

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

April 9, 2018

6:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Louise Stutes, Chair
Representative David Eastman
Representative Mark Neuman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Geran Tarr

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Mike Chenault

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 199

"An Act establishing general fish and wildlife permits and major and minor anadromous fish habitat permits for certain activities; establishing related penalties; and relating to the protection of fish and game and fish and game habitat."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 199

SHORT TITLE: FISH/WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION; PERMITS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STUTES

03/27/17	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/27/17	(H)	FSH, RES
04/11/17	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
04/11/17	(H)	-- Delayed to 4/12/17 at 6:00 PM --
04/12/17	(H)	FSH AT 6:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
04/12/17	(H)	-- Delayed from 4/11/17 --
01/18/18	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
01/18/18	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
01/23/18	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
01/23/18	(H)	Heard & Held
01/23/18	(H)	MINUTE (FSH)
04/03/18	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

04/03/18 (H) Heard & Held
04/03/18 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
04/05/18 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
04/05/18 (H) Heard & Held
04/05/18 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
04/07/18 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
04/07/18 (H) Heard & Held
04/07/18 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
04/09/18 (H) FSH AT 6:30 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

HOWARD MOZEN

Commercial Fisherman
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support HB 199.

GRANT FAIRBANKS

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

DAVE CANNON

Aniak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

JASMINE IEREMIA, Student

Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

ALYSHYA QUINEYNE

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

JODE SPARKS, Student

Soldotna High School

Sterling, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

MALCOLM VANCE, Commercial Fisherman

McCarthy, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

RITA GOODRICH

Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

ERIC JORDAN, Owner

I Gotta Salmon
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

JEREMY PRICE, Alaska State Director
Americans for Prosperity
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 199.

AUSTIN RICE, Student
Mt. Edgecumbe High School
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

SAM SNYDER
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

WYCHE FORD, General Manager
Fluor Alaska, Inc.
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 199.

CHRISTINE WOLL
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

KEVIN DURLING
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

REBECCA LOGAN, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Alaska Support Industry Alliance (The Alliance)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 199.

THOMAS EMERSON, Commercial Fisherman
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

MALENA MARVIN, Co-Owner
School House Fish Company
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

CLAIRE SANCHEZ
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

NELLI WILLIAMS, Director
Alaska Program
Trout Unlimited (TU)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

ALANNAH HURLEY
Commercial Fisherman
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

DAVID LISI
Fishing Guide
Cooper Landing, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

ANNA GODDUHN
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

JONATHAN WOOD
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing of HB 199.

JOE SCHLINGER
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition of HB 199.

REBECCA KNIGHT
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing of HB 199.

MIKE MANN, Commercial Fisherman
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

JIM SYKES
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

BENJAMIN TIMBY
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

KATIE LLOYD

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

MATT BOLINE

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

YEMI KNIGHT

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the discussion of HB 199.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[6:32:37 PM](#)

CHAIR LOUISE STUTES called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Representatives Stutes and Neuman were present at the call to order. Representatives Eastman, Tarr, and Kreiss-Tomkins arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 199-FISH/WILDLIFE HABITAT PROTECTION; PERMITS

[6:32:39 PM](#)

CHAIR STUTES announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 199, "An Act establishing general fish and wildlife permits and major and minor anadromous fish habitat permits for certain activities; establishing related penalties; and relating to the protection of fish and game and fish and game habitat." [Version M was before the committee.]

CHAIR STUTES continued public testimony on HB 199.

[6:33:34 PM](#)

HOWARD MOZEN said he was a schoolteacher but also a commercial fisherman in Bristol Bay. He strongly supported that salmon should be protected in Alaska. Since it was not possible to control the ocean waters, the state would be well served to protect fish habitat in fresh water streams. He spoke in support of HB 199. His family and friends enjoy Alaska because of the fish, including the areas they live in and for food.

[6:35:10 PM](#)

GRANT FAIRBANKS stated he was a 45-year-resident of Alaska living on the Kuskokwim River. He has been involved in salmon issues most of his life and has submitted proposals before the Board of Fisheries (BOF). The BOF voted 7-0 in favor of his proposal for a Tier II permit system for king salmon on the Kuskokwim River due to the drastic decline in the watershed. He stated that HB 199 was introduced by a petition signed by 40,000 Alaskans who believe the present laws that permit large-scale mining projects do not adequately protect salmon streams in the spawning areas. Alaska has some of the last wild salmon stocks in the United States and current statutes and laws do not properly protect the water quality, in-stream flow levels and fish passage needed to support the sustainability of Alaska's salmon.

