

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



Official Business

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- Co-Chair, Senate Resources Committee
- Co-Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
- Vice-Chair, Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee
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Session: January – May

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SJR 26

SALMON ENHANCEMENT IN WILDERNESS AREAS

For about 30 years the Department of Fish and Game, in cooperation with Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association have stocked Tustumena Lake with Sockeye salmon. 6 million salmon fry are dumped into the lake every year in early spring where they stay for a year and follow the regular cycle of a salmon; swim out to the Cook Inlet, mature, then return to Tustumena Lake.

On December 30, 2003 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decided that the salmon stocking enhancement project in Tustumena Lake is an improper commercial activity-taking place inside a wilderness area, which violates the Wilderness Act. Tustumena Lake falls within the Wilderness area set out in the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act as part of the Wilderness System initially created in 1964, but the Hatchery and areas where the various fisheries take place are outside of the area.

This enhancement program was designed to smooth out those times when the numbers of fish returning to this region are low. It was not designed to add income to commercial fisheries, although they do benefit from the program, as do others.

[SJR 26](#) requests that the federal defendants in this case seek an immediate temporary stay of the Ninth Circuit Court decision to allow for this established enhancement program to continue until the appeal process is completed. SJR 26 also requests that the Department of the Interior and the United States Department of Justice support appealing this far-reaching decision made by the court. If the decision is not stayed and reversed, 6 million salmon fry will have to be disposed of, and in future years there will not be the cushion those salmon provide. It will also set a strict guideline for what constitutes a commercial activity, which will affect more than just the Kenai Peninsula, commercial fishing and the State of Alaska.