

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA

## **HB 308: Streambank Land Exchange**

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. House Bill 308 aims to ensure future public access to Alaska's fishing streams by putting in place a mechanism for 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.

There are currently large stretches of private land on streams such as the Anchor River, Deep Creek, Parks Highway Streams, the Salcha River 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. 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.