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Senate Bill 88 Sponsor Statement

[This Bill](#) revises the riparian management standards of the Forest Resources Practices Act (FRPA) for Region III by strengthening protection for fish habitat and water quality in a manner that continues to support both the timber and fishing industries.

The current standards for Region III were adopted as an interim measure in the 1990 revision of the Act. Under these standards, harvesting can occur up to the bank of anadromous waters on both public and private land under some conditions. With the proposed Bill, all anadromous and high-value resident fish waters are classified and riparian standards are established for each classification.

The requirements are tailored to the characteristics and fish habitat needs of each stream type. A no-harvest buffer will be required on most anadromous and high-value resident fish waters. However, along glacial rivers where some of the most valuable timber occurs, the standards allow harvest of up to half the large white spruce in the landward half of the buffer. This allows landowners to capture some of the economic value within the riparian areas while keeping enough large trees to provide woody debris.

This bill is not a wholesale revision of the Act. It has substantive changes for riparian management standards applying to Region III only. Other technical revisions include changes to the statewide nomenclature for waterbody classes to prevent confusion between waterbody types in different regions. The bill also moves definitions of regional boundaries from the regulations to the Act and makes a minor change to the regional boundary on the Kenai Peninsula to better match the difference between forest types. Most forestland in the affected area is in federal ownership, so there will be minimal impact on other landowners.

SB 88 helps ensure that the FRPA continues to be certified for compliance with federal Clean Water Act and coastal zone management requirements. This means that the Act continues to provide “one-stop shopping” for the timber industry with respect to state and federal non-point source pollution and coastal management standards.

This bill is founded on the best science available including an extensive review of existing research and recommendations of an interdisciplinary Science & Technical Committee. The committee included experienced field staff from the state resource agencies and private sector as well as University of Alaska and federal scientists.

An Implementation Group that included representatives of the timber and fishing industries, Native corporations and environmental groups drafted language to implement the scientists' recommendations in a practical manner that works in the field. This bill is unanimously endorsed by the Board of Forestry and has support from a broad array of interest groups.