



Representative Sarah Vance  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
33rd Alaska State Legislature

Re: Support for House Bill 98 STATE OWNERSHIP OF SUBMERGED LAND

March 21, 2023

Dear Representative Vance, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter and Kenai Peninsula Chapter support House Bill 98 STATE OWNERSHIP OF SUBMERGED LAND.

Founded in 1971, Safari Club International is the country's leading hunter rights advocate and additionally promotes worldwide wildlife conservation. SCI's approximately 50,000 members and 200 Chapters represent all 50 of the United States as well as 106 other countries. The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter (SCI AK) and Kenai Peninsula Chapter (KPSCI) are 501c4 conservation non-profit corporations. SCI AK was established in Alaska in 1977, and currently has 670 members. Our joint mission statement is "First for Hunters - First for Wildlife."

HB 98 asserts that, by operation of law, submerged lands under navigable waters in areas managed by federal agencies were conveyed to the state from the United States pursuant to the Equal Footing Doctrine of the U.S. Constitution, the federal Submerged Lands Act, and the Alaska Statehood Act. Since statehood, navigability determinations have been made through administrative processes and litigation brought by the state pursuant to the federal Quiet Title Act. This bill is intended to bring clarity to state ownership of submerged lands in federal areas and to claim, occupy, and possess all such submerged lands as state sovereign property.

Having navigable waters under State management is critical to the people of Alaska. Under state management Alaskans will actually be able to access and use these resources whereas, under federal management, that will always be in question. We will never be able to predict what regulations ever-changing administrations will implement. After 13 years, \$1.6 million, and two unanimous U.S. Supreme Court decisions (*Sturgeon v. Frost I & II*) it should be clear to the Federal Government that Alaska has the right to manage all navigable waters within the state. Unfortunately, the feds are ignoring the will of the court and not acknowledging the right of the State to manage its navigable waters. To date, the feds have only approved the transfer of 9% of the State's navigable waters since Statehood.

We thank Representative Saddler for introducing HB 98 and fully support the legislature's efforts to bring submerged lands—and therefore navigability—under state control.

Best regards,

*John Sturgeon*

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*Safari Club International Alaska Chapter  
First for Hunters - First for Wildlife*