



March 19, 2014

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
Resource Committee Chairman
Alaska State Senate
Capitol Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Senate Bill 28 – Susitna State Forest

Dear Senator Giessel,

The mission of the Alaska State Chamber of Commerce (Alaska Chamber) is to promote a positive business environment in Alaska. The Alaska Chamber represents hundreds of businesses, manufacturers and local chambers from across Alaska. Our members support legislation that updates and clarifies laws, provides regulatory certainty, and that generally improves Alaska's business climate. The Alaska Chamber supports Senate Bill 28 (HB 28).

The Alaska Chamber supports increasing responsible natural resources development and production. Creation of a fourth State forest, as proposed in SB 28, is an excellent way for the State to provide economic development and job growth opportunities in the region. Additionally water, fish and wildlife in the forest ensuring will be actively managed maintaining and even enhancing those resources. Finally, creation of the Susitna forest will provide increased access for recreation, fire protection and other resource development projects.

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. 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.

The Susitna State Forest would be managed consistent with the management intent under the Susitna Matanuska and the Southeast Susitna Area Plans. The Alaska Forest Resources Practices Act would apply to management activities on the forest and is designed to protect both fish habitat and water quality.



The Alaska Chamber supports SB 28 because it will benefit the economy by allowing responsible resource development, increasing access for recreational, fire protection, and other economic development purposes all while maintaining and potentially improving the forest's water, fish, and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Rachael Petro', with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Rachael Petro
President/CEO