[6:36:22 PM](#)

MR. FAIRBANKS emphasized promoting responsible development by requiring projects must avoid or minimize adverse impacts to fish habitat. Under current law, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) does not have the authority to say no to irresponsible projects; however, Alaskans need its legislators and state government to create accountability to ensure salmon habitat is not sacrificed when large projects are developed. He remarked:

Here in the Kuskokwim we are now watching a large Canadian mining company in the final days of permitting possibly being allowed to mine on a salmon stream to the extent that during times the mine will curtail the stream flow in winter.

MR. FAIRBANKS reminded members that 40,000 Alaskans fostered this bill [by signing the ballot initiative] due to their concern about improper development on or near salmon streams. He cautioned that these Alaskans watch with great interest as some legislators appear to work to "water down" the bill. He offered his belief that true Alaskans would support salmon in this legislation; that the public will note and support legislators who value salmon over projects and corporations that do not value salmon habitat.

[6:37:55 PM](#)

DAVE CANNON stated that he worked as a fish biologist, has lived in Aniak for 20 years and previously lived in Bethel for four years. He previously worked for the US Forest Service and the

US Fish & Wildlife service in the Lower 48 in Wyoming and Idaho. He characterized his experience under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act in the 1990s as "combat biology." He remarked that death threats were not uncommon during that time, while biologists tried to save the few remaining wild salmon in the Salmon River. At the time an estimated 16 million anadromous fish went up the Columbia River annually; however, wild fish now comprised only 20 percent of the run. Even in the best years less than 600,000 wild fish return to the Columbia River, which he said was tremendously sad.

MR. CANNON said he was originally from Pennsylvania. Atlantic salmon are now only found in a pittance of their original habitat. He cautioned that a substantial downturn has occurred in the Kuskokwim king salmon numbers although he believed the fish habitat was currently intact. Throughout the state major development projects have been proposed that would negatively affect salmon and other fish, including the Susitna-Watana Dam, Pebble Mine, and Chuitna Mine. Without rigorous habitat measures it would be foolish to think that Alaska would not experience the "death by 1,000 cuts" that has happened elsewhere.

[6:40:48 PM](#)

JASMINE IEREMIA, Student, said she was 17-years-old. She offered her belief that HB 199 would help protect salmon rights and health for the future. She has been on boats since she was 12-years-old and worked on a seine vessel at 14-years-old tendering crab, continuing on to fish for Dungeness crab and on a seiner, seining for salmon. Her parents met in Petersburg working at the cannery and eventually went on to seining together. They got married on the fishing vessel (F/V) Rose Woody, which was still a working fishing boat today. She remarked that salmon is in every way a huge part of her life and she does not want to imagine her life without salmon.

MS. IEREMIA highlighted that salmon was a renewable resource used by Alaskans throughout the state for food, a way to earn a living, and a way of life. The value of salmon in Alaska was immeasurable, so she asked legislators to hold companies accountable for the damage they have dealt to Alaska's waters and to put a stop to similar issues in the future. It has been nearly 60 years since the [permitting process under Title 16] for salmon habitat has been updated. The world around us has vastly changed. She did not see a future for small communities like hers without viable and returning salmon populations. She

would like to be able to share her lifestyle with her children and allow them to appreciate one of the most beautiful places she has ever seen. This bill would help protect Alaska's waters for her children, her grandchildren, and all future generations of Alaskans. She thanked the committee for its work to protect Alaska's waters, fish and culture.

[6:42:50 PM](#)

ALYSHYA QUINEYNE voiced her support for HB 199. She wanted to elevate the issue in the Fairbanks and Interior Alaska area. She offered her belief that this bill would provide a step towards clear engagement, stronger protection, and more responsibility, including fiscal, political, and social responsibility. She supported giving agencies such as ADF&G, better guidance and direction when surveying anadromous streams and in engaging with communities statewide. She suggested that resources in some communities have not been protected in some instances. She would like to see consistency in efficiency, responsibility, and community engagement happen in every instance. With some work this bill could absolutely do that, she said. She thanked the committee for its work on HB 199.

