

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 11, 2022

3:34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Peter Micciche, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Scott Kawasaki

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Joshua Revak, Chair
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Natasha von Imhof

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 54 (FIN)

"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 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
03/18/21	(H)	Heard & Held

03/18/21 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
 03/25/21 (H) FSH AT 10:30 AM GRUENBERG 120
 03/25/21 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 03/30/21 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
 03/30/21 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
 04/01/21 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
 04/01/21 (H) <Bill Hearing Canceled>
 04/06/21 (H) FSH AT 10:00 AM GRUENBERG 120
 04/06/21 (H) Moved CSHB 54 (FSH) Out of Committee
 04/06/21 (H) MINUTE (FSH)
 04/07/21 (H) FSH RPT CS (FSH) 7DP
 04/07/21 (H) DP: KREISS-TOMKINS, ORTIZ, MCCABE,
 VANCE, STORY, STUTES, TARR
 04/16/21 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
 04/16/21 (H) Heard & Held
 04/16/21 (H) MINUTE (RES)
 04/21/21 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
 04/21/21 (H) Moved CSHB 54 (FSH) Out of Committee
 04/21/21 (H) MINUTE (RES)
 04/22/21 (H) RES RPT CS (FSH) 3DP 3DNP 3NR
 04/22/21 (H) DP: SCHRAGE, HANNAN, FIELDS
 04/22/21 (H) DNP: GILLHAM, RAUSCHER, CRONK
 04/22/21 (H) NR: MCKAY, HOPKINS, PATKOTAK
 04/22/21 (H) FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER RES
 04/22/21 (H) BILL REPRINTED
 05/11/21 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
 05/11/21 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 05/18/21 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
 05/18/21 (H) Heard & Held
 05/18/21 (H) MINUTE (FIN)
 02/02/22 (H) FIN AT 9:00 AM ADAMS 519
 02/02/22 (H) Moved CSHB 54 (FIN) Out of Committee
 02/02/22 (H) MINUTE (FIN)
 02/04/22 (H) FIN RPT CS (FIN) 4DP 3NR
 02/04/22 (H) DP: ORTIZ, JOSEPHSON, WOOL, FOSTER
 02/04/22 (H) NR: EDGMON, THOMPSON, MERRICK
 02/17/22 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)
 02/17/22 (H) VERSION: CSHB 54 (FIN)
 02/22/22 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 02/22/22 (S) RES, FIN
 03/11/22 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR
 Alaska State Legislature
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented CSHB 54(FIN) as Chair of the House Special Committee on Fisheries.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an abbreviated sectional analysis of HB 54.

TIM STALLARD, Owner
Alien Species Control LLC
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the slideshow "Alaskans Depend on our Resources for Food, Culture, Fun, and Making a Living."

DANIELLE VERNA, Vice Chair
Alaska Invasive Species Partnership (AISP); and Project Manager
Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint on the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: During the hearing on HB 54, stated support for the idea of a task force to evaluate the issue of invasive species instead of starting by developing regulations that may or may not have consensus moving forward.

MATTHEW VAN DAELE, Natural Resources Director and Tribal Biologist for the Sun'aq Tribe
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

PAUL SHADURA, Representing Self
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

DAVID MARTIN, Representing Self
Clam Gulch, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 54.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:34:56 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Stevens, Kawasaki, and Vice Chair Micciche.

HB 54-INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

[3:35:40 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 54(FIN) "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."

