

Original sponsors: Herrmann, Menard,  
Hanley, et al.

1 IN THE HOUSE BY THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 29 (Resources)

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:

8 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

16 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

20 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

23 WHEREAS the salmon using the ladder annually account for an estimated  
24 \$134,000 of ex-vessel value to the Bristol Bay sockeye salmon fishery; and

25 WHEREAS the anticipated annual maintenance costs for the fish ladder  
26 are estimated to be less than one percent of the ex-vessel value; and

27 WHEREAS sockeye salmon are the economic mainstay of the Bristol Bay  
28 fishing industry and the major source of income for the residents of the  
29 Bristol Bay region; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

14       WHEREAS the State of Alaska has refuted each of these points and has  
15 presented its evidence and arguments to the Department of the Interior to  
16 no avail; and

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

21       WHEREAS the State of Alaska has found no provisions in the Alaska  
22 National Interest Lands Conservation Act or in the legislative history of  
23 that Act that compel the National Park Service to remove the fish ladder;  
24 and

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

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

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

7           WHEREAS it seems inconsistent for the National Park Service to say  
8 that the ladder is incompatible with the wilderness qualities of Katmai  
9 National Park when the service itself installed a viewer platform by the  
10 falls, accessed by a well traveled trail from a commercial lodge and the  
11 National Park Service headquarters, and from which there is a road into the  
12 heart of the beautiful Valley of 10,000 Smokes;

13           BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Secretary of  
14 the Interior is respectfully requested to intervene in the decision of the  
15 National Park Service to remove the Brooks River Falls fish ladder in  
16 Katmai National Park and reverse that decision in the best interests of an  
17 important commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishery and the region-  
18 al salmon-based ecosystem; and be it

19           FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Interior is respectfully  
20 requested to direct the National Park Service to remove the boards that are  
21 blocking the outlet to the ladder and to prepare a Memorandum of Under-  
22 standing that will allow the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to maintain  
23 and operate the ladder in a manner consistent with its historical use and  
24 with current uses of the area.

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