

March 16, 2016

Dear Governor Walker:

I write in objection to HB 283 and SB 163.

These bills are in House Rules Committee and Senate Rules Committee at your request. I hope that you withdraw your support for this legislation, for the following reasons.

I have long been a strong advocate of the rights of the public to participate meaningfully in land and resource management decisions. The outpouring of widespread opposition to HB77 a couple of years ago demonstrates that a great many Alaskans also believe in this fundamental right of public process.

The HB77 public outcry also showed that Alaskans want the pristine quality of the waters of the state to be protected. Your transition report for Fisheries, for example, has as its number one priority a “fish first” policy for the state. Number 4 on the priority list recommends a fisheries management policy of Science over politics. Both of these transition report items can’t happen if water quality isn’t protected.

It is contrary to the public’s best interest to politicize the question of water body protection by having the legislature make the “outstanding national resource water” determinations. If we are going to have good public policy decisions governing designation and management of waters of the state I think they need to be made at the agency level, according to a policy framework that emphasizes the demonstrated importance of water quality protection, with such decisions meaningfully informed by stakeholders, members of the public, and sound science.

In addition to withdrawing your support for HB 283 and SB 163, I hope that you will act aggressively throughout your administration, to ensure our waters remain pristine and free of contamination, and thus maintain and protect the quality (and quantity) of our water that is so integral to our recreation, economies, subsistence, and overall quality of life in Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Strassenburgh

Talkeetna, AK 99676

cc Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair, Senate Resources Committee
Representative Louise Stutes, Chair, House Fisheries Committee