[3:36:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented CSHB 54(FIN) on behalf of the House Special Committee on Fisheries. She stated that invasive species management is a statewide issue. The committee began work on this legislation in 2017 when it became apparent that there was a need to mobilize a rapid response to control the explosive growth of the invasive plant, elodea. She thanked the Department of Environmental Conservation for implementing treatment permits.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR stated that it became apparent that a comprehensive, statewide, multi-year, forward-looking approach was required to combat the growing threat of various invasive species. The state of Washington's successful model to control invasive species was referenced to develop an eradication strategy for Alaska. Washington's success hinged, in large part, on including an array of stakeholders and a multitude of jurisdictions to control all vectors from ballast water from shipping to the people coming to Alaska to the elodea that came from fish tanks. The Alaska Invasive Species Council seeks to include local government, state government, federal government, tribal partners, the university, and private businesses. The private sector includes float plane operators, people doing excavation work, and mineral development workers. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has switched to the use of native seed produced in-state to repropagate disrupted areas. This model works by bringing all the stakeholders together in an official way to come up with a plan for the most effective and efficient use of all the available resources.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR relayed that estimates in 2012 were that the state was spending about \$6 million per year to manage invasive species. The intention is to keep that number from growing as it has in other states where invasive species have burgeoned. In some places in the Lower 48 invasive species such as zebra mussels and Quagga Mussels have disrupted municipal water systems to the point that they were closed. In the Columbia River Basin spending to control those mussels is close to \$30 million per year. These problems can get very large very quickly and management becomes very costly.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said the fisheries committee has worked closely with the many stakeholders to develop the list of entities that would sit on the council. The committee also explored the opportunities for funding to start the work on invasive species control. Some of those opportunities may still exist, but the only revenue stream in the current version of the bill would come from the invasive species management decals that ADF&G would produce and make available for the public to purchase.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR advised that the fisheries committee added the legislative intent language to clarify that the work on invasive species management will be paid for without using any unrestricted general fund (UGF) funds. She noted that ADF&G previously testified in support of the legislation and confirmed that the bill would not impact the general fund. She further noted that the House Finance Committee added a seven year sunset for the council, which the fisheries committee supported.

[3:44:16 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked who serves on the council and how often it will meet.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR answered that the council has representation from state government, ex officio participation from the federal government, and private industry representation that includes:

- A person engaged in commercial agriculture, horticulture or landscaping;
- A person engaged in commercial aquaculture or mariculture;
- A person engaged in the tourism industry
- A person who owns a seaplane, is employed as a seaplane pilot, or is otherwise knowledgeable about seaplanes;

The council will also have:

- A representative from an Alaska tribal entity;
- A representative from an Alaska Native corporation;
- Representation from local governments; and
- Representation from research entities.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR stated that the people who are working on this through the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership are very dedicated and the testimony today will highlight the good work that is underway. The motivation for the legislation is to coordinate that work and provide an official avenue for making recommendations to the legislature.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR advised that appointing the council members and the setting the number of meetings required in the initial year was addressed in Section 5. The appointments have staggered terms, the council is required to hold its initial meeting within 90 days of the appointments, and it must meet at least four times in the 12 months following the appointment of the members. During this time the council will establish the bylaws and the schedule for future meetings.

[3:46:48 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE asked Mr. Brower for an abbreviated sectional analysis.

[3:47:02 PM](#)

THATCHER BROUWER, Staff, Representative Geran Tarr, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, presented an abbreviated sectional analysis of HB 54, highlighting that Sec. 16.20.810 in bill Section 2 was the most important part of the bill. The full sectional read as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Section One

Adds a new section to uncodified law that states it is the intent of the legislature that the Department of Fish and Game does not use money from the state's general fund to support the Alaska Invasive Species Council, and instead finds other sources of funding to support the council.

Section Two

Section 16.20.800 establishes the invasive species management decals. The decals will be produced by the

Department of Fish and Game annually and made available for sale to the public for a \$20 fee. The department will work in conjunction with the Alaska Invasive Species Council described in **Sec. 16.20.810** to design and produce the decals. The legislature may then appropriate the proceeds from the sale of the decals to further produce the decals or to the invasive species response fund described in **Sec. 16.20.820**, to carry out the work of invasive species response.

Section 16.20.810 establishes the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game. The council will be comprised of representatives from the Departments of Fish and Game, Natural Resources, Environmental Conservation and Transportation and Public Facilities. Furthermore, the council will have members from stakeholder organizations and industries appointed by the governor to three-year terms, as well as representatives from federal agencies that deal with invasive species.

Additionally, **Section 16.20.810** outlines the responsibilities of the council. This section requires that the council be responsible for facilitating cooperation between state, federal, tribal, local agencies, and nongovernmental organizations in the management invasive species. The council will be tasked with recommending coordinated interagency strategies and policies related to the management of invasive species. The council will also provide guidance on how to prioritize the response to invasive species and how to best use funds from the invasive species response fund. Lastly, the council will be responsible for selecting designers of the invasive species control decals and approving and promoting the designs.

