ALASKA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Representative Steve Thompson, Chair
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Meeting Schedule
Days: Tuesday & Thursday
Time: 5 to 7pm
Location: Capitol Room 120
Email: House_Fisheries@legis.state.ak.us

House Special Committee on Fisheries

SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR HOUSE BILL 173

"*An Act amending the termination date of the licensing of sport fishing operators and sport fishing guides; and providing for an effective date.*"

House Bill 173 will ensure the continuation of Alaska's sport fish guide licensing and reporting program. Legislation authorizing the program was passed in 2004 and the program has proven beneficial to both the sport fishing industry and resource managers. With more than 1.8 million clients, 88% of whom are nonresidents, taking more than 460,000 guided fishing trips in Alaska annually, guided sport fishing has become an integral part of Alaska's tourism economy. In fact, a study commissioned by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimated that nonresident spending on sport fishing was more than $650 million in 2007.

Since the program's inception, an average of 1,670 sport fishing business licenses and 1,981 sport fishing guide licenses have been sold annually. 90% of license holders are Alaska residents and the professionalization of the sport fishing guide industry has benefitted both the industry and the resource. The data collected through the program provides information state and federal managers need to sustainably manage sport fish populations. The program also allows Alaska to receive an exemption from the National Saltwater Angler Registry; a federal program that would begin levying fees for registration in 2011.

Recognizing the importance of the program, the Alaska legislature extended the program's termination date for one year in 2010. HB 173 proposes to similarly amend the program's statutory termination language to allow this valuable program to continue serving Alaskans and their valuable fishery resources.