

**Alaska Trappers Association
PO Box 82177
Fairbanks, AK 99708**

**Linda Menard
Alaska State Senator
State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau, AK 99801**

February 2, 2012

Re: SB 159 – Susitna State Forest

Dear Senator Menard:

The Alaska Trappers Association is a statewide organization with nearly one thousand members. We are active in Alaska wildlife issues and other resource conservation efforts. We support a very active trapper education program.

ATA supports the CONCEPT of a fourth state forest, but we have serious concerns about how this might affect other consumptive resource use, particularly trapping. Our concern stems primarily from experience with the way that the planning process for the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF) in Interior Alaska was politically manipulated by Governor Knowles.

Title 41 (specifically AS 41.17.200) makes it quite clear that the primary purpose of any state forest is to provide a timber base and the opportunity for active forest management and timber harvest. We support and applaud this goal. However, the TVSF Citizens Advisory Committee (a quasi-public agency) was stacked with non-consumptive users and allowed to corrupt and control the planning process to minimize logging, hunting, trapping and motorized access. That serious and systemic problem was exactly what happened when the TVSF Management Plan was rewritten. Environmental groups (enabled, supported and encouraged by the Governor's Office) tied up the planning process for years and manipulated the process. The Governor's Office, rather than the State Forester's

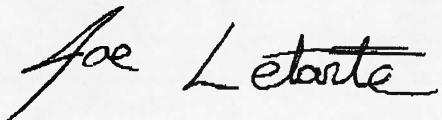
Office, controlled which specific individuals were appointed to the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Thus, before we can wholeheartedly support your bill, we would prefer to see included some language to prevent or at least minimize this type of political manipulation of the planning process and attempts to preclude the very consumptive uses the State Forest was established to protect. This might entail a slight change to AS 41.17.200. Or perhaps it could be handled with a very clear statement of legislative intent. At a minimum, public discussion during the legislative process regarding this bill should thoroughly air and review the process that took place during the rewriting of the TVSF Management Plan.

Once this concern is addressed, we will be glad to comment on specific acreages and areas proposed for inclusion. However, until we can be sure that trapping (and timber harvest, for that matter) are really protected, we support only the CONCEPT of establishing the Susitna State Forest.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposal to establish a Susitna State Forest in South-Central Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Letarte".

**Joe Letarte, President
Alaska Trappers Association**