example, in the mid 1980's the Kenai River when the runs of salmon were heavy was crowded in the area of the old Sportsman Lodge and ferry crossing. However, a short walk either up or down stream would result in far fewer anglers. Now, during the same time periods, the river is often crowded on nearly every available space between the Kenai Lake and Jim's Landing for between June and September. This isn't isolated to this fishery.

If we were systematically to review opportunities to acquire land which has a high value for fishing through a process that insures land owners rights are not violated, it would both improve the access for Alaskans and the quality of their lives. I believe HB 144 would do that.

I have been involved as a volunteer in a number of aspects of resources in Alaska. I served for over 10 years on the Anchorage Fish & Game Advisory Committee, approximately 5 years on the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council for Subsistence, and one term on the Board of Game. During that time access for the average Alaskan was a consistent issue. I am currently a member of the Alaska Fly Fishers and have served numerous terms as an officer of that organization. Again, AFF members have made many contributions to habitat restoration and to enhance our public fisheries. We often hear about the lack of access to fisheries which they can reach within a reasonable distance of their homes.

Based on my experience, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game does a very good job of maintaining and enhancing our fisheries. However with a growing population in Alaska, it becomes critical to do what we can to increase the amount of public lands available. We, as a state, have an obligation under Article 8 of our constitution to make the resources of Alaska available for the maximum use consistent with the public interest. Further the legislature has an obligation to make these resources reserved for to the people for common use.

HB 144, in my opinion, would be consistent with and assist in meeting this obligation.

Sincerely,

Bob Churchill