

Committees:

Resources
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Transportation

World Trade and
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Alaska State Legislature



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Representative Beverly Masek

Sponsor Statement

HB 421 "An Act relating to water use and appropriation."

This bill directs the Department of Natural Resources to develop a standardized procedure for processing water rights applications.

Alaska's water is a public trust resource. Our state constitution tasks our legislature with the responsibility to oversee distribution of all public trust resources. The distribution of our state's water has been statutorily delegated to the administrative branch of our state government, specifically to the [Commissioner](#) of our [Department of Natural Resources](#).

[This legislation](#) is a response to overwhelming public testimony given at meetings conducted in the fall of 2001. The meetings were initiated by the Department of Natural Resources in order to meet with various environmental groups in order to explain the proposed regulation changes to the water rights adjudication process. Many individuals voiced complaints that they were unsure as to the status of their own permit, or that they could not obtain information as to pending permits in a given area. Examples of water uses that have been distributed for bodies of water with pending applications for adjudication of a water right were revealed at these meetings. Directing the department to develop and implement a standardized procedure is an effort which will better serve the public interest regarding the distribution of our state's water.

This bill also directs the department to make public records, including pending applications for water rights adjudication, available on the internet.

It was agreed in many of the meetings this fall that the posting of information on the internet was an acceptable method of public notice, and a desirable avenue for public access to records. The department was able to use their website for several well designed pages supporting the proposed regulation changes, and should be able to implement a means of similar access to other matters of public record.