



Alaska State Legislature

REPRESENTATIVE DREW SCALZI
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Official Business

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 15, 2002
CONTACT: Rep. Drew Scalzi, 465-2689

(907) 465-2689; (800) 665-2689
FAX: (907) 465-3472

Representative_Drew_Scalzi@legis.state.ak.us

Fish Permit Consolidation Bill Passes House **HB 286 Would Let Fishermen Buy Up Permits to Reduce Effort**

(JUNEAU) – The House today approved a bill that would allow salmon fishermen to help their industry adjust to lower prices and excess fishing capacity by authorizing fishermen to work together to consolidate the number of limited entry permits.

Rep. Drew Scalzi (R-Homer), who has 30 years experience in commercial fishing, introduced House Bill 286 in an effort to help protect the industry from the one-two punch of drastically depressed salmon prices and excessive numbers of fishing boats targeting a limited resource.

“The health of the salmon industry should be of the utmost importance to the state of Alaska, as it directly impacts the economic health of the state,” Scalzi said. “While nearly 175 million salmon were landed last summer, the fishermen's take was only \$216 million -- less than half of what they got 15 years ago.”

HB 286 would encourage consolidation of the limited-entry commercial salmon fleet, making it legal for a permit holder to purchase a second permit for the same area. The bill also allows associations of fishermen to band together into cooperatives, and assess themselves no more than 5 percent of the value of fish landed in a given area to raise money to buy up permits in that area.

“Technology has advanced the capabilities of the fleets, and it’s time to look at new ways -- innovative ways -- to consolidate and make this industry more viable,” said Scalzi. “It is a challenge to get these very independent fishermen to cooperate, but they have agreed to support this measure as a way they can help themselves and their industry.”

While the bill encourages removal of vessels and gear from a fishery, it does not permanently remove permits from the system, Scalzi said. If fishing conditions improve, permits can be added back into fisheries, allowing each administrative area to address its particular difficulties by gear type.

The bill includes other protections for the industry, including a requirement that two-thirds of permit holders in an area must approve any assessments, and another to ensure holders of two permits win no special advantages over other fishermen.

HB 286 moves next to the Senate for consideration.

###

**Broadcasters note: Comments are available on the Majority Actuality Line 1-800-478-6540,
or on the Majority webpage at www.akrepublicans.org**