

April 2, 2017

Dear Chairman Stutes and Members of the House Fisheries Committee,

I write in support of HB199, "The Wild Salmon Legacy Act."

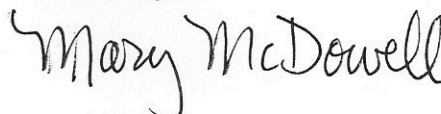
I have been involved in Alaska's fisheries for 40 years --- as a participant in commercial, sport, and personal use fisheries and in my professional work for the legislative and administrative branches of state government and the seafood industry. And, like most Alaskans, I am connected to and sustained by Alaska's salmon and other fish resources at my core.

The drafters of our State Constitution wisely included the mandate for sustained yield of fish and game resources in our constitution. Over the subsequent decades, the state's laws and management of fish, game, land, and waters, along with some favorable conditions and good luck, have kept most of our salmon and other fish and game resources healthy. *However, we have continued to rely on a statutory framework for protecting fish habitat that was designed decades ago and is now, I believe, outdated and inadequate.* This leaves us at risk of making many of the same mistakes that have wiped out the wild salmon resources in nearly every other state and country that originally had them.

Since the time Alaska's habitat protection laws were written, an incredible amount has been learned about the biology of fish, what they need, and what puts them at risk; about the ways various kinds of development can affect the habitat that fish, wildlife, and humans need to stay healthy; how some potential impacts can be avoided; and the value of public input in decision-making processes. Additionally, the context in which our fish and game resources exist has changed considerably since those laws were written. Alaska itself is different - our population, urban areas, and transportation systems have all grown considerably; we are seeing development projects of far greater size, magnitude, and potential impacts than were contemplated back then; and, now, we humans and our fish and wildlife resources face the vast potential impacts of climate change. Our laws must keep pace with what we have learned and the risks and challenges we can anticipate.

Alaska needs continued growth, stability, and responsible development of our communities and resources. But that comes with an enormous responsibility to ensure that it occurs within a statutory framework that is up-to-date and capable of effectively protecting the habitat upon which our fish and game (and, thus, all of us) depend. I believe passage of HB199 is a critical step in our living up to that responsibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary McDowell". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large loop on the "M" and a long, sweeping tail on the "l".

Mary McDowell
PO Box 20763
Juneau, AK 99802