

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

March 18, 2021
11:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Geran Tarr, Chair
Representative Louise Stutes, Vice Chair
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins
Representative Andi Story
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Sarah Vance
Representative Kevin McCabe

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 26

"An Act relating to participation in matters before the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game by the members of the respective boards; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HB 26 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 54

"An Act establishing the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game; relating to management of invasive species; relating to invasive species management decals; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 26

SHORT TITLE: CONFLICT OF INTEREST: BD FISHERIES/GAME

SPONSOR(S): FISHERIES

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	FSH, RES
02/25/21	(H)	FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
02/25/21	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --

03/12/21 (H) BILL REPRINTED
03/16/21 (H) FSH AT 11:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/16/21 (H) Heard & Held
03/16/21 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
03/18/21 (H) FSH AT 11:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

BILL: HB 54

SHORT TITLE: INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT
SPONSOR(s): FISHERIES

02/18/21 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/15/21
02/18/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21 (H) RES, FSH
02/24/21 (H) RES REFERRAL MOVED TO AFTER FSH
02/24/21 (H) BILL REPRINTED
03/11/21 (H) FSH AT 11:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
03/11/21 (H) Heard & Held
03/11/21 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
03/12/21 (H) BILL REPRINTED
03/18/21 (H) FSH AT 11:00 AM GRUENBERG 120

WITNESS REGISTER

GLENN HAIGHT, Executive Director
Board of Fisheries
Boards Support Section
Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing of HB 26.

THATCHER BROUWER, Staff
Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 54 on behalf of Representative Tarr, prime sponsor.

DOUG VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided testimony on HB 54.

DAYNA MACKEY, Director
Division of Administrative Services
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided testimony regarding the fiscal note for HB 54.

TIM STALLARD

Anchorage Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ANC-CISMA)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

SUMMER NAY

Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

DAVID MARTIN

Clam Gulch, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

KATHERINE SHAKE

Natural Resource Specialist, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District

Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[11:05:42 AM](#)

CHAIR GERAN TARR called the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. Representatives Vance, Story, McCabe, Kreiss-Tomkins, Ortiz, Stutes, and Tarr were present at the call to order.

HB 26-CONFLICT OF INTEREST: BD FISHERIES/GAME

[11:06:49 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 26, "An Act relating to participation in matters before the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game by the members of the respective boards; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR TARR said the committee has not received any proposed amendments to HB 26. She related that Representative Kreiss-Tomkins has expressed his strong support for the bill.

[11:07:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES expressed her support for this "fabulous legislation."

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ voiced his support for this "brilliant piece of legislation."

[11:08:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE related that people from the Interior are saying that members of the Board of Game rarely conflict out, so they are questioning the need for HB 26. People from the sport fish side are saying there should not be any more undue influence on the conversations. More is heard from commercial fishing because they are the ones who are overwhelmingly conflicted out. Since the legislature has talked about this for many years, she is listening to all sides to ensure the committee is making a sound decision because this deals with allocation. She said she is leaning toward supporting this given that members of the board are already deliberating off the record because their insight is needed. So, she continued, the committee is asking that it be on record for the public to hear. She further argued that the "fish and game members" are professionals and should be trusted and able to differentiate between statements made from a direct financial interest versus statements made from expertise in a fishery or region. If the department and board members believe that a member is making comments in the [sharing] expertise, they have the wisdom to see the difference. Representative Vance specified that HB 26 does not allow a [conflicted board member] to vote on the matter, which is the hard line here because it is not being said that that can be overridden and waived. She stated she is currently supportive of HB 26 because she wants the transparency to the public and doesn't like that there is conversations happening off record that people are unaware of. The more transparency to the public on these conversations, the more trust can be built in the Board of Fisheries and in the public process.

[11:12:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES added that whether it be fish or game, the legislation treats everybody and all sectors equally.

[11:12:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that in general he is supportive of the idea of HB 26. He agreed with Representative Vance that it

is important to get all the conversation on the record instead of off the record so it can be seen later. He said his friends who are sport fishermen and who may not support the bill might at some point be on the other end of things where they want an excellent sport fisherman board member to speak on the record for them. He is waffling on yes or no because of the different sides, he continued, and surprisingly the bill highlights the distrust and divisiveness that has happened between commercial fish and sport fish. Both are going after the same resource and the committee needs to fix that at some point.

