

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY HERRMANN, MENARD, HANLEY
AND ZAWACKI

2

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5

Relating to the Brooks River Falls fish

6

ladder.

7

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

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WHEREAS the National Park Service has recently stated that it will
9 remove the fish ladder at Brooks Falls on the Brooks River in Katmai Na-
10 tional Park; and

11

WHEREAS the fish ladder was installed at the falls in 1949 in response
12 to the concerns of fisheries biologists who had recognized as early as the
13 1920's that a ladder was necessary to allow more sockeye salmon to migrate
14 above the falls, and that it would allow pink, coho, and chum salmon access
15 to the area above the falls; and

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WHEREAS the partially successful attempt to construct a bypass of the
17 falls in 1920 and the later construction of the present fish ladder were
18 done with the knowledge and support of the appropriate national fisheries
19 management and National Park Service personnel; and

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WHEREAS on-site observers estimate that in recent years approximately
21 one-half of the sockeye salmon that spawn above the falls use the fish
22 ladder to get there; and

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WHEREAS the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and National Marine
24 Fisheries Service biologists who have firsthand knowledge of the Brooks
25 River system feel that the removal of the ladder will ultimately prove
26 detrimental to the fishery resources of the river; and

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WHEREAS the National Park Service is removing the fish ladder on the
28 basis that the ladder

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(1) is insignificant to the production of sockeye salmon;

1 (2) is inconsistent with National Park Service management objec-
2 tives and federal mandates;

3 (3) allows exotic species and races of fish to enter the upper
4 Brooks River ecosystem; and

5 (4) causes bank erosion and degrades the scenic quality of the
6 Brooks River Falls; and

7 WHEREAS the State of Alaska has refuted each of these points and has
8 presented its evidence and arguments to the Department of the Interior to
9 no avail; and

10 WHEREAS fisheries biologists of the State of Alaska and the National
11 Marine Fisheries Service believe that the ladder makes a significant con-
12 tribution to sockeye salmon production, and they presented the scientific
13 data to back up that belief; and

14 WHEREAS the State of Alaska has found no provisions in the Alaska
15 National Interest Lands Conservation Act or in the legislative history of
16 that Act that compel the National Park Service to remove the fish ladder;
17 and

18 WHEREAS a careful review of historic species lists for fish, wildlife,
19 and aquatic organisms upstream and downstream of the ladder does not pro-
20 vide an indication that exotic or nonindigenous species, disease vectors,
21 or gene pools have entered the upper Brooks River drainage by way of the
22 ladder; and

23 WHEREAS on-site inspection of the area by State of Alaska personnel
24 has found no riverbank erosion caused by or in the area of the fish ladder;
25 and

26 WHEREAS most people who visit the falls are not even aware that the
27 ladder exists because of the heavy brush and vegetation that have grown
28 around the ladder since 1949; and

29 WHEREAS it seems inconsistent for the National Park Service to say

1 that the ladder is incompatible with the wilderness qualities of Katmai
2 National Park when the service itself installed a viewer platform by the
3 falls, accessed by a well traveled trail from a commercial lodge and the
4 National Park Service headquarters, and from which there is a road into the
5 heart of the beautiful Valley of 10,000 Smokes;

6 BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Secretary of
7 the Interior is respectfully requested to intervene in the decision of the
8 National Park Service to remove the Brooks River Falls fish ladder in
9 Katmai National Park and reverse that decision in the best interests of an
10 important subsistence fishery and wildlife resource protection.

11 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ronald
12 Reagan, President of the United States; to the Honorable Donald P. Hodel,
13 Secretary of the Interior; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honor-
14 able Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
15 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.