



Alaska Conservation Alliance

Uniting for Alaska's Future

March 13, 2009

State House of Representatives
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Representatives Coghill and Kawasaki,

On behalf of the 40 conservation groups and the 38,000 Alaskans that are represented by the Alaska Conservation Alliance, I am pleased to acknowledge our strong support for HB121 allowing municipalities to offer property tax credits for reductions in emissions. Offering an incentive to decrease emissions rewards pro-active Alaskans without penalizing others. Current tools available to municipalities to reduce emissions are limited to banning certain actions and other punitive measures and without this change to Title 29, municipalities are missing a very useful tool to use to become compliant with the clean air act.

HB121 could help reduce harmful levels of PM_{2.5} in the air. PM_{2.5} is particulate matter that is 2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller, less than 1/10 of the diameter of a single strand of hair. This type of air pollution is unhealthy to breath because of its small size. The particles can travel deep into the respiratory tract to the lungs and has been associated with short-term health effects such as eye, nose, throat and lung irritation, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and shortness of breath. Studies also suggest that long term exposure to fine particulate matter may be associated with increased rates of chronic bronchitis, reduced lung function and increased mortality from lung cancer and heart disease. People with breathing and heart problems, children and the elderly may be particularly sensitive to PM_{2.5}. While there are many difference sources of pollution, HB121 would address the PM_{2.5} pollution coming from the burning of wood, heating oil, coal and natural gas in Alaskan homes.

In March 2007 the EPA set new requirements for air quality – defining those areas not meeting national PM_{2.5} air quality standards for over 3 years as “non-attainment” areas. Currently there are two areas designated as non-attainment in Alaska - Fairbanks and Juneau. States must submit an implementation plan to the EPA for these non-attainment areas to show how they will address PM_{2.5} levels. By allowing these and other municipalities an additional method for controlling air pollution they can potentially avoid the health and economic consequences of a non-attainment listing. HB121 does not *require* municipalities to make any change but simply puts an additional tool into the toolbox.

In conclusion, we support this bill as a way to encourage better air quality through incentives, should the municipalities choose to use it. The Alaska Conservation Alliance strongly encourages the Alaska Legislature to pass HB 121. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Troll".

Kate Troll
Executive Director

CC: House Finance Committee