[6:45:02 PM](#)

JODE SPARKS, Student, Soldotna High School, said he was a senior at Soldotna High School; that he resides in Sterling, and has served as a student ambassador with the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce. He wanted to testify today due to his desire for stronger protections for salmon habitat. The revised bill does not provide strong enough feedback for natural resources. He stated that he has helped on the salmon initiative, gathering about 42,000 Alaskans statewide signing the petition. He offered his belief that most Alaskans support stronger and more rigorous salmon habitat protection. He has learned at the Soldotna Chamber of Commerce about economic drivers for his town. In fact, the Kenai River runs right through town and the City of Soldotna holds a "river festival" in the summer. Soldotna and the Kenai Peninsula in general rely on tourism, he said. According to the Kenai Economic Development district, 260,000 tourists visited the Kenai River in 2016, which represents about four times the town's population. He noted that fishing was the biggest draw for visitors. He heard prior testifiers talk about how their lives were dependent on salmon. Even though mines are miles from his town, he has felt affected by the cultural and economic health [of Bristol Bay]. He

thanked the committee for making certain that salmon have been at the forefront of the political discussion in Alaska.

[6:47:06 PM](#)

MALCOLM VANCE, Commercial Fisherman, spoke in full support of HB 199. He said he has commercially fished in Bristol Bay for 37 years, from cannery work to owning a boat and permit. He characterized Bristol Bay as an amazing place that needed to be preserved for generations to come. He related that he lives more of a subsistence lifestyle during the winter. He said the state has the ability to protect these waters, which he felt was unprecedented in the 21st century. He urged members to pass HB 199.

[6:48:27 PM](#)

RITA GOODRICH stated she was a third-generation Alaskan. She said that HB 199 in its current form removed the presumption of anadromy from Alaska's waters, which leaves the vulnerable fish of the state absurdly vulnerable to mining and development. She said that to presume Alaska's waters did not contain anadromous fish and were not vulnerable to development was to not know Alaska's waters or the sensitivity of fish to the environment. She urged members to restore the presumption of anadromy in HB 199.

MS. GOODRICH told members that she recently spent time at her aunt's farm in Vermont, where the culture of family farming reminded her of the culture of commercial fishing in Alaska. She stated that she loves her Alaska community of Sitka and she wanted to understand the farming history in Vermont. In the 1980s Vermont farmers saw their property taxes soar and the non-profit Rural Vermont was formed, an organization that went on to reform Vermont's tax system based on the productive value of land rather than the potential for development. The victory in rural Vermont has been incredible and farms have been protected legislatively, she said. She emphasized that Alaska must view its land and water for the production value and not the potential development value, just as Vermont has done. Vermont has not acquiesced to industrial farming, mining, and development, subdivisions of farmlands, strip malls, and billboards. Alaska cannot maintain its status as the last bastion of commercial, sport, and subsistence salmon fishing on earth if Alaska does not do the same.

[6:50:53 PM](#)

ERIC JORDAN, Owner, I Gotta Salmon, stated he has a fishing business in Sitka. As a lifelong Alaskan he has been a commercial troll fisherman since the 1950s. He has been involved in fishery politics since he was a child, when his father practiced his speech in favor of statehood in the 1950s. He has previously served on the Board of Fisheries and currently serves as an elected representative of two fishing groups.

MR. JORDAN related that the State of Alaska was literally founded to protect its salmon resources from the corporate canned salmon interests. The state has done remarkably well in rebuilding its salmon resource and empowering fishermen to control salmon enhancement programs. He emphasized the need to be constantly vigilant and upgrade Alaska's salmon protections.

MR. JORDAN said he still commercial fished salmon, that his sons commercially fish and his grandchildren are interested in fishing. He urged members to update salmon protections by strengthening this vital bill for his future, for his sons and for his grandchildren and future generations.

[6:52:31 PM](#)

JEREMY PRICE, Alaska State Director, Americans for Prosperity, spoke in opposition to HB 199. He reminded members that Alaska is a frontier state and it must build roads, bridges, pipelines, and infrastructure to access its resources. He stated he has been working on these issues in Washington D.C. for nine years. He cautioned that Alaska cannot "put a shovel in the ground" without triggering a full-blown environmental impact statement (EIS). This comes with millions of dollars in expenditures from the resource developer for permits, he said. He characterized HB 199 as a regulatory nightmare that would only add to project costs.

