



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH

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MIKE NAVARRE
BOROUGH MAYOR

April 3, 2017

Alaska State Legislature
Alaska House of Representatives
House Resources Committee
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: House Bill 177

I want to state on the record my strong support for House Bill 177 as a positive addition to the state's ongoing efforts to control aquatic invasive species. By allowing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to more quickly respond to outbreaks of invasive plants and other marine organisms, this legislation could prove helpful in battling the expanding problem that threatens our waters.

This legislation, unfortunately, was proven even more necessary when just six weeks ago the invasive weed elodea was found in Soldotna's Sport Lake, one of the most popular on the central Kenai Peninsula for sport fishing. Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff found fragments of the weed while drilling holes for a school district ice-fishing event. Elodea, which can grow beneath the ice, can be especially destructive in freshwater lakes as it grows so thick that it can reduce oxygen levels in the water enough to kill fish. It can also damage spawning habitat and get tangled up in boat props and seaplane floats.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough's diversified economy depends in great part on tourism, commercial fishing, sport and subsistence fishing. Healthy waters — free of invasive species — are essential to preserving the region's economic and ecological health. House Bill 177 provides the Department of Fish and Game with stronger capabilities to respond to and control aquatic invasive species. Rapid response is essential, as is adequate funding to cover the costs of that response. This bill helps in several ways, and I support its passage.

Sincerely,

Mike Navarre
Mayor