

CITY OF SEWARD
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March 10, 2009

The Honorable Mark Neuman
Co-Chair, House Resources Committee
State Capitol, Room 432
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB 134 An Act relating to the terms and conditions of commercial passenger vessel permits for the discharge of graywater, treated sewage, and other wastewater

Dear Chairman Neuman:

We are writing to express our support for HB 134 as originally proposed, and our concern with Representative Seaton's pending amendment. We appreciate your request for input from impacted communities.

As you know, the original intent of HB 134 was giving ADEC the authority to examine all options for protecting our water and marine environment and using the best science available to establish appropriate and effective wastewater discharge standards for cruise ships. While we support efforts to improve the environment, in our opinion, the amendment from Representative Seaton departs from that intent in a couple of ways.

The amendment appears to make significant changes in environmental policies for coastal communities without seeking input from the coastal communities which would be affected. The top priorities in our community for use of the cruise ship head tax revenue are improvements that make Seward a better port for cruise ships and their passengers. The proposed amendment limits our ability to accomplish needed port infrastructure because a substantial portion of the revenues is redirected- to a purpose not prioritized by Seward. The amendment will almost certainly increase community operating costs for wastewater treatment plants - i.e., it is an unfunded (state) government mandate.

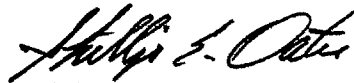
It is also important to remember that future court action could find that many current appropriations of the regional impact tax are not legal. The State or communities could conceivably be required to return improperly expended funds to the passengers who paid the taxes.

As you know, we have a public and open process to identify and prioritize local capital improvement projects. With input from the public, we have developed the priorities that we believe will improve services to cruise ships, their passengers, and our communities. With declining oil revenue and limited budgets, it is safe to say that upgrading municipal wastewater treatment plants to ultra high standards would not be the top priority of the majority of our residents.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request you oppose the amendment and move the bill from committee in its current form. Thank you for your consideration.



Clark Corbridge
Mayor, City of Seward



Phillip Oates
City Manager

cc: House Resources Committee