MR. PRICE offered his belief that any time a federal agency issued a decision or determination that the environmental community disagrees with it has resulted in lawsuits. This type of legislation would only invite further litigation and harms Alaskans and businesses seeking to develop resources, he said. He pointed out some costly projects waiting to be built, including the Knik Arm Bridge, the Port of Anchorage, and Ambler Road. He wondered how much more money it would cost if HB 199 were to pass.

MR. PRICE pointed to one of the most egregious things in HB 199, which was that the permit could be rescinded retroactively. He asked how the bill provides protection for the private sector. In closing, he reiterated his opposition to HB 199. He urged members to vote against it.

[6:54:41 PM](#)

AUSTIN RICE, Student, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, stated he has been salmon fishing ever since he could hold a pole. He advocated for increasing salmon management in streams and stated its importance. He emphasized the importance of salmon to his family and his culture; that he wanted to see salmon to be around for future generations. He would love one day to show his future children how to fly fish in the same streams he once fished.

[6:55:42 PM](#)

SAM SNYDER said he appreciated the sponsor's efforts in the past two years on this bill. He said he was a little disappointed to see the new version was "watered down" from the robust attempt to comprehensively update fish habitat permitting laws. Mr. Cannon effectively articulated the adverse impact on salmon fisheries in the Lower 48 and he cautioned against doing so in Alaska. He acknowledged that the Americans for Prosperity expressed concern over added project costs; however, he said what needed to be considered was that the voices the committee has heard indicate that Alaska's salmon fisheries were immeasurably invaluable to the state. These salmon and fisheries provide jobs, economic benefits, cultural aspects and heritage to Alaskans. He encouraged the state to take a precautionary principled approach, to be forward thinking and not suddenly realize that Alaska was millions or trillions of dollars in the hole to restore its fisheries. He urged members to take active measures now and update Alaska's outdated laws to ensure that Alaska does not go down the same path [as those in the Lower 48]. He said appreciated HB 199 and fully supported it; however, he would like to see critical pieces reinstated in the bill, including public process, the anadromous waters presumption and strengthening the mitigation standards.

[6:57:45 PM](#)

WYCHE FORD, General Manager, Fluor Alaska, Inc., stated he was a 40-year resident of Alaska. He spoke in opposition to HB 199. He characterized it as a piece of legislation looking for a

problem to solve. He offered his belief that the current regulatory framework was adequate to protect Alaska's salmon resources and has stood up well over time. He did not think this was the time for the state to put in place additional bureaucracy and cost in state government to oversee another complicated permitting plan. He said it sends the wrong message to those outside the state looking to invest in Alaska. He remarked on the photograph of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), which [indisc.] over 800 streams and waterways. He noted the regulatory burden required to build such a pipeline as is currently being contemplated with the Alaska LNG project [Alaska Liquefied Natural Gas] project. He said this would send the wrong message to outside investors the state would like to attract to make the project possible. He urged members to consider the current system was adequate to protect Alaska's valuable salmon resource.

[6:59:12 PM](#)

CHRISTINE WOLL provided a brief personal history, such that she works as a fish biologist, holds a master's degree in Fisheries from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), and has lived in Alaska since 2009. She stated she has conducted biological field work on small headwater streams on salmon systems, spending five summers sampling pristine salmon streams on the Tokiak, Nushagak, and Kvichak watersheds in Bristol Bay and four summers on Prince of Wales Island watersheds. When people think about Alaska's salmon streams, they often visualize fishing for adult salmon on large rivers; however, she has spent the majority of her work on tiny, wadable streams, sometimes as narrow as a meter across sampling for juvenile Coho salmon. She estimated she has sampled on over 300 miles of varied salmon habitat, including beaver ponds, glacier streams and streams coming right off the mountainside. She remarked that if a stream was wet, connected to the ocean and not above a waterfall, it has baby salmon in it.

