



KENAI RIVER

Special Management Area

"Working together...for the river"

ADVISORY BOARD

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April 19, 2021

House Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol
124 4th Street
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Co-Chairs Foster and Merrick:

The Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board was established by the Legislature to provide recommendations regarding the Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA), with regard to the KRSMA Plan. The KRSMA Plan's goal is to protect natural resources and fish and wildlife habitat, manage the river's recreational and commercial uses, and provide public facilities. Accordingly, the Advisory Board has an interest in continued capital and operations/maintenance funding associated with the KRSMA.

The Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board encourages the support of HB-80, a bill establishing a sport fishing hatchery facilities account and establishing a sport fishing facility surcharge. The KRSMA is a remarkable park unit – with world-class natural resources and sportfishing opportunities. Unfortunately, access infrastructure for anglers, funding for habitat conservation, and law enforcement within the park are not funded commensurate to the levels of use and public interest.

Accordingly, the KRSMA Advisory Board requests further amendment to HB-80 with language specifying that monies collected under a sportfishing license surcharge, in excess of the \$4 surcharge originally requested by the Governor, be directed specifically to angler access, opportunity, and capital improvements within the KRSMA. The KRSMA Advisory Board recognizes that it may not be fair to direct all these funds to the KRSMA park unit, and so recommends that money be distributed to regions/river systems based upon use as represented by total number of angler-days in a calendar year.

The KRSMA represents one of Alaska's most accessible and iconic outdoor recreation resources and these surcharge funds may help relieve some backlog of deferred maintenance projects and further fund public access, safety, habitat conservation and educational resources within the park at a level befitting its reputation.

Thank you for considering this request, and for your continued service to the people of Alaska.

Best regards, Ted Wellman

Chair, KRSMA Advisory Board