[11:14:18 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR stated her support for HB 26. She noted that the board process is very involved, and that people need to be dedicated and have the time and commitment to be a good board member. She questioned whether it can always be expected that each time there will be a lot of Alaskans to fill that, as well as also having good representation between the regions and the backgrounds. She said it makes her feel more comfortable that it can be disclosed and that everything can be on the record, and she agrees with the transparency component of the bill.

[11:15:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY related that was an elected school board member for 15 years and members got to vote on issues and express their opinions. She said she thinks it is very helpful to have most of the conversations on the record at the table. While she realizes that a member can leave his or her chair and testify before the body, she said it expedites things to have the [conflicted] member at the table and able to share his or her thoughts. It is not going to prohibit side conversations from happening, she added, but they will be done more at the committee level and the public will appreciate hearing those thoughts whether or not they agree with them.

[11:16:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE posed a scenario in which a member with a financial conflict is participating in deliberations and the board chair deems that that member's conversation is ethically going too far. She asked whether the board chair has discretion to limit the conversation so that it doesn't provide undue influence over the vote.

[11:17:03 AM](#)

GLENN HAIGHT, Executive Director, Board of Fisheries, Boards Support Section, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), replied that he thinks the board chair would have the ability to stop the conversation and take a break to talk with the board member to explain the chair's concerns.

[11:17:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE inquired whether there are any examples in the past where a chair has exercised that authority.

MR. HAIGHT responded that an example occurred last year when a board member was recused from working on a suite of proposals. He explained that at the beginning of every board meeting all board members sit through staff reports, but in this example a line of questions came from one board member and the recused member came back with another line of questioning that was starting to get to argument building. The board chair and the Department of Law representative realized it was probably going too far, so they stopped the meeting and had that conversation.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE commented that that answers the concern that there is another safety net mechanism for when undue influence is taking place and the chair has the discretion [to stop the conversation].

CHAIR TARR offered her appreciation for the comments about the legislation and said it points to how important the resource is to all Alaskans.

[11:19:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES moved to report HB 26 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying [zero] fiscal note.

[11:19:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE objected.

[11:20:07 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 11:20 a.m. to 11:21 a.m.

[11:21:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES withdrew her first motion as she had stated the incorrect bill version. She moved to report HB 26 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying [zero] fiscal note.

[11:21:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE objected.

[11:21:47 AM](#)

A roll call vote was taken. Representatives Kreiss-Tompkins, Story, Ortiz, Vance, Stutes, and Tarr voted in favor of the motion to report HB 26 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note. Representative McCabe voted against it. Therefore, by a vote of 6-1, HB 26 was reported out of the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

HB 54-INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

[11:22:40 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 54, "An Act establishing the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game; relating to management of invasive species; relating to invasive species management decals; and providing for an effective date."

[11:23:25 AM](#)

THATCHER BROUWER, Staff, Representative Geran Tarr, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HB 54 on behalf of Representative Tarr, prime sponsor. He explained that HB 54 would do three things: establish an Invasive Species Council, create an invasive species response fund, and set a way for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to create and sell invasive species management decals. Of these three things, he pointed out, the most important is establishing within ADF&G the Alaska Invasive Species Council, which would be composed of representatives from state and federal agencies as well as tribal, nongovernmental, business, and industry stakeholders.

CHAIR TARR interjected that this idea came from the Washington Invasive Species Council, which has written a letter of support. She related that at the 2018 meeting of the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership the director of the Washington council

shared with the 100-plus people in attendance why this was such an effective model and how it had helped the Washington council engage stakeholders and keep the business community connected to the government connected to the scientific community.

[11:24:50 AM](#)

MR. BROUWER continued his introduction of HB 54. He said one of the Alaska Invasive Species Council's responsibilities would be preparing and presenting a five-year strategic plan that addresses economic effects of invasive species, the council's priorities for addressing invasive species, and recommending legislation and funding required to implement the council's priorities. An updated strategic plan would be given to the legislature every other year.

MR. BROUWER stated that the second thing HB 54 would do is establish an invasive species response fund in the general fund, and the department would appropriate the funds to manage invasive species. He noted that while the fund is established in the bill, there is not at this time a dedicated funding source aside from the profits from the sale of invasive species decals. However, he continued, additional fund sources could be established at a later date.