MS. WOLL stated that on Prince of Wales Island she saw firsthand how historic logging practices and building roads has impacted these same types of streams. While many still have salmon, it was obvious to the eye that streams like these simply do not produce as many salmon fry. She has worked on projects costing millions of dollars, many of them federal, whose purpose was to add miles of streams to the Anadromous Waters Catalog and to restore streams to provide better fish habitat. This was not a cost-effective way to ensure that salmon streams have the protection they need to provide all the benefits that robust

salmon populations provide our society, she said. She urged members to continue the efforts to ensure that Alaska's fish habitat decision-making processes were being based on science and allow for adequate habitat protections for all of the tiny streams that she promised have fish in them.

[7:01:38 PM](#)

KEVIN DURLING stated that the systems in place with the Department of Natural Resources, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and other state agencies have the strength to support good water quality and to maintain Alaska's fisheries in a solid basis going forward. He related his understanding that the bill would add costs to any projects, not just big projects, but small subdivisions in Anchorage, Kenai, or Soldotna. He suggested that Alaska needed to specifically identify protection it was attempting to provide and amend current regulations to protect salmon rather than to undergo a comprehensive rewrite that would overregulate a system that seemed to be working quite well.

[7:03:07 PM](#)

REBECCA LOGAN, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Alaska Support Industry Alliance (The Alliance), spoke on behalf of the 500 members and 25,000 employees represented by the Alliance. She highlighted reasons for the opposition, first, that it does not achieve the stated goals of the sponsor statement, which was to create efficiency and predictability in permitting and enforcement. She offered her belief that the committee has heard overwhelmingly from the business community that they were concerned it did the exact opposite.

MS. LOGAN said secondly, the bill would have unintended consequences, such as ones expressed in the letter from the Alaska Power Authority, who have concerns about future hydroelectric projects and ones already permitted that could be affected by retroactivity. She said such retroactivity could adversely affect ratepayers at a time when the state faced a recession. Third, she highlighted the potential effects on Alaska's economy, when Alaska has the highest unemployment in the nation and has lost thousands of the best jobs due to uncertainty in the permitting process and development process. She said delay leads to no jobs. In closing, she stated for those reasons and many more, the Alliance opposed HB 199.

[7:04:58 PM](#)

THOMAS EMERSON, Commercial Fisherman, stated he grew up in Juneau and works as a third-generation commercial salmon troller. He related that since he bought a boat three years ago his livelihood has forevermore been tied to the future and health of salmon stocks. He hoped the opportunities he has experienced as a commercial fisherman will continue to be there for him going forward and for others who might follow in his footsteps. He remarked that he and his crewmembers often opine about what lucky farmers they are with this self-planting field; that all they needed to do was to harvest responsibly to keep reaping the salmon rewards.

MR. EMERSON offered his belief that HB 199 was a good step in that direction, in fact, he would go even further to say that some of the protections outlined in the [Stand for Salmon] ballot measure would be appropriate to add. Alaska has a deep societal interest in guarding against profit maximization of private developers in order to protect this public resource. This bill would be good to ensure that fish resource will be here for generations to come, he said.

[7:06:35 PM](#)

MALENA MARVIN, Co-Owner, School House Fish Company, stated that she and her fiancé run the business and he has participated in fisheries as a commercial salmon troller and commercial longliner, as well as having participated in the commercial sea cucumber guide fishery and herring roe on kelp fishery. Like people in Petersburg, his family also depended on clean water, salmon, and other fish species to make their living. She pointed out that Ms. Logan stated that the business community was not in favor of the bill; however, as a business owner she differed with that opinion. She offered her belief that she was one of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of fish-based businesses that support HB 199. She agreed with some testifiers who supported adding language back into the bill. She related that she personally collected 150 signatures for the [Stand for Salmon] ballot initiative in Petersburg. She found people were overwhelmingly supportive of the measure, spanning conservative and liberal political views and all walks of life. In particular, people who moved to Alaska from places where salmon were extinct hold especially strong convictions, she said. She recalled that Jeremy Price talked about development and big projects. She would like to see Alaskans develop a win-win attitude and alter - a little bit - how development occurs in areas with salmon habitat and keep salmon in mind. She offered

her belief it was possible to keep people working in the trades; that Alaska should not pit its industries against one another. She said that HB 199 could help support us in doing that and Alaskans should work together and make it work. In closing, she reiterated her support for HB 199.

