

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

Aquatic Invasive Species

Sponsor Statement

“An act relating to the response to, and control of, aquatic invasive species; establishing the aquatic invasive species response fund and relating to the provision of information about aquatic invasive species to users of the Alaska Marine Highway System.”

HB177 provides the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) with the statutory authority, and a fund, to swiftly address outbreaks of aquatic invasive species such as Dvex.

Didemnum vexillum (Dvex), also known as Sea Vomit, is an aggressive tunicate invader that grows rapidly and has few known natural predators. It creates metabolic toxins that help it smother substrates and other organisms to create monoculture infestations from intertidal, subtidal to deep sea habitats. As demonstrated in a recent infestation in Whiting Harbor near Sitka, the rapid spread of Dvex is a threat to the mariculture industry, commercial fisheries and ecosystem integrity.

HB177 gives ADF&G the authority to use chemical, biological, mechanical, or physical methods to deal with the outbreak. It allows for expedited review of plans for dealing with invasive species, and directs ADF&G staff to prioritize eradication of the invasive species over other management issues for a specific area.

Additionally, the bill directs the commissioner of transportation and public facilities to provide any person transporting a vessel on the Alaska Marine Highway System with a pamphlet relating to aquatic invasive species. This important low cost preventative measure can be used educate travelers to Alaska about the potential for harm should they bring an invasive species with them during transport.