



Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • January 28, 2004

New Bills Benefit Fish Consumers

Senator Kim Elton draws contrast between farmed and wild salmon

JUNEAU – Alaska fish consumers get a heads up when peddlers of farmed or genetically modified fish are trolling for customers in Alaska under the provisions of a pair of Senate bills introduced today.

Senate Bill 282, introduced by Senate Democratic Whip Kim Elton (D-Juneau), requires Alaska restaurant menus to identify if fish is wild or farmed. State law already provides that farmed fish be identified on the label when the fish is sold at the retail level. Senate Bill 281, also introduced by Sen. Elton, requires retail package labels to identify fish or fish products that are genetically modified.

“Recent reports in the scientific and general media focus on increased toxin loads in farmed fish and environmental degradation near fish farm sites,” Elton said. “Restaurant consumers in Alaska deserve the same notice as retail consumers when they make purchase decisions based on whether the fish is farmed or wild.”

SB281 is similar to legislation introduced in other fish-conscious states. It requires retailers to identify fish and shellfish or fish and shellfish products whose genetic structure has been altered by means not possible under natural conditions.

“These fish are commonly called Frankenfish,” Elton said. “Consumer and environmental groups are legitimately concerned about genetically modified foods, including fish. The scientific community also has significant questions about problems associated with escaped genetically modified fish affecting wild stocks.” Genetically modified fish are not now allowed in U.S. markets but an application for genetically modified salmon is before the Food and Drug Administration.

Both labeling bills were unanimously supported by the Joint Legislative Salmon Industry Task Force comprised of legislators, seafood harvesters and seafood processors. Sen. Elton has served on the task force since its inception and is co-chair of the task force’s marketing and quality committee.

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