[7:08:58 PM](#)

CLAIRE SANCHEZ stated she works for 4-H. She thanked the committee for giving Alaskans a voice in the permitting process in HB 199 and for its work to protect Alaska's salmon for future generations. She remarked that salmon has been tied to this land for thousands of years, which has been essential to local culture, vital to the community, provided sustenance, and it has supported the economy. Living in a fishing community has allowed Sitka to create the lunch program called "Fish to Schools," where local fishermen donate salmon to feed students in the Sitka School District. She offered her belief that Alaska needs strong state laws to put Alaskans in charge of sustaining its thriving salmon economy and a way of life for present and future generations.

[7:10:03 PM](#)

NELLI WILLIAMS, Director, Alaska Program, Trout Unlimited (TU), stated that she was the mother of two Alaskans and an avid angler. As director of the Trout Unlimited, Alaska Program, she spoke on behalf of more than a 1,000 sportsmen and sportswomen across Alaska. She thanked the Chair for her work on this difficult conversation. Protecting fish habitat does not just help fish but it has supported businesses and families throughout Alaska that depend on salmon, trout, and other fish for fun, food, and income.

MS. WILLIAMS referenced the Trout Unlimited letter of April 4, 2018, signed by 20 businesses, that she submitted to the committee. She reported that in the sport fishing industry alone, salmon and fishing opportunities has supported 1,500 businesses and nearly 2,500 Alaska resident fishing guides, not including the auxiliary businesses that benefit from this industry throughout Alaska. She related that tourism creates a \$4.8 billion industry in Alaska and is responsible for 43,000 jobs. She said protecting fish habitat was deeply personal and for her, like many Alaskans, some of the best made memories have been made on a river bank or gravel bar. She related a scenario, that two years ago her son Nathan, as a four-year-old, pulled in a giant sockeye salmon on his "Spiderman" fishing rod

and although it was hard, he pulled it in all by himself. Two years later, when they are on the river and pass by the gravel bar, he will always remark about catching his favorite fish at that spot. She showed the committee a drawing her son made, which he titled "Alaska is Where you Help Salmon." She does not want Nathan's generation to look back on 2018 as a time when Alaska decided to "throw salmon under the bus" in pursuit of short-term gains. Notably, the Pebble Mine has been one of those decisions Alaska still faces, but right now the fish habitat laws are "nothing but a straw house that could crumble." In closing, she acknowledged that Alaska needs mines, roads, and other resource development; however, Alaska does not need to operate under a law that functionally says that mines, roads, and other resource development is all Alaska needs.

[7:13:20 PM](#)

ALANNAH HURLEY, Commercial Fisherman, provided a brief personal history, stating that she was a Yupik woman born and raised at Clark's Point in Bristol Bay. She has worked as a commercial setnet fisherman for the last 22 years as a fourth-generation commercial setnetter. She commented that her great-grandmother moved to Dillingham from the Y-K Delta [Yukon-Kuskokwim] at the birth of the commercial fishery in Bristol Bay. She spoke in full support of strengthening salmon protection. She said that Alaskans were living the reality of the necessity for this update [to Title 16]. She characterized the Pebble Mine as a mining project that has loomed over Bristol Bay and held people hostage for over a decade. Now the federal permit has been fast-tracked and if the permit is processed by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) published timeline, [it would adversely impact Bristol Bay]. She brought up the mine to highlight the need for HB 199, which would provide increased protection for salmon. She reiterated the need to update the law to protect salmon habitat.

MS. HURLEY echoed earlier remarks that requested the committee return the bill to its previous robust language. She said the future of the last and greatest sockeye salmon run depends on work like this. Without Alaskans and for legislators taking on this responsibility it was scary to think about Alaska's future without salmon. In closing, she spoke in full support of HB 199.

[7:16:05 PM](#)

DAVID LISI, Fishing Guide, stated he has a fishing guide business in Cooper Landing. He stated [HB 199] offered Alaskans a great opportunity to be heard. He marveled at the number of signatures that have been gathered in support of something that most Alaskans are in favor of: protecting salmon habitat. He recalled that Cripple Creek king salmon have pretty much become extinct because of development on the creek. He spoke in support of the updates to salmon habitat protection [in HB 199], which he believed were long overdue. It was more important than ever, considering that corporations have spent nearly \$1 million to oppose the bill. In fact, the opposition has put interests of foreign and non-Alaskan business profits over Alaskans and the state would be saddled with the cost of restoring its fisheries -- over corporations that have pretty much left the state with profits. He wondered why the business community would be opposed the bill. He cautioned that the [business community] would be held accountable for damaging salmon streams and not just strip the state of profits and resources. He offered his belief was not very prudent to rush projects through during a time with high unemployment rates and a sluggish economy. He thought [development projects] were foolish reasons to oppose the bill. That opposition strengthens his rationale for supporting the bill since seemed that a lot of corporations were in opposition to HB 199 for quick profits. In closing, he spoke in support of the bill.