Furthermore, **Section 16.20.810** provides guidance on council meetings and deliverables. The council will meet at least once a year, and by January 15th of each odd-numbered year, the council shall produce a plan that addresses the economic impact of invasive species and recommends legislation and funding to implement the council's priorities.

Section 16.20.820 establishes an invasive species response fund in the general fund and allows the department to use the funds to prevent, control, or eradicate invasive species.

Section 16.20.850 defines commissioner, council, department, invasive species, management of invasive species and non-native species.

Section Three

Section 37.05.146 adds the invasive species decal fee to the list of separately accounted program receipts.

Section Four

Adds a July 1, 2029 sunset date all the sections in the bill.

Section Five

Gives direction to the governor regarding the appointment of the members, chair, as well as timing and number of meetings in the initial year.

Section Six

Establishes an immediate effective date.

[3:50:03 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if there had been any discussion about having ex officio members from the legislature, appointed by the Senate President and Speaker of the House, serve on the council.

[3:50:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said she was amenable to that idea if it was something the committee wanted to consider. She explained that her reasoning to have the council work independent of the legislature was because of the potential transition of membership in the legislature.

SENATOR STEVENS offered his reasoning that seven years was a long time for the legislature to not know what was happening, other than the annual report.

[3:51:09 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE asked if purchase of a decal was voluntary.

MR. BROUWER answered yes; anybody who might want to show support for better invasive species management would have the option of purchasing a decal through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said the thought is that the decals could be added to the department's portal for fishing license purchases. Several stakeholders also indicated interest in helping to sell the decals.

[3:52:12 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked whether zebra mussels were edible.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR replied they aren't eaten because they're extremely small. They're problematic because they grow very rapidly and will choke water lines.

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE noted that she discussed the cost to manage invasive species, but not the less quantifiable cost associated with the inconvenience. He relayed that many Lower 48 states have set up roadblocks to screen for invasive species and if anything is found the trip could be over.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR agreed that there was reason to be concerned about the watercraft coming to Alaska. She relayed that the committee was likely to hear testimony today about what is being done on Alaska's borders.

[3:53:58 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked what methods are used to eradicate invasives.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR answered that it depends on the species but sometimes it is a matter of trial and error. She worked for years in Anchorage to eradicate the European Bird Cherry, first by digging the plant and now with a chemical treatment followed by mechanical removal. The waterweed Elodea is treated chemically but it was important to learn what chemical doesn't kill other species. One method of eradicating invasive pike is to catch the fish. Border check stations are also an important control measure. For example, all watercraft entering Montana must go through an inspection station. Several summers ago she noticed what looked like an oversized Brillo pad at the trailhead at Crow Creek with a sign asking everyone to clean the soles of their shoes before they started on the trail.

[3:56:29 PM](#)

At ease.

[3:57:27 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE reconvened the meeting and turned to invited testimony on HB 54.

[3:58:00 PM](#)

TIM STALLARD, Owner, Alien Species Control LLC, Anchorage, Alaska, presented the PowerPoint "Alaskans Depend on our Resources for Food, Culture, Fun, and Making a Living." He advised that he also chairs the Anchorage Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area. It is an informal group that gets a lot done without any actual authority. (

MR. STALLARD began the presentation by reviewing the definition of invasive species, which means an alien or non-native species that if introduced is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human or animal health. The hallmark of an invasive species is that it arrives in a natural area and quickly proliferates to the point that it displaces native species. Because Alaska is so deeply tied to its natural resources, the introduction of an invasive species quickly impacts Alaskans and their economic values.

MR. STALLARD turned to the images on slide 4 of invasive chokecherries that are also called invasive European bird cherry trees or mayday trees. He relayed that they had been spreading out of control in Anchorage along salmon streams and into the riparian forests. In addition to Anchorage, this invasive is spreading and causing concern in Fairbanks, Eielson Air Force Base, Juneau, Homer and other areas on the peninsula, Talkeetna and other parts of the MatSu Valley. Evidence that the state is not doing very well to address invasive species is the fact that the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) list of plants that cannot be sold in the state does not include these invasive chokecherry trees. They can be sold anywhere in the state outside the Municipality of Anchorage. Requests over the last ten years for DNR to update its noxious weed list have gone unanswered.

