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Alaska Federation of
Natives



ANCSA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

Bringing Together Regional Corporation Presidents and CEOs

PO Box 240766 • Anchorage, AK 99524 • 907 375 4212

Alaska Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

February 13, 2018

Alaska Legislators,

As an association of Alaska Native Regional Corporation CEOs, our collective mission is to promote and foster the continued growth and economic strength of the Alaska Native Regional Corporations on behalf of our more than 127,000 shareholders.

It is with this mission in mind that we stand together in support of HB 188, which authorizes the establishment of regional fisheries trusts. Our shareholders commercial fish all over Alaska, from gillnetters in Kotzebue Sound to drift netters in Bristol Bay and the Alaska Peninsula to seiners and trollers in Southeast.

Commercial fishing is an economic driver and cultural touchstone for both interior and coastal Alaska communities. But over the last thirty years, we have seen the barriers to entering commercial fishing grow for our shareholders and all aspiring fishermen. Vibrant commercial fishing fleets once filled harbors in our regions; today too many harbors sit half-full or close to empty. Regional fisheries trusts as envisioned by HB 188 hold promise as a tool to help refill those harbors and bring fishing income, fishing jobs, and economic opportunity back to our communities.

While other tools, such as the Commercial Fishing Revolving Loan Fund (CF RLF), help Alaska's fisherman engage in Alaska's fisheries, regional fisheries trusts fill a unique need. Fisheries trusts would be allowed to acquire a small number of permits off the open market, then temporarily transfer these permits to up-and-coming fishermen, allowing them to build the experience and cash flow necessary to secure a loan and purchase a permit for themselves.

We believe this stepping stone will prove particularly valuable for fishermen in smaller communities, where other economic opportunities and the corresponding ability to build a credit history are limited. Fisheries trusts would be opt-in, established only upon regional consensus, and would be governed — as our corporations are — by local boards.

Fisheries trusts will provide our shareholders with access to the fisheries resources off their shores, and improve economic opportunity in our communities. We strongly encourage the legislature's support for HB 188.

Sincerely,
ANCSA REGIONAL ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A Schutt".

Aaron Schutt
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Reitmeier".

Kim Reitmeier
Executive Director