

Murkowski Seeks Fishing Boat Exemption From Act

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{audio}/images/stories/mp3/080715.cleanboatingact.mp3{/audio}

Jay Barrett/KMXT

About

10-thousand commercial fishing boats in Alaska could be subject to new, far stricter environmental rules if legislation in the U.S. Senate eventually passes. But right now, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski has put a hold on what is known as the Clean Boating Bill, because she says exemptions for pleasure boats need to be extended to smaller fishing boats, too.

-- (Boats 1 20
sec "and...
they cannot handle a bureaucratic noose like this.")

What

Murkowski would like is an exemption for fishing under 125-feet in length. But as the bill reads now, all pleasure boats would be exempt from the Environmental Protection Agency's new rules, even the 400-foot mega-yacht of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. However no commercial fishing boat would be exempt, whether it's a factory trawler in the Bering Sea or a seine skiff in Southeast.

-- (Boats 2 38
sec “…
they just weren’t willing to go there.”)

As written,
the Clean Boating Act could be interpreted to require an EPA permit even for
the water that comes off the deck of a fishing boat as it’s being washed down
in port.

-- (Boats 3 30
sec “…
and any manner of operation.”)

Murkowski
has gotten some heat from pleasure boating enthusiasts – and their
representatives in Congress – for putting the hold on the legislation while she
works on getting an exemption for commercial fishing boats. She said if she
fails to get the exemption affixed to the Clean Boating Act in the next few
weeks, she’ll have to sponsor new legislation, which would likely be harder to
pass, and might not come until after the damage to the fishing fleet is already
done.

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