

From: [Sen. Click Bishop](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FW: I Strongly Oppose SB 62
Date: Thursday, March 17, 2022 2:33:57 PM

From: Iris Fletcher <fletchflower@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2022 2:04 PM
To: Sen. Bert Stedman <Sen.Bert.Stedman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Lyman Hoffman <Sen.Lyman.Hoffman@akleg.gov>; Sen. Natasha Von Imhof <Sen.Natasha.VonImhof@akleg.gov>; Sen. David Wilson <Sen.David.Wilson@akleg.gov>; Sen. Donny Olson <Sen.Donny.Olson@akleg.gov>; Sen. Bill Wielechowski <Sen.Bill.Wielechowski@akleg.gov>; Sen. Click Bishop <Sen.Click.Bishop@akleg.gov>; Senate Finance <Finance.Calendar@akleg.gov>
Cc: Rep. Sarah Vance <Rep.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov>; Rep. Geran Tarr <Rep.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov>
Subject: I Strongly Oppose SB 62

Good afternoon, members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing this email to you today to express my concern and strong opposition to SB 62. I feel this way for several reasons.

I have lived in Homer for my entire life, and intend to live here for the remainder. I am now a fisheries biologist, and have enjoyed the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area and State Park from childhood into today. This place is extremely important to me and many other constituents like me, along with people who moved here later and had their hearts stolen by this beautiful place.

We need to continue to safeguard our protected lands and waters if we want wild places, wild salmon, big game, their supporting industries, and our Alaskan way of life. The bills in the House and Senate jeopardize Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area, as well as Alaska's State Game Sanctuaries, State Game Refuges, State Parks, and other Critical Habitat Areas.

SB 62 would be in direct conflict with Alaska Statute 16.20.500, which states that the purpose of the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area is to: "protect and preserve habitat areas especially crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other uses not compatible with that primary purpose." In all likelihood, it is also in direct conflict with the statutory purpose of every other State Park, Game Refuge or Sanctuary, Critical Habitat Area where it would be applied. Along with this, HB 82 and SB 62 threaten the livelihood of commercial, sport and subsistence fishermen, as well as local guides, lodges, B&Bs, and charter boat companies whose businesses depend on protected lands and waters.

Seismic exploration on protected lands and waters is highly likely if this bill passes. It is well-known that seismic surveys threaten marine mammals and kill large numbers of zooplankton, disrupting the food web. Seismic surveys have no place in Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area, or any of Alaska's State Parks and Reserves.

Hilcorp cannot be trusted to operate safely under our Critical Habitat Area. In 2017, we saw them leave a leaking gas pipeline go un-repaired for over 4 months, while it leaked 100,000 cubic feet per day. According to Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation records, over the course of operations in Alaska, which began in 2012, Hilcorp is responsible for over 90 crude oil spills or discharges, including spilling 10,000 gallons on Alaska's North Slope in 2015. Their record is so bad that the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission has concluded that Hilcorp has a culture of disregard for regulatory standards: "The disregard for regulatory compliance is endemic to Hilcorp's approach to its Alaska operations...Hilcorp's conduct is inexcusable."

Lateral drilling technology allows companies to drill and frack up to six miles into protected areas from outside platforms. At any point along the way, they can hit underground aquifers and cause long-term contamination of waters within the protected area. Contamination of underground sources of drinking water and surface waters often result from spills, leaks, and faulty well construction. Horizontal drilling generally goes together with fracking. While the bills do not explicitly name fracking, they do not prohibit it. According to the US Energy Information Administration, hydraulically fractured horizontal wells accounted for 69% of all oil and natural gas wells drilled in the United States in 2016, and the trend was steadily increasing.

The average water withdrawal in a horizontal drilling and fracking operation is 3 million gallons per well and can be up to 16 million gallons. Where will the water come from? In the case of Kachemak Bay, most likely from The Anchor River, which has its own Critical Habitat Area upstream, which would be impacted from these withdrawals. Large-scale water withdrawals to support drilling and fracking under Alaska's protected lands will mean drawing down water tables in and around protected lands—which in turn will lead to warmer water in streams and lakes, harm to essential fish habitat, wetlands and peatlands. In our already warming and drying climate, we cannot allow this. Even if enough extra water was available without damage to our natural resources from purely a volume standpoint, water that comes out of wells contains high levels of toxins and heavy metals that are harmful to living organisms. This is no small matter, when according to studies by Duke University, up to 16% of hydraulically fractured oil and gas wells spill liquids every year.

In short, approval of these bills would spell disaster for our carefully protected natural resources within Kachemak Bay, and for the surrounding communities that depend on these resources. Please help us to avoid disaster by voting against SB 62.

Thank you,

Iris Fletcher
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