

## Sponsor Statement

### SB 295

Senate Bill 295: "An Act extending the termination date of the Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

Sponsor: Senator Gene Therriault

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[Senate Bill 295](#) would extend the life of the Joint Federal and State Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska until 2006.

The commission's purpose is to expedite the title process to the state's submerged lands, to determine which bodies of water are navigable or non-navigable, and to recommend ways to improve the water navigability determination process and quickly clear title to the state's submerged lands. It would consist of seven federal and seven state representatives.

At statehood, Alaska was granted title to all the submerged land under the state's navigable waters and marine waters out to three miles off shore, with the exception of federal land withdrawn at statehood. But the state and federal governments have been locked in a decades-old dispute over which waters are navigable, and fewer than 20 rivers have been deemed navigable by federal courts. The ownership of more than 60 million acres is at stake.

In 2002, the Twenty-Second Alaska State Legislature passed [Senate Bill 219](#) to authorize the state's portion of the commission. Unfortunately, the federal authorization did not pass that year, and the state's authorization is now set to expire. Senate Bill 295 will extend the sunset date for an additional two years in the hope that federal lawmakers will grant the federal authorization needed to create this commission.