[11:25:50 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR stated that she has worked on this bill for a few years and has explored many different funding mechanisms. She advised that one mechanism could be through ferry tickets when the [Alaska Marine Highway] next updates its ticketing system because people are bringing watercraft. She said a registration fee with planes was looked at, but it is federal and so not a good opportunity. An additional registration fee on snow machines, four-wheelers, or watercraft through the Division of Motor Vehicles was looked at but not pursued to avoid a stacking up of fees. In working with multiple stakeholders this summer, she continued, the idea for a voluntary decal came from former senator Gary Wilken and other homeowners on Harding Lake, which has an elodea problem. A voluntary decal, she explained, can be used to engage and educate people, and provide them with a way to financially contribute towards management.

[11:27:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS offered his appreciation for the background information. He said he is very motivated about any

way to create funding, even as a part of the bill, or possibly exploring a nexus with Dingell-Johnson. He further suggested that perhaps the dots could be connected by designating a portion of the surcharge in HB 80 for invasive species.

CHAIR TARR stated that Commissioner Vincent-Lang [of ADF&G] may help connect those dots when the fiscal notes are discussed.

[11:28:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated he is very interested in the bill but not interested in the fiscal note. He related that he and the sponsor have discussed the tiny pieces of funding in many different spots for invasive species and he thinks a way needs to be found to consolidate those, although he is unsure about the vehicle for doing that. He said he doesn't think taking it out of the general fund is the answer. Other states deal with boat trailer registration, and it doesn't seem to be too egregious and is like the small surcharge on Alaska's fishing licenses for the hatcheries. A way needs to be found to do that, he continued, because he won't be able to support the bill with a fiscal note given the current budget climate.

CHAIR TARR expressed her hope that Representative McCabe's concerns will be addressed when Commissioner Vincent-Lang testifies.

[11:30:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE requested the sponsor to describe how the optional invasive species decal will work. She observed that the fiscal note estimates ADF&G will collect [\$3,900] annually based on the average of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Stamps that were sold between 2017 and 2019.

CHAIR TARR responded that the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Stamp was used as a comparison because it is voluntary and can be purchased online while purchasing fishing licenses, and the Invasive Species Decal is envisioned in that same way. She noted that a core group of Alaskans is very engaged on this topic with more than 100 people normally attending the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership meetings, and the Harding Lake folks have indicated they want a voluntary, not mandatory, way to contribute. Chair Tarr stated she is interested in looking at a boat trailer registration, but because two or three other pieces of legislation are looking at Division of Motor Vehicle (DMV) fees she is cautious about stacking things unexpectedly on

top of people. In speaking with the ADF&G commissioner, she continued, it seems there could be some federal grant opportunities. Also, a funding stream could be created if HB 80 is passed in its amended form, but it is premature to count on that given HB 80 is still under consideration.

[11:33:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how the decal fee amount [of \$20] was determined and why.

CHAIR TARR replied that there isn't much science applied to the amount, she tried to pick a price that was not onerous and that felt reasonable. She said the way the decal is reflected in the fiscal note is not entirely as envisioned. The idea was to have an annual contest where artists submit something and receive recognition. Running it through the [Alaska Invasive Species] Council would minimize the need for administrative support from the department.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE recalled the "Snow Track funding" where \$20 was paid to decal a snow machine but then it was stripped out of the budget. He said he is concerned that this could happen here even though it is voluntary.

CHAIR TARR noted that the specifics of what the Alaska Invasive Species Council would do are outlined in Section 1.

[11:37:17 AM](#)

MR. BROUWER presented a sectional analysis of HB 54. He stated that under Section 1 of the bill, Section 16.20.800 [which would be added to AS 16.20] and would establish the invasive species decals. He said the heart of the bill is [the addition of] Section 16.20.810 which would establish the Alaska Invasive Species Council, with members from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), as well as members appointed by the governor from stakeholder organizations and industries. The council, he explained, would be responsible for facilitating cooperation between state, federal, tribal, and local agencies, as well as nongovernmental organizations involved in the management of invasive species. The council would also be tasked with recommending coordinated inter-agency strategies and policies related to the management of invasive species. The council would provide guidance on how to prioritize a response and how to best use the funds from the

invasive species response fund. The council would also be responsible for designing the invasive species control decals.

