

ALASKA STATE SENATE



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Senator Ralph Seekins
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Senate Bill 147 Sponsor Statement

“An Act providing for a sport fishing facility surcharge on sport fishing licenses; providing for the construction and renovation of state sport fishing facilities and for other projects beneficial to the sport fish resources of the state as a public enterprise; and authorizing the issuance of revenue bonds to finance those projects.”

Alaska has an ever-growing demand for fish stocks. More people want to fish. Resident populations are growing. Tourist demand for recreational opportunity is increasing. And, at the same time, sport fish production is decreasing. Alaska’s only sport fish hatcheries are located at Ft. Richardson and Elmendorf A.F.B. Both are more than 30 years old and nearing the end of their useful life.

To make matters worse, biomass production will soon plummet. Hatcheries require warm water to enhance growth in baby fish. Waste heat from the Ft. Richardson and Elmendorf power plants has provided that energy for many years. Both power plants will be shutting down hot water production in October. As a result, biomass production will suffer greatly at the same time that demand is increasing.

We can fix this problem and plan for years to come. Senate Bill 147 provides for the renovation and expansion of the Ft. Richardson and Elmendorf facilities to meet south central needs. Furthermore, it will also provide for a new hatchery in Fairbanks to meet the demands of the interior regions.

It won’t be cheap but it is affordable. Federal funds have been procured to meet increased demand due to military expansion. Other capital costs will be met by a simple revenue bond package. A modest “fishery enhancement fee” will be added to the price of a fishing license until the bonds are paid off. The combined price of a fishing license and the enhancement fee will still be a bargain – especially when a person can actually expect to catch fish.

Alternatively, we could do nothing. But doing nothing is not an acceptable option for it only leads to substantially reduced fish stocks in our lakes and streams. Our current fresh water hatcheries will be out of commission soon. With passage of Senate Bill 147 we can avoid disaster, satisfy current needs and provide modern facilities that can be expanded to meet expected demand for generations to come.