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STATE OF WASHINGTON
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

January 19, 2020

The Honorable Representative Geran Tarr
State of Alaska Legislature
Room 126 Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Tarr:

On behalf of the Washington Invasive Species Council, I am writing to express strong support for House Bill number 54, which establishes the Alaska Invasive Species Council.

Alaska and Washington face similar issues, including prevention and rapid response to invasive species that have not yet become widely established in our jurisdictions, and long-term management of species that are more well established. For the protection of our individual, regional and national natural and cultural resources, economies, human health, and infrastructure; we believe it is imperative that each state have a strong invasive species strategy and coordinating body. The largely intact natural landscape and diverse natural resource economy of Alaska is extremely vulnerable to the often-irreparable impacts from invasive species.

The Washington State Legislature established the Washington Invasive Species Council in 2006 to develop and implement a strategic approach to prevent and control invasive species that threaten Washington's environment and economy. In our experience, a council can prevent millions in damage and loss by breaking through organizational silos and providing a forum for agencies, user groups, and stakeholders to collaborate, set policy, and share successful approaches. Every organization has a slightly different mission, but an invasive species council unites all, looks at the big picture, and fills in the gaps that individual agencies would be unable to cover.

When prevention fails, an invasive species council provides efficient and effective rapid response capabilities through working relationships established well before the emergency. Successfully containing and eradicating a new invasive species is often beyond the capability of a single organization. An invasive species council can leverage the knowledge and resources of the whole community to address a shared problem before substantial impacts and the need for recovery.

If we may show additional support or answer any questions, please contact me at justin.bush@rco.wa.gov or 360-902-3088.

Justin D. Bush, Executive Coordinator
Washington Invasive Species Council