[4:01:25 PM](#)

MR. STALLARD said he likes the metaphor that Alaska is facing a biological wildfire because Alaskans are familiar with the damage cause by wildfires. Similar to wildfires, the invasive species curve on slide 5 illustrates that the best control is prevention. Quick detection and a coordinated response are the

next lines of defense. This will make management of the invasive less expensive and have fewer impacts on the natural resources

[4:02:16 PM.](#)

MR. STALLARD turned to the infestation curve on slide 6 and characterized the state's approach to address the biological wildfire it is facing as a very good "bond to your bucket brigade." There are sophisticated and successful management plans in some places. For example, programs to manage Elodea have been very successful on the Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, the Interior region and Anchorage; efforts to manage Northern Pike have also been successful. However, the state has yet to organize in a well-structured format such as the incident command system (ICS) that coordinates federal agencies, state and local agencies, and private interests to effectively respond to fire and other emergencies. The Invasive Species Council that is outlined in HB 54 could provide the needed organization to manage invasive species in the state.

MR. STALLARD moved to slide 7 that showcases a native Salmonberry flower on the cover of Verna Pratt's Alaskan Wildflower guide alongside an image of spotted knotweed and sweet white clover that is proliferating along Turnagain Arm. He said it's ironic that monocultures of invasive weeds are spreading out from the population centers of Anchorage, MatSu, and Fairbanks. The Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Invasive Species Management (KS-CISMA) area is an exception that shows that these plants can be monitored effectively. The problem is that this isn't being done in other areas of the state.

MR. STALLARD advanced to slide 8 that is an illustration of Fairbanks drowning in bird vetch. He relayed that each time he returns to Fairbanks he's dismayed to see that this invasive weed is still spreading. He displayed slide 9 and noted the earlier references to the invasive waterweed Elodea that threatens salmon spawning habitat throughout the state. [The caption above the pictures is taken from the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) report that says this plant could cost the salmon industry \$159 million a year.]

[4:04:55 PM](#)

MR. STALLARD displayed the picture on slide 10 that illustrates the threat that Northern Pike represent to spawning salmon runs in Southcentral Alaska. He highlighted that there had been very successful control projects on the Kenai Peninsula, Anchorage, and MatSu areas. Similarly, the Crayfish/Crawfish/Crawdadd "Wanted" poster depicted on slide 11 highlights the danger these

nonnative fresh water crustaceans present in the Kodiak area. In Juneau the aggressive and hard to control knotweed is a huge threat to waterways and infrastructure. The roots can crack concrete and has destroyed home foundations.

[4:05:51 PM](#)

MR. STALLARD urged the committee and others to look at the biological threats the state is facing and consider what can be done to better protect natural resources going forward. He gave credit to the successful management measures he had mentioned and stressed the importance of a more organized management approach such as the Alaska Invasive Species Council. He acknowledged the need for commissioner-level authority to tie in federal agencies and hopefully federal resources and support.

He noted that the House passed HB 54 33:2 and expressed hope that it would pass the Senate this session.

[4:07:18 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE stated appreciation for the work that had been done to manage invasive species and talked specifically about the threat Northern Pike presents to salmon species on the Kenai Peninsula. He agreed that early intervention was key.

[4:08:19 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS commented on the explosive expansion of crayfish populations in Buskin Lake and River and surmised that someone must have introduced them years ago thinking they'd be a good food source. He noted that beaver were introduced the same way. He asked if people who introduce invasive species could be prosecuted.

MR. STALLARD said he understands those introductions are illegal, but ADF&G could answer definitively.

[4:09:35 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE asked Daniella Verna to begin her presentation.

[4:09:53 PM](#)

DANIELLE VERNA, Vice Chair Alaska Invasive Species Partnership (AISP); and Project Manager, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that today she would share what the Alaska Invasive Species Partnership is, what it does, and why they believe an Invasive Species Council will strengthen the ability to respond to invasive species throughout the state.

