



# Alaska State Legislature House and Senate Democrats

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## *Stream Bank Exchange*

### *Gara angles to protect public access to fishing and recreational rivers*

JUNEAU – Representative Les Gara (D-Anchorage) today introduced House Bill 308, a bill to ensure future public access to Alaska's fishing streams. The bill would encourage voluntary land trade deals between the State and private owners along important recreational rivers. The program would be facilitated by the Department of Natural Resources and would be completely voluntary. It would not take land away from citizens who don't want to trade for other public land of equal value.

"Alaska's rivers are a treasured resource for fishermen, boaters, hunters, hikers, and people of all walks of life. We need to protect the public's access to them," said Gara.

There are currently large stretches of private land on rivers like the Anchor, Deep Creek, Parks Highway Streams, and others throughout the state: "Today the public uses these streams, and has access to them. Once they're developed, we'll never be able to afford to get them back," Gara explained. In Montana, for example, fishermen have to pay for public access to some rivers. One hundred eighty miles of the Missouri River have been lost to public access, and that state now budgets \$300,000 per year to buy back parcels of riverbank land.

HB308 will help insure that unparalleled recreational opportunities in our vibrant river corridors remain accessible, for our own and for future generations.

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## *Putting Alaskans First • Moving Alaska Forward 2003*

Sen. Bettye Davis, Sen. Johnny Ellis, Sen. Kim Elton, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, Sen. Hollis French, Sen. Gretchen Guess, Sen. Georgianna Lincoln, Sen. Donny Olson, Rep. Ethan Berkowitz, Rep. Sharon Cissna, Rep. Harry Crawford, Rep. Eric Croft, Rep. Les Gara, Rep. Max Gruenberg, Rep. David Guttenberg, Rep. Reggie Joule, Rep. Mary Kapsner, Rep. Beth Kerttula, Rep. Albert Kookesh, Rep. Carl Moses