

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

HOUSE BILL 54 **Version W**

"An Act establishing the Alaska Invasive Species Council in the Department of Fish and Game; relating to management of invasive species; relating to invasive species management decals; and providing for an effective date."

SPONSOR STATEMENT (Revised 1.28.21)

Invasive species are costing Alaska money (Almost \$6 million a year to manage according to a 2012 ISER study) and damaging some of our most important resources. Whether it is the devastation of the Alexander Creek king salmon by northern pike, the degradation of salmon habitat by elodea, orange hawkweed over taking roadways, or the blanketing of Whiting Harbor by *Didemnum Vexillum* (Dvex), the impact of invasive species in the state is substantial and getting worse. House Bill 54 will help improve the prevention, eradication, and control of invasive species in Alaska.

It is important to note that Alaska also has an advantage over other states in the United States. We are relatively isolated and invasive species have just begun to spread in the state. It was estimated in 2005 that invasive species cost the United States \$120 billion in damages every year according to a US Fish and Wildlife Fact Sheet on the Cost of Invasive Species. Alaska only accounts for a small portion of these damages and now is the time to address invasive species.

House Bill 54 will establish an Invasive Species Council of experts with the purpose of advising the Department of Fish and Game on the best means to manage invasive species in Alaska. In addition, the bill will create and provide for the sale of invasive species management decals and establish an invasive species response fund to provide the means and revenue for the management of invasive species.

By establishing the council, creating a fund, and providing revenue, this bill will allow Alaska to manage invasive species more effectively. Currently there are numerous departments, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and others working to manage invasive species in Alaska, but they are not as well coordinated as they could be. This bill will result in a better coordination of the management activities, clearer strategies, and policies to address invasive species, while saving that state money because of the involvement of volunteer experts.

Ultimately, House Bill 54 will streamline the management of invasive species in Alaska before they further devastate Alaska's resources and become more costly to manage.