



SITKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

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March 16, 2011

The Honorable Peggy Wilson
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 408
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Wilson:

The Sitka Economic Development Association is writing to express support for House Joint Resolution 20 regarding the affects of the Roadless Rule on hydro-electric projects located within the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

Development of additional hydro-electric capacity in Southeast Alaska is vital to the region's economy and to the long-term health of the National Forests in question.

The financial, national security and environmental costs associated with the use of fossil fuels make development of hydro-electricity in Southeast Alaska the obvious course of action. Unlike the large hydro-electric dams of the lower-48 states, the hydro-electric dams of Southeast Alaska are based on alpine lake systems that are renewed by abundant annual rainfall and are relatively environmentally friendly, especially when compared with the continued burning of diesel for generating electricity.

It is ironic and extremely frustrating that at the same time the Federal Government is supporting and pushing for the development of renewable energy projects it is also creating obstacles and barriers that prevent such development. Placing the Tongass and Chugach National Forests under the constraints of the Roadless Rule will effectively make hydro-electric development in these areas impossible due to increased costs and regulatory burden.

The expansion of Sitka's Blue Lake dam has been in the planning stages for a number of years and construction is scheduled to begin early in 2012. The implementation of the Roadless Rule has already created problems for this project by prohibiting the removal of a stand of trees that would be underwater when the level of Blue Lake is raised, creating a turbidity issue that will costs millions of additional dollars to resolve.

SEDA's top strategic priority is to support the development of renewable energy resources in Sitka and Southeast Alaska. Without increased hydro-electric capacity, sustaining our current level of economic activity will be challenging at best and new economic development will be virtually impossible.

SEDA, therefore, strongly supports HJR 20.

Sincerely,

Garry A. White, Executive Director