CHAIR TARR invited Mr. Vincent-Lang to testify on the bill.

[11:39:01 AM](#)

DOUG VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), recalled that at the bill's last hearing there was discussion on how ADF&G would approach the [Alaska Invasive Species Council] if HB 54 were passed. He stated he understands the issues with general funding and the consternation with appropriating general funds. He said he sees value in this effort and thinks there is a high probability that ADF&G would be able to get federal funding or patchworks of different funding that would enable this to move forward. His intent, he continued, is to not form the council and have it meet until ADF&G has secured those other funding sources. He suggested that the concerns of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) be put on the hearing record regarding the fiscal note, which came out of OMB.

[11:40:42 AM](#)

DAYNA MACKEY, Director, Division of Administrative Services, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, described her division and department as operating through the Office of Management & Budget. She explained that it is not customary to budget, or fiscal note practice, to appropriate fund sources in grants that are not available with certainty. She advised that if a grant became available for this function while the legislature was not in session, the Revised Program Legislative (RPL) Process could be used.

CHAIR TARR stated that the fiscal note currently reflects using general funds for the \$60,000 that would be needed annually to support the council. She said Commissioner Vincent-Lang thinks there could be some federal funds through grants or possibly other funding streams, and Ms. Mackey is saying that OMB would not update a fiscal note to reflect that because it is prospective rather than already in hand.

MS. MACKEY replied that is correct. She explained that until the funding is known, the funding source would have to be the unrestricted general fund (UGF).

[11:42:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether it would be appropriate to put contingency language in the bill and have a fiscal note with contingency language so if federal funds become available the department could proceed with the council. She requested a recommendation as to whether it is best to have contingency language or wait until next year after it is known that funds are available.

MS. MACKEY responded that contingent language could possibly help to be able to identify what the funding source could be for this. But as the bill is currently written, she continued, there is no funding source, so the only guaranteed money known at this point is the UGF.

CHAIR TARR commented that her concern is "the chicken or the egg" because she believes grants cannot be applied for prior to the council being in existence.

[11:43:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated he is confused because Commissioner Vincent-Lang said he doesn't need money to do this, and OMB says yes and is going to put a part-time person towards it.

COMMISSIONER VINCENT-LANG answered that his intent is to try to find additional funding outside of UGF knowing the issues the legislature is facing with UGF funding to proceed with this Invasive Species Council. He said he is convinced that there is money out there. He concurred with the "chicken or the egg" argument about how to get money if the council isn't formed and urged the committee to work on contingency language that says the council is not formed until alternative funding sources are available. He said he understands the position that if the council is created and there is no funding available towards it the only way to implement that council is to have UGF identified. He deferred to OMB to provide further response and related that ADF&G tried to identify a compromise, but OMB identified that that is not secure money and is trying to figure out how to put a fiscal note together.

MS. MACKEY said she doesn't have anything else to add to the commissioner's statements. She concurred that contingent language may be able to help and to state what the funding source is and that the council can move on once the funding is established. But, she added, at this point the UGF is the only thing that is identifiable.

[11:46:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE observed the fiscal note includes \$99,000-\$100,000 for the first year and then \$62,400 for 2023 onward. He asked what would happen if the \$100,000 is appropriated by the legislature but then the commissioner finds federal or grant funding, or money comes from HB 80.

MS. MACKEY replied that through the budget process in the next legislative session there could be a fund source change where the fund source is changed from UGF to whatever is identified. If any federal funds come through when the legislature is not in session, she continued, an RPL Process can be used to be able to get that funding a little bit quicker and then in the next legislative session there could be a decrease of the \$62,400 or \$99,50 or whatever it may be. So, there is a way to change that UGF through the budget process.

CHAIR TARR pointed out that HB 54 would not be moved from committee today, so there will be time for further questions.

[11:48:50 AM](#)

CHAIR TARR opened public testimony on HB 54.

[11:49:16 AM](#)

TIM STALLARD, Anchorage Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (ANC-CISMA), testified in support of HB 54. He stated he is an invasive species management consultant and is speaking today on behalf of ANC-CISMA. He said the organization's philosophy is that invasive species do not respect land ownership boundaries, so there needs to be cooperation and working together to protect Alaska's natural resources from degradation by harmful species. He noted that the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership has a similar philosophy at a statewide level, therefore important coordination and management across the state is already taking place by him and his colleagues. The current coordination is voluntary and driven by the personal commitment and passion of dedicated colleagues from state, local, tribal, nonprofit, university, and federal entities.

