



# UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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March 11, 2013

Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair  
Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
[Senator.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov)  
[Senator.Kevin.Meyer@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Kevin.Meyer@akleg.gov)

**RE: SB 26/HB77, concerns relating changes to the Alaska Water Use Act.**

Dear Senator Kelly, Senator Meyer, and members of the Senate Finance Committee;

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) is the largest statewide commercial fishing trade association, representing 36 commercial fishing organizations participating in fisheries throughout the state and its offshore federal waters. We appreciate the opportunity to address our concerns regarding SB 26 (HB 77) regarding the Alaska Water Use Act.

UFA had the opportunity to meet with DNR Deputy Commissioner Ed Fogels, Director of Division of Mining, Land and Water Brent Goodrum, and Deputy Director of DNR Wyn Menefee. While many of our questions were answered regarding the impacts of SB 26; the meeting raised additional questions. A follow-up with DNR was just recently answered and we are still working through the response. While UFA has a number of concerns regarding the impacts of SB 26/HB 77, our primary concern at this point is the speed in which the bill is moving through the Legislature. UFA would appreciate more time for thorough analysis of the impacts of this legislation which will allow the public to effectively weigh in before the full Senate takes a vote.

Although UFA recognizes the merits of streamlining Alaska's permitting processes, this bill has not been given an appropriate amount of time for affected Alaskans to understand and respond to the proposed changes. Alaska's reputation is built on sustainability of our resources and a strong belief in the public process. We appreciate the ability to discuss our concerns with DNR and legislators. However, we respectfully request that any bill that removes the ability of Alaskans to apply for a water right be fully noticed and that adequate opportunity for public participation is allowed.

UFA remains concerned with how some measures in the bill could affect the existing standards for protecting aquatic resources in Alaska. UFA is also concerned about how SB 26 changes the process for our members and member groups to engage in permitting decisions that impact fisheries. The proposed changes to the Water Use Act reduce the ability of Alaskan citizens to apply for water reservations to protect in-stream flow. Through

the changes in SB 26/HB 77, citizens would need to apply for water reservations through a public entity, borough, or municipality to submit an application to DNR therefore creating another layer to the permitting process as opposed to eliminating a layer. It is our understanding that under SB 26/HB 77, the statutes remain to require DNR to evaluate impacts to fish and their habitat in consultation with ADF&G when issuing any water authorizations. However, DNR continues to have the latitude to either accept or reject ADF&G comments. UFA respectfully requests that there be a stronger requirement for DNR to accept recommendations from ADF&G in protecting salmon streams.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. We appreciate the Senate Finance committee's careful review and dedication to Alaska's resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julianne Curry', written in a cursive style.

Julianne Curry  
Executive Director