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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE House District 35

HB 85 Sponsor Statement

A water discharge permit is a privilege to use our public water. Alaska waters receive varying amounts of pollution under the parameters of discharge permits as specified by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Mixing zones are areas permitted in a water body surrounding or downstream of a discharge where state water quality standards may be exceeded while the effluent plume is diluted by the receiving water.

Current regulations allow freshwater spawning areas to be designated as mixing zones if salmon are not actively spawning (laying eggs) at the time of wastewater discharge and allows a mixing zone in the area even while other species are laying eggs. HB 85 would change that regulation to prevent discharge of pollutants into any freshwater spawning area of the species identified on the statutory list if they spawn in nests.

HB 85 is also a public right-to-know bill. It seeks to create accountability by allowing the public to have clear and easy access to information regarding the amount and nature of pollutants that are discharged under permit into Alaska water.

HB 85 allows the public to be involved if a commercial sewage lagoon is expanded by more than 50% of its originally permitted size. Current law doesn't adequately provide opportunity for public awareness and involvement in a comment process for the expansion of commercial sewage containment facilities.