MR. STALLARD pointed out that Alaskans are lucky to have a vast state and relatively healthy fisheries and other natural resources. Alaskans depend on these resources for jobs, food,

recreation, and culture, he noted, but introduced invasive species have the potential to disrupt all this. The state's cold climate and relative geographic isolation has slowed the arrival and spread of invasive species, but these threats are here and will continue to increase in the future.

MR. STALLARD stated that to protect Alaska's fisheries and other resources, Alaskans must actively prevent and rapidly respond to harmful new invaders. This requires coordination across the state, he advised, so to adequately protect the state's fisheries and other resources Alaskans need to step up their coordination with the formation of the Alaska Invasive Species Council as outlined in HB 54. This council would bring high level coordination from ADF&G, DNR, DEC, DOT&PF together with commercial, local, federal, Alaska Native, and other interests. Alaska needs this high-level coordination to protect its fisheries and other natural resources into the future.

[11:51:43 AM](#)

SUMMER NAY, testified in support of HB 54. She stated she serves as the Invasive Species Plant Program Coordinator in Delta Junction, and that she is a member of the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership and a member of the Outreach Education Subcommittee. She said she is offering her testimony in support of HB 54 as an individual based on her perspective and experience gained while living and working in Interior Alaska.

MS. NAY noted that commercial hay and grain crops are produced in the [Delta Junction area], one of Alaska's largest agricultural regions. The Richardson and Alaska highways carry traffic into this district from populated areas of Alaska and Canada. Both agriculture and roads, she pointed out, are major vectors for the introduction of invasive terrestrial species, resulting in costly and damaging infestations that could threaten agricultural and natural resources.

MS. NAY advised that water bodies in the Interior are under threat from elodea, an aquatic invasive plant species that has been identified in up to 10 Interior water bodies. Watercraft and human transportation, she explained, are the main vectors for the introduction of elodea to freshwater systems. Elodea causes serious irreversible harm to aquatic habitats, resulting in the degradation of fisheries if given the opportunity to spread. Alaska is under threat, she continued, and only with help from local, state, federal, and tribal collaboration will it not perish. Passing HB 54 will establish statutory

expectation and motivate overdue coordination and institutional leadership towards invasive species prevention and management.

[11:53:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE requested the name of the organization with which Ms. Nay is affiliated.

MS. NAY replied that she works in Delta Junction for the Salcha-Delta Soil and Water Conservation District.

CHAIR TARR added, "I think also with the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership."

MS. NAY [confirmed that is correct].

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE asked how Mr. Stallard's and Ms. Nay's organizations are funded.

MS. NAY responded, "We fund ourselves; ... private funded."

[11:54:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS offered his understanding that the soil and water conservation districts in Alaska - Ms. Nay's and others - don't receive any public funding, including federal funding.

MS. NAY answered, "Correct."

CHAIR TARR stated that this topic could be discussed on another day. She said some districts like Ms. Nay's are active and doing important work, but others have lost their leadership.

[11:55:11 AM](#)

DAVID MARTIN, said he has been involved in fish and game issues in Alaska for 50 years. He stated he fully supports HB 54 for the need for a rapid response to invasive species. It is long past due, he added, and he supported it when it started at least six years ago. He advised being proactive and on the offense, "the sooner the better and the cheaper," when addressing invasive species in order to eradicate them before they can establish a toehold and change the ecosystem forever. A classic example is the [northern] pike that came into the Susitna drainage in the 1960s. Now there are at least eight lakes in the Susitna drainage that have nothing but pike in them. They

will never be eradicated, but they can be managed, and Mr. Martin said he is involved in an aquaculture association that does a lot of the pike work up there. Salmon production, he pointed out, is down substantially in the Susitna drainage because of pike.

MR. MARTIN related that elodea has also come into the Susitna drainage. He said an example is Alexander Lake where it started out in five acres from a float plane and from which it could have been eradicated for \$15,000. There was no rapid response and by the time action was taken the whole lake was infested. Now it is going to take over \$1 million to treat that lake and hopefully eradicate the elodea. According to a University of Alaska report, he continued, elodea alone will cost the state of Alaska \$100 million in annual losses from salmon production, float planes, and recreational activities.