[7:18:27 PM](#)

ANNA GODDUHN spoke in support of HB 199. She joined prior testifiers who stated that protections for salmon were long overdue. She characterized Washington D.C. as being an out of control railroad, such that Alaska needed to develop its own rules, so it has something to say when projects are being imposed from [the Lower 48.] She remarked that it stunned her that there were no requirements to minimize adverse effects from any development project. It seemed like the easiest place to start. She said she thought it was very unfortunate that the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 199 [Version M] removed that language; but she understood that it might be necessary. She acknowledged that she did not know the legislators' job well enough to know. She urged members to take the strongest measures possible because this is not about money, but about food on the table for tens of thousands of Alaskan families.

[7:20:19 PM](#)

JONATHAN WOOD offered his belief that it was essential the state protect our wild salmon fisheries, which would not be possible unless the current laws are updated. He offered his belief that HB 199 was an attempt to do so, but he did not think [Version M] goes nearly far enough. Public participation throughout the permitting process and a simplified two-tier system were steps in the right direction, but more should be done. Alaskans deserve a strong state law that demands accountability in development projects and does not sacrifice vital salmon habitat to short sighted and irresponsible development.

[7:21:22 PM](#)

JOE SCHLINGER spoke in opposition to HB 199. He offered his belief that Alaska needed to be "open for business" in the stated and this bill would kill any resource development for mining gold and other minerals. Although he was not a mining expert, he knew for a fact that the \$150 million project at Port MacKenzie has been idle for ten years awaiting shipping coal, gold, and other resources to the port. He lamented that the legislature has done nothing to move this project forward.

[7:22:48 PM](#)

REBECCA KNIGHT, as a 43-year-resident of Petersburg, said she began [commercial] salmon fishing with her husband forty years ago. Her family's livelihood still depended upon salmon, including her two sons who were essentially raised on a boat. She expressed concern for her two grandchildren's future. She offered her belief that intact salmon habitat was Alaska's most important resource. She spoke in support of HB 199 with the caveat that the proof of anadromy clause should be reinserted. Not only were Alaska's streams important, but the class IV headwaters also needed protection. She explained that these headwaters contribute to salmon livelihood. She related that the commercial fishing industry was going through difficult times. She recalled earlier testimony by a salmon troller who said things were looking bad. "People are starting to get worried," she said. With respect to uncertainty in other industries, she attested to the uncertainty commercial salmon fisherman face right now. Knowing that habitat would be protected was very important. As a retired Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) employee, she offered her belief that politics played a major role in decision making in the strength of enforcement for salmon habitat protections.

[7:25:01 PM](#)

MIKE MANN, Commercial Fisherman, stated his support for HB 199. In response to those who said that HB 199 was not ideal, and it would adversely affect the economy, he said the "bad habitats" were responsible and the economy would continue to suffer. During the time he began fishing with his uncles in 1953 commercial fish and the salmon industry was big business in Alaska. He stressed the importance to assure that commercial salmon fishing would continue. During that time Alaska did not have the numbers of people it does today, and it seemed that reason people came to Alaska was to enjoy salmon fishing and salmon numbers increased with the state's salmon habitat protections. In recent times, more people have been willing to reduce the salmon industry. Salmon was the reason for statehood. In the 1960s fishermen were taxed more. In closing, he offered his support for HB 199 to help Alaska.

