

Alaska State Legislature

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Bill 68 (vsn B)

“An Act relating to public notice for a sale, appropriation, or removal of water, or for filing a declaration of a right of water; and providing for an effective date.”

Senate Bill 68 proposes changes to certain public notice requirements relating to the sale, appropriation, or removal of water, and for the commencement of the process for determining the rights of persons holding existing appropriations of water.

Specifically, SB 68 proposes that public notices, as originally required in statute, instead be posted on the Alaska Online Public Notice System. This change would remove the current requirement that notices be posted in a newspaper of general circulation in the affected area. The bill would update, but not substantively change, any other requirements for notice by the commissioner to determine the rights of persons holding existing appropriations, removal, or sale of beneficial water use rights.

Eliminating the newspaper notice requirement would prevent delays in the water permitting process and save the applicants a significant amount of money required for newspaper notice. The changes would utilize the state’s existing online public notice system, which is available to most Alaskans at no cost. All public notices posted on the online public notice system are permanently retained for future reference by interested parties, whereas newspaper notices are much more difficult to retrieve. Utilizing the online public notice system ensures that each Alaska resident has equal access to public notices rather than just newspaper subscribers or residents of an affected area. Further, elimination of coordinating newspaper publications reduces the permit processing timeframe.

The public is encouraged to utilize the “Subscriptions” feature on the Alaska Online Public Notice System website (<https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>) to either register for all notifications through the system, or to tailor what notifications from which departments they wish to receive. The Department of Natural Resources is eager to educate the public on the benefits of using the online notice system; SB 68 enables notice to be delivered to Alaskans through the power of the Internet.