MR. MARTIN further related zebra mussels have recently come into Alaska by way of pet stores. These mussels are disastrous, he stated, and have wiped out the fisheries in the Great Lakes. He said Alaska is fortunate in that it could get ahead of most of these invasive species and HB 54 will help. However, he advised, there also needs to be the will, the money, the education, and the rapid response to do so. Stricter laws are also needed not to allow invasive species to get into Alaska in the first place, and there needs to be strict enforcement and penalties for those who do bring them in and spread them throughout the state. He urged that HB 54 be forwarded.

[11:57:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE asked whether United Cook Inlet Drift Association (UCIDA) has taken a position on HB 54.

MR. MARTIN replied that UCIDA is supportive of HB 54. He said the fish and game advisory committee that he sits on has addressed and supported this bill in the past, as do aquaculture and the Cook Inlet Fisherman's Fund. It would be foolish not to support it, he opined. Invasive species have decimated Florida and other places and hopefully Alaska can get in the forefront of this. He said there is a lot of support for the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE said she has heard reports of pike straying into Cook Inlet. She asked whether Mr. Martin has personally seen pike in Cook Inlet.

MR. MARTIN responded he has been involved with the pike suppression by aquaculture and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) on the lakes in the Kenai Peninsula, and they have eradicated basically every lake. He said he has also been instrumental in aquaculture's effort for pike suppression in the Susitna drainage and he was instrumental in getting Shell Lake rehabilitated to salvage the genetic pool for sockeye in that system. Under a current program up there, pike are being netted in various lakes to increase the salmon production in them. While some lakes will not be able to be done, a lot of effort is being put into pike suppression. He said he hopes that HB 54 will eliminate invasive species so there isn't a pike issue where their numbers need to be curtailed annually.

[12:00:15 PM](#)

KATHERINE SHAKE, Natural Resource Specialist, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, testified in support of HB 54. She stated she is a board member of the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership and is speaking today on behalf of the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District and the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (KP-CISMA), a partnership of state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and tribes.

MS. SHAKE reported that on the Kenai Peninsula elodea has been successfully eradicated from five lakes and northern pike from seventeen lakes. She explained that a priority invasive plant list is maintained to keep the most harmful non-native plants out of salmon and moose habitat. However, she advised, while eradication efforts for some species have been successful, the battle is being lost with others like reed canary grass and orange hawkweed. European green crabs, which could destroy aquaculture in Prince William Sound and Kachemak Bay, are marching northward and were discovered in British Columbia last July. Zebra mussels have been found in moss balls sold in aquariums in Anchorage and Soldotna.

MS. SHAKE said the successful high-functioning partnership she has coordinated for the last 17 years is at its limits. She stressed that help is needed to detect and prevent introduction of new invasive species because the soil and water conservation districts are stretched thin. She explained that the districts write proposals and integrated pest management plans, fund raise, apply for state permits to ensure compliance, and implement control of the most harmful invasive plants along roadways, which are the primary vector of terrestrial invasives.

The reason the Seward and Sterling highways are not covered in bird vetch and white sweet clover, she pointed out, is because of the CISMA partnership and the soil and water districts. Soil and water districts have no state funding yet are managing vegetation in DOT&PF's rights-of-way. This is not a long-term solution, she stressed, and requires so much effort that the district doesn't have the bandwidth to respond when new invasive species show up.

MS. SHAKE advised that the ability to update and maintain a noxious weed list is critical to protecting Alaska's agriculture and native ecosystems. The Division of Agriculture needs support to provide the service of evaluating and prohibiting the sale of harmful plants, she said. Establishing an invasive species council would help elevate these conversations to a higher level of government and provide a conduit for education about the most pressing threats to Alaska's salmon and wildlife habitat. Creating an invasive species council, enabling ADF&G to implement prevention measures, and establishing a fund for rapid response are critical to increase the success of protecting local economies and livelihoods. She affirmed the support of both her organizations for HB 54.

[12:03:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY requested a written copy of Ms. Shake's testimony.

[12:03:26 PM](#)

CHAIR TARR closed public testimony after ascertaining no one else wished to testify.

CHAIR TARR announced that HB 54 was held over.

[12:03:41 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Fisheries meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.