

***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

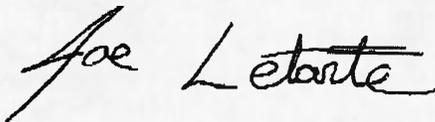
Office, controlled which specific individuals were appointed to the Citizens' Advisory Committee.

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 cursive script that reads "Joe Letarte". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

**Joe Letarte, President
Alaska Trappers Association**



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of the Borough Manager

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Phone (907) 745-9689 • Fax (907) 745-9669

John.Moosey@matsugov.us

January 18, 2012

The Honorable Senator Linda Menard
Alaska State Capitol
Room 9
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Menard,

I am very pleased to send a letter of support for Senate Bill 159 which will establish the Susitna State Forest. This bill will establish a new State Forest from state lands presently used for timber harvest. The Division of Forestry will be able to manage the State Forest for a long-term supply of timber to local processors, and retain the land in state ownership for multiple uses.

The Mat-Su Borough and its residents will benefit from a state forest in the form of an economic boost from a sustainable supply of timber from the state timber base. The Susitna State Forest would be managed as part of the State Forest System and would be open for multiple uses, including wildlife habitat, harvest, and recreational activities.

Demand for state timber sales is steady and growing, and personal use sales for fuel wood have also increased. Local mills depend heavily on state timber for their raw material supply and there is a growing interest in the use of wood in the form of round wood, chips or wood pellets for both commercial and residential space heating. At the same time, active management will also help reduce wild land fire risk by breaking up large fuel types and encouraging initial regeneration by hardwood species.

Thank you for the opportunity to endorse this project. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

John M. Moosey
Borough Manager

JM/al



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January 19, 2012

Senators Joe Paskvan and Tom Wagoner
Co-Chairs, Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 159, Susitna State Forest

Dear Senators Paskvan and Wagoner:

The Resource Development Council (RDC) is writing to support Senate Bill 159, which would create the Susitna State Forest over 763,200 acres of state land west of the Parks Highway.

RDC is a statewide, non-profit, membership-funded organization founded in 1975. The RDC membership is comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's oil and gas, mining, timber, tourism, and fisheries industries, as well as Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to link these diverse interests together to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources currently manages 9.5 million acres of forest land in the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys. Of this land, timber management is allowed on approximately 2.1 million acres. Remaining land is designated for other uses, including land sales, recreation, water resources, and fish and wildlife habitat. Over 3.1 million acres is protected in legislatively-designated state parks, refuges, and public use areas.

The establishment of the Susitna State Forest would ensure that some land would remain available for long-term forest management. It would allow the Division of Forestry to more actively manage lands and vegetation to promote a variety of forest ages, which in turn would maximize the sustainable supply of timber from the state timber base and provide for more diverse and healthy habitats for wildlife. In addition, active management would also help reduce wildfire risk.

The Division of Forestry would manage the state forest for a long-term supply of timber to local processors and retain land in state ownership for other multiple uses. An enhanced long-term timber supply would help support the forest products industry, provide fuel for sustainable biomass energy projects, and create new jobs. It would also benefit the recreational sector as the state intends to develop access to the new state forest and encourage a broad range of multiple uses. These multiple uses, including annual timber harvests, would provide important economic opportunities to local communities, businesses, and residents.

It is important to keep in mind that SB 159 would establish a new state forest from state lands presently designated for forest management. The Susitna State Forest would be managed consistent with the management intent under the current Susitna Matanuska and the Southeast Susitna Area Plans. Alaska's Forest Resources Practices Act would apply to management activities on the forest and is designed to protect both fish habitat and water quality.

If established, the Susitna State Forest would be the fourth state forest in Alaska. RDC supports SB 159 and believes the proposed state forest will be of much benefit to the local economy – creating and sustaining much needed jobs in the forest products industry while providing many other opportunities. We urge the committee to pass SB 159.

Sincerely,



Carl Portman
Deputy Director

Cc: Senator Linda Menard
Chris Maisch, State Forester

Alaska Chapter SCI
PO Box 770511
Eagle River, AK 99577
(907) 980-9018



February 9, 2012

The Honorable Linda Menard
Alaska State Senate
120 4th St. Rm 9
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Menard:

The Alaska Chapter of SCI is in support of SB 159 and commends you for your foresight in introducing this necessary piece of legislation.

As you may or may not know, SCI Alaska Chapter is not only the leading hunter-conservationist organization in Alaska, but is also SCI's leading chapter throughout the SCI network which includes over 105 countries and 260 chapters. Our mission is to protect the freedom to hunt through political advocacy and action, support for sound, science based conservation and wildlife management, and through humanitarian services.

In reviewing SB 159 and the applicable statutory guidelines in Title 41, we may wish to suggest amendments as this bill works its way through the process. We have some concerns as to whether the simple set aside of lands into a state forest will bring about desired results.

Our first concern is that suitable habitat is maintained for wildlife upon which rests one of the primary impetuses for recreation in Alaska. This concern leads us to believe that the bill does not go far enough in sequestering the necessary habitat to sustain wildlife populations through the establishment of contiguous parcels of land.

Our other major concern involves management practices. Although some lands may not be suitable for the growth of marketable timber, we maintain that those lands are nonetheless important for this state forest designation. Most of Alaska's wildlife depends heavily upon successional plant life. 'Climax forests do not provide the same level of benefit as does new forest lands. Since we do not encourage the proliferation of fire any longer in this area due to a variety of concerns, it is important that harvest of climax forests be allowed to produce suitable habitat for wildlife.

We look forward to working with you on this legislation and thank you again for introducing it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Eddie Grasser'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Eddie Grasser
Director of Government Affairs

SCI's Top Gun Chapter