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# RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

May 7, 2023

Submitted electronically to: [House.Resources@akleg.gov](mailto:House.Resources@akleg.gov)

House Resources Committee  
State of Alaska Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

Re: Support for SB 92, state ownership of submerged land

Dear Chair McKay, Vice Chair Rauscher, and Members of the Committee:

The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) writes in support of SB 92, an act relating to state ownership of submerged land underlying navigable water within the boundaries of federal areas. RDC is a statewide trade association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries. RDC's membership also includes Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. Since 1975, RDC's purpose has been to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through our mission of growing Alaska through responsible resource development. Access to our bountiful resources has always been a critical issue for RDC and its members.

SB 92, as amended, presents a much needed clarification for the state's rights of ownership and management of its submerged lands under navigable waters in federally controlled areas within Alaska. According to the State Department of Natural Resources, only 9% of an estimated more than 800,000 river miles and approximately 16% of 30 million acres under lakes have been recognized as state-owned by the federal government since statehood. Codification of SB 92 will create a more timely resolution to these remaining title questions that otherwise must be resolved piecemeal through a lengthy federal administrative process, costly litigation, or both.

Ever since the U.S. Supreme Court (*twice*) resolved the question of Alaskan's right of access in these areas in *Sturgeon v. Frost*, there has been little interest from federal agencies to allow for a smooth transition and recognition of the State's rights in this regard. SB 92 addresses important issues of access and management of state-owned submerged lands under rivers, lakes, and tidelands, in areas such as national parks and preserves, national wildlife refuges, areas managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife and others. After more than 60 years of fighting these access rights, it is time to take more assertive control in resolving the state's title for these lands.

For these reasons, RDC supports passage of SB 92. Please feel free to share our position with your colleagues as this bill progresses. Thank you for your leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Leila Kimbrell  
Executive Director

