

# Sponsor Statement

## SB 23

**“An Act relating to public rights-of-way and easements for surface transportation affecting the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.”**

In 1971, the Alaska State Legislature created the Potter Point State Game refuge, later expanding it to form the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge in 1988. The Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (ACWR) runs 16 miles along Anchorage’s coastline, from Point Woronzof to Potter Marsh. The ACWR is one of the few coastal salt marshes in Cook Inlet, in part because Fire Island protects the refuge from the ice scour that ravages other Cook Inlet shorelines. It is a very popular, multiuse area for Anchorage residents that provides the opportunity for duck hunting, bird and wildlife viewing, and other outdoor recreational activities, including the Anchorage Rabbit Creek Rifle Range.

[Senate Bill 23](#) will require approval by the legislature for a state agency to acquire or create a right-of-way or other easement for surface transportation within the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. This legislation is a rewrite similar to the legislation sponsored by Representative Joe Green during the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> legislatures; both of which were supported by the legislature but vetoed by the previous Administration. Senate Bill 23 reaffirms the support by the past legislatures and by many Anchorage residents for legislative oversight for the refuge.

The proposed extension of the coastal trail in Anchorage has been a very controversial issue among Anchorage residents during the past several years. The public process for the route selection appears to have been biased and has lost the credibility of many residents, including those who live away from the refuge. The legislature is the elected body that authorizes the expenditure of federal funds for projects such as this one and therefore should have authorization of the projects it funds. Senate Bill 23 enables the legislature to fulfill its constitutional duty by ensuring that state and federal funds are spent appropriately and that the legitimacy of the public process is protected.