

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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CSHB 395 (FIN) am FIRE SEASON START DATE

The spruce bark beetle kill on the Kenai Peninsula has created an enormous amount of dry grass and dead trees susceptible to lightning strikes and man made fires. The threat grows greater ever year.

For the past several years the climate in our area has been gradually warming earlier in the year, leaving wild areas dry and increasing the probability of a major wildfire early in or even before the start of the current fire season.

The largest uncontained fire on the Southern Kenai Peninsula ever recorded, the Tracy Avenue fire, started prior to May 1, 2005, threatening residents and property. This fire might have been contained had the equipment and personnel been available the first day.

The threat of early season fires is a statewide issue. These pre-green up fires are a very real threat in the Mat-Su Valley, the Anchorage bowl and the Fairbanks area. Since many of these fires are man made, they tend to be near populated areas thus increasing the risk to life and property.

Moving the fire season start date to April 1 will allow the state to become actively involved in fire prevention and control earlier in the fire season and hopefully stop the progress of a disastrous pre-summer fire.

The bill was amended to change the fire season end date to August 31 to allow for a zero fiscal note and to include an immediate effective date.

I respectfully ask for your support of this bill.