



Representative Louise Stutes
Chair, House Special Committee on Fisheries
Alaska State Capitol Rm. 406
Juneau, AK 99801
Re: House Bill 199

April 10, 2017

Representative Stutes,

The Southeast Alaska Guides Organization (SEAGO) represents sportfishing guides, charter captains, and lodge owners throughout Southeast Alaska. SEAGO advocates for reasonable laws, regulations, and policies which ensure the long-term sustainability of our businesses and fishery resources. We write today in support of House Bill 199, the Wild Salmon Legacy Act, and thank Rep. Stutes for introducing this bill. As written, H.B. 199 is a comprehensive response to the January 2017 letter to the Legislature from the Board of Fish, and the requests raised by multiple user groups to strengthen Title 16.

Alaska is synonymous with fishing and outdoor adventures. Our tourism opportunities join private and public entities together to host millions of visitors annually, creating thousands of jobs and bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into our economy. In these times of economic uncertainty, we should look at our existing tourism industries to provide increased stability, and recognize the importance of fish and habitat as providing stable, long-term benefits through recreational opportunities.

The State has maintained Alaska's spirit of adventure since statehood; however, there exists room for improvement when it comes to managing in the name of protecting and enhancing the habitat of our fishery resources. The applicable section of Title 16 is clarified here for the first time since statehood, creating habitat protection measures in permitting, which support sportfishing and other tourism opportunities. These measures include creating enforceable, science-based adverse effects standards using habitat characteristics, such as water quality and instream flow levels. Furthermore, the bill updates the Anadromous Fish Habitat catalogue to include important salmon waters and create a presumption of inclusion and protection. These pre-permitting measures, combined with an improved notice and comment opportunity, are significant steps towards maintaining our State resources. Post-activity changes, including mitigation and bond requirements, further safeguard our fish habitat.

H.B. 199 takes important steps to protect our wild fish for generations to come, while safeguarding our existing recreational opportunities, businesses, and coastal communities. Thank you for your support in these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Weinstein', is written below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Samantha Weinstein
Executive Director
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