[7:28:49 PM](#)

JIM SYKES, speaking on behalf of himself, said he also serves on the Mat-Su Borough Assembly and the Mat-Su Borough Fish and Wildlife Commission. He offered his support for HB 199. He offered his belief that the robust language should be restored. He reported that 8 of 14 streams in the Mat-Su were streams of concern. This meant that these streams were having difficulty in maintaining sustainability. Nearly half the Mat-Su Borough consisted of wetlands, much of which drains into the Susitna-Yenta system. The state has been working very hard to try to restore the system to the vibrant, healthy system it was 30 years ago. He recalled that most people fish for kings and [sockeye] salmon and in the fall for [Coho] salmon. He said if the state was successful in restoring the salmon habitat it would mean more fish for commercial fishermen and dipnetters in the [Cook] Inlet. He acknowledged that he and his wife depend on the personal use dipnet fishery. He noted many testifiers discussed provisions, but it was particularly critical to the Mat-Su region to return to stable healthy streams. In closing he said, "For us, salmon is food and salmon is life and we need to support that. I think HB 199 is a good step in that direction."

[7:30:47 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 7:31 p.m. to 8:14 p.m.

[8:14:45 PM](#)

BENJAMIN TIMBY stated he has lived in Alaska since he finished high school in Colorado. He has been commercial fishing and working construction for the past ten years. He moved to Alaska because of the pristine wilderness, clean water and subsistence lifestyle. He appreciated the things that were central to all Alaskans while still understanding the needs of industry and the pressures of that. He offered his belief that it was time to update Alaska's outdated enforcement and environmental safeguards. He pointed out several environmental disasters, including the Mount Polley mine disaster and the Tulsequah River mining metals leaching into the Taku River. He cautioned that if Pebble Mine were to happen it could be disastrous and irreparable [to Bristol Bay salmon]. He acknowledged that mining methods have changed in the last 60 years, so it was an appropriate time to update the [statutes] to make certain Alaska does not destroy its most important resource - "our way of life and our subsistence."

MR. TIMBY stated that HB 199 has weaker language and he preferred the "Stand for Salmon" ballot initiative language; however, whatever can be done to make progress on this issue would mean a lot to him and many other Alaskans.

[8:17:00 PM](#)

KATIE LLOYD stated she grew up in the Midwest and loves angling. She stated that coming from Lake Erie she was aware of what can happen without adequate fish habitat protection. It was often a joke that people who valued their lives would not eat the fish from Lake Erie. Her family participated in catch and release fishing. She recalled the Cuyahoga River fire in 1969 due to chemical pollution. She has seen the [fish habitat] decimation in the Lower 48 and how careless industry has been despite the promises industry makes. As a lifelong fisher, she moved to Alaska three years ago from Colorado because of the fishing. She said fishing represented a way of life in Alaska; it feeds her family and has created valuable jobs across the state. She offered her belief that Alaska was smarter and better and will make the right choice and update Alaska's salmon habitat protections. She did not want to have to tell her kids how Alaskans once fished in pristine waters but not to eat the chemically-laden fish or that Bristol Bay caught fire due to chemicals. Instead, she wanted to be able to continue this way of life that has been around for thousands of years. In closing, she said, "Protect what you love; and it will always continue to give back."

[8:19:38 PM](#)

MATT BOLINE said he works as a fishing guide who moved to Juneau from Minnesota 14 years ago. He also runs a small fishing operation, which he does not own; however, it provides about 20 seasonal jobs to locals. His family subsists on salmon, fishing and enjoying the wilderness when they can, he said. He said that having a healthy salmon habitat throughout Alaska was important to him, his family, his employees, and the guests they take out fishing. Alaskans have shown over time the importance of salmon to them. He expressed concern when he reads about how corporations, such as British Petroleum, have contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars against the "Stand for Salmon" initiative. He offered his belief that the corporation was spreading lies about who has been collecting signatures and who makes money from salmon. He pointed out that he and his employees were locals, the money they earn stays in Alaska, the salmon stays in the freezer and provides food for their dinners.

[8:21:41 PM](#)

YEMI KNIGHT stated she was a student who would like to work in the field of conservation. As someone who was originally from Barbados, she offered an international perspective, which was that when people think about Alaska it was synonymously linked to salmon. She expressed concern that some people were not taking the value of salmon seriously. She viewed salmon as intrinsically important, noting it has helped stabilize Alaska's economy. She said salmon was really important to her. She thanked the committee for helping protect salmon for future generations.

[8:23:09 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:23 p.m. to 8:29 p.m.

[8:29:19 PM](#)

[HB 199 was held over.]

[8:31:25 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.