MS. VERNA explained that the partnership is an informal group of individuals from agencies and organizations statewide that collectively recognize different ways Alaska is vulnerable to invasive species. The partnership's goal is to foster statewide coordination, cooperation, and action to prevent the introduction of new invasive species and reduce the effects of existing invasive species. To achieve its goal, the partnership provides support to engaged stakeholders, including the public and members of the partnership that are engaged in on-the-ground management. It is a very collaborative effort across land ownership and jurisdictions. She relayed that the AKISP board is comprised of 11 volunteers that represent nonprofit, Native, state and federal entities.

MS. VERNA said the board and partnership has gaps in its representation. They recognize that one of the values of the Invasive Species Council is that it would fill those gaps and thereby improve collaboration and a coordinated response across Alaska's dynamic landscape.

[4:13:00 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE asked about the decision process for selecting the representation on the board versus representatives who were working for on-the-ground solutions.

MS. VERNA answered that many of the organizations represented on the board were engaged in on-the-ground management. A decision about board membership is made during the annual workshop. The full membership votes on the members that were selected to serve on the board for that year. Selections are based on background, organization, and experience. She described board membership as very partnership driven.

[4:14:14 PM](#)

MS. VERNA advanced to slide 3 and reviewed AKISP's six standing committees. They focus on issues that have been identified by either the membership or the board of directors. She noted that Elodea and northern pike were discussed in the previous presentation.

AKISP STANDING COMMITTEES

- Elodea
- Northern Pike

- Marine that focuses on bringing together members from coastal communities that monitor species such as European green crab and invasive tunicates.
- Governmental Relations works on topics such as the annual proclamation recognizing Alaska Invasive Species Awareness Week each June and opportunities to engage with elected officials in communities.
- Workshop Planning hosts an annual conference that is open to the public.
- Outreach & Education has the mission to engage the public in invasive species issues.

MS. VERNA relayed that the partnership's vision statement is for Alaska's environmental, cultural, and economic resources to be free from the impacts of invasive species. Prevention, early detection, and rapid response is emphasized. Members work across ecosystems to survey for new arrivals, manage current infestations, and conduct research on the effects of invasive species. The partnership currently is working on the issues of northern pike, zebra mussels, and Elodea. Northern pike are native north of the Alaska Range, but their introduction to the MatSu and Kenai Peninsula is damaging salmon populations. Zebra mussels were detected last year and elicited a strong response from partnership members because they present a substantial threat to fresh water systems. Elodea currently is the only aquatic invasive plant and efforts to control it are widespread. She noted that a lot of work was also being done to control invasive plants, pests, and pathogens.

[4:17:34 PM](#)

MS. VERNA highlighted that the European green crab currently is not in Alaska, but it is well established on the West Coast and in British Columbia so it is within 100 miles of communities in Southeast. The photos on slide 8 depict partners in Kachemak Bay and Prince William Sound doing monitoring so these invasive crabs are detected early if they do arrive.

[4:18:11 PM](#)

MS. VERNA advanced to slide 9 to discuss House Bill 54. It would create an Alaska Invasive Species Council that would serve in an advisory role for the management of invasive species. This will provide consistent statewide priorities, efficient management approaches, and common messaging, and encourage coordinated interagency strategies. This will break the organizational silos and provide a platform for organizations to unite and look at the big picture, identify gaps, and share successful approaches. HB 54 would also establish a fund through the sale of decals,

the purchase of which is optional. Importantly, HB 54 requires a five-year strategic plan to address invasive species in Alaska. It would identify the economic effects and establish priorities for management. With the implementation of HB 54, the partnership sees opportunities for advanced coordination to address the active and evolving threat of invasive species. Much like oil spills and catastrophic wildfires, she said an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This is evidenced by the experiences in other states where management is very costly.

[4:20:21 PM](#)

MS. VERNA advanced to slide 10 and conveyed that the partnership provides platforms for sharing information through a number of different venues, including monthly membership meetings, an active Facebook page through the Outreach and Education Committee, the website alaskainvasives.org, a designated email address to reach board members, and the annual workshop that rotates between Anchorage, Fairbanks, and an outlying community. This year it will be held in Anchorage on November 1-3. She welcomed anyone who was interested in invasive species in Alaska to become a member of the partnership.

She thanked the committee for considering the bill.

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE thanked Ms. Verna for the presentation. He asked Commissioner Vincent-Lang if he had any comments to offer on HB 54.

