

Testimony
Before the Alaska House Resources Committee
On
HB 105: Authorizing Additions to the Southeast State Forest
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I am Wayne R. Nicolls, I live in Juneau. I am retired after 37 years with the US Forest Service. I am a 50-year member of the Society of American Foresters and I continue my education efforts to qualify as a Certified Forester. I am also a member of the Alaska Board of Forestry.

This statement in support of HB 105 is in behalf of myself as an individual, not as a spokesman for any organization.

The addition of some 23,000 acres to the Southeast State Forest will total nearly 50,000 acres. The legislature and administration are to be complimented for their foresight in establishing the Southeast State Forest and I urge that they exercise that same foresight in enlarging it.

As I indicated last year during deliberations that led to the establishment of the SE State Forest, designation of lands as such elevates their status above mere state ownership. It justifies prudent investments via cultural treatment of the forest stands and establishment of infrastructure to facilitate their management and multiple public use.

While much current focus is on logging, resultant employment, and current economic results of state management, the real benefit is long term through subsequent management and use over many decades, possibly a century or more. These long term benefits far outweigh short term wood harvest benefits.

I have only heard one argument for deletion of certain tracts on the basis that they contain considerable old growth. Thus should remain outside the state forest. This is some sort of reverse logic. The argument is without merit because as the land is already owned by the state it can be harvested. It just is not feasible to invest management effort subsequently. Not including it in the state forest does nothing to protect it from logging if that is the objective.

Contrary to some popular belief, old growth is not the epitome of wildlife habitat. Carefully managed forest land through vegetation manipulation can improve habitat. It can increase carrying capacity for deer and other species. It can even improve fish habitat as has been proven by research in the past decade or two. Preaching that old growth must be preserved to benefit wildlife is shallow logic. The effort opposing inclusion in state forest would best be devoted to acquiring current scientific knowledge and advocating conservation through forest management..

Back to the primary reason for my appearance, I urge the committee to quickly move HB 105 toward passage making the most of your shortened time to conduct business. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

Wayne R. Nicolls
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