[4:21:53 PM](#)

DOUG VINCENT-LANG, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Anchorage, Alaska, expressed appreciation that Representative Tarr stepped away from the regulation-heavy initial concept of the bill and worked with the department to develop the idea of a task force to define the problem and reach consensus on needed regulatory or information outreach strategies to address invasive species. The task force would bring invasive species experts together to have informed discussions and develop recommendations on the next steps. He said he agreed with everything that was said today about invasive species being a significant issue facing fish and wildlife management on lands and waters statewide. HB 54 is a step in the right direction to look at the problem and develop recommendations. He relayed that ADF&G submitted a fiscal note that reflects additional staff time associated with staffing the task force. He restated that ADF&G supports the idea of a task force to evaluate the issue instead of starting by developing regulations that may or may not have consensus moving forward.

[4:24:43 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE opened public testimony on HB 54.

[4:25:01 PM](#)

MATTHEW VAN DAELE, Natural Resources Director and Tribal Biologist for the Sun'aq Tribe, Kodiak, Alaska, thanked the committee for hearing the bill and Representative Tarr for continuing to help the efforts to control invasive species and raise public awareness about the threats they present to the state. He agreed with the previous statements about the benefits of having a collaborative and interagency council of experts to protect Alaska's natural resources, and the need for a multi-year strategic and team approach. HB 54 creates an opportunity for stakeholders to work together and it empowers the public to actively help protect the natural resources, subsistence activities, and the land and waters of Alaska.

[4:27:40 PM](#)

PAUL SHADURA, Representing Self, Soldotna, Alaska, stated that he had been a commercial fisherman for several years and did understand the effects of a health environment and the positive effect that has on renewable resources. He highlighted that the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association had spent a lot of time and money to assess and extract invasive species and to educate the public about the negative effects that invasive species have on their lives. He noted that the invasive European Green Crab could arrive in Alaska by hitching a ride on a boat. He referenced the aquatic nuisance species section of the 2022 Coast Guard authorization bill and posited that federal funding to control invasive species may be available. He concluded his testimony by quoting from another state's invasive species council.

By setting strategic goals and convening the state and federal agencies and other partners, the council helps ensure the investments made today are the right investments and will prevent paying a steeper price in the future.

MR. SHADURA urged the committee to pass HB 54.

[4:29:57 PM](#)

DAVID MARTIN, Representing Self, Clam Gulch, Alaska, stated that it is imperative to pass this bill to prevent invasive species from displacing or drastically reducing the natural species in Alaska and changing the natural habitat. Managing invasive

species is a worldwide issue. Millions of dollars have been spent worldwide to eradicate or manage invasive species and billions of dollars have been lost in commerce through lost food supplies and people's ways of life. Alaska has not been exposed to a great number of invasive species, but vigilance is necessary to prevent this from happening. He cited examples. One was the introduction of the invasive waterweed elodea to the Alexander Lake system in the Susitna drainage by a floatplane. Five acres were initially affected and it would have cost \$15,000 to eradicate. It took several years to obtain the necessary permits and raise funding and by then the elodea had spread throughout the lake and into the Alexander River. The cost of eradication increased hundreds of thousands of dollars. Another example was the introduction of invasive pike in the Susitna drainage. Those fish ate all the salmon and trout and then started to feed on themselves.

MR. MARTIN described HB 54 as an important offensive measure that complies with the state constitution to conserve all natural resources. The bill is well thought out and should be passed into law.

[4:32:26 PM](#)

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE closed public testimony on HB 54.

[4:32:36 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL asked the sponsor what the reasoning was for housing the council in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game instead of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). He noted that invasive species touch both departments and that one comment in the packet suggested that DNR would be a better home.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR said the bill initially was focused on rapid response, which is more in the wheelhouse of ADF&G and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

[4:34:20 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked where the delays in permitting were occurring and how the council would resolve that problem.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR answered that the rapid response permit through DEC has been addressed for problem species that have been identified. Part of the council's role will be to explore potential threats and what regulatory structure is needed to address those threats. The idea is for these conversations to take place before a looming threat becomes a reality.

4:36:02 PM

VICE CHAIR MICCICHE held HB 54 in committee.

4:37:04 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Vice Chair Micciche adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 4:37 p.m.