

Sponsored by: Mayor DeVilbiss and Assembly member Arvin
Amended: 03/18/14
Adopted: 03/18/14

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 14-030**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY SUPPORTING HOUSE BILL 79 AND SENATE BILL 28, ESTABLISHING THE SUSITNA STATE FOREST.

WHEREAS, the Alaska State Department of Natural Resources manages over 9.5 million acres of State land in the Borough, and timber harvesting is allowed on 2.1 million acres of this land; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 79 and Senate Bill 28 would establish a new Susitna State Forest from State lands presently classified in the Susitna-Matanuska and Southeast Susitna Area Plans for forest management; and

WHEREAS, demand for State timber sales is growing and personal use sales for fuelwood have increased in this region; and

WHEREAS, local mills depend heavily on State timber for their raw material and there is a growing interest in roundwood, wood chips or pellets for both commercial and residential heating; and

Whereas, other regions of the State with state forests have experienced both a diversification and increased economic activity that supports local communities; and

WHEREAS, the Susitna State Forest would include 20 parcels totaling approximately 686,800 acres; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska State Division of Forestry worked with the Division Mining, Land and Water Management to identify and exclude

lands that are priorities of the State land disposal program for both residential and agricultural purposes; and

WHEREAS, since 2009 the Division of Mining, Land and Water and Division of Forestry have held numerous public meetings in communities in the region, conducted webinars and given presentations to local governments and various organizations to discuss this proposal; and

WHEREAS, legislatively designating a State Forest would ensure that productive forest land will remain available for long-term forest management that will follow multiple use principles, and residents of the region will continue to have access to the range of uses and benefits they currently enjoy; and

WHEREAS, management of the forest will follow the regulations and best management practices required by the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act (FRPA) that is designed to protect water quality and fish habitat; and

WHEREAS, the Assembly requests the Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Susitna State Forest, which will replace the Susitna Forestry Guidelines, follow the format and management intent of the Forest Management Plan for the Tanana Valley State Forest; and

WHEREAS, the Division of Forestry has recently completed a forest mapping and inventory for the forest classified lands in the region, and this information will be used to determine allowable sustained yield harvests and inform the development of the Forest Management Plan; and


WHEREAS, the Susitna State Forest will encourage a mix of all season and winter only access development to the entire forest, and has recently begun work on the Little Susitna River ice bridge and winter road project that will access timber sales on state land, and facilitate development on Borough lands in the Fish Creek Block.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly supports the adoption of House Bill 79 and Senate Bill 28 establishing the Susitna State Forest.

Adopted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 18 day of March, 2014.


LARRY DEWILBISS, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk
(SEAL)

YES: Sykes, Beck, Arvin, Colligan, Colver, and Halter

NO: Salmon



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.



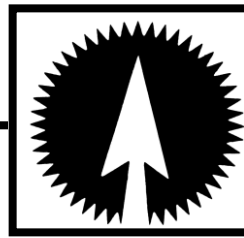
The Alaska Chamber supports SB 28 because it will benefit the economy by allowing responsible resource development, increasing access for recreational, fire protection, and other economic development purposes all while maintaining and potentially improving the forest's water, fish, and wildlife resources.

Sincerely,

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

Rachael Petro
President/CEO

Alaska Forest Association



111 Stedman Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901
Phone: 907-225-6114
Fax: 907-225-5920

February 21, 2014

Dear Governor Parnell,

The Alaska Forest Association (AFA) has been the primary timber industry association in Alaska since 1957. Our Association mission is to help restore and sustain a viable timber industry in Alaska and to insure our industry members operate their businesses in a responsible manner. AFA maintains a Health Insurance program, a Pension plan, a Scholarship program and AFA sponsors the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program in Alaska

The Alaska Forest Association supports HB 79 – SB 28, which establishes a 763,200 acre Susitna State Forest. Enactment of this State Forest will foster the creation of additional jobs in this region, as explained in the 2012 Jobs and Timber Task Force report.

A stable supply of timber is a necessity for a successful wood manufacturing facility not just to enable financing, but also to attract and maintain a solid customer base. Different sizes, species and quality of trees are suitable for different wood products and a more substantial timber sale program would sustain the existing sawmills and could support more diverse wood products manufacturing facilities as well. Establishment of the Susitna State Forest will enable the State Division of Forestry to manage a larger, more reliable timber sale program that can increase the amount of timber manufacturing and related jobs in this region.

Over the last twenty years the Forest Service has downsized the federal timber sale program in Southeast Alaska by about 90%. Although the State currently manages only about 1% of the timberland in the region, the State timber sale program is very well managed and the State timber sales have allowed at least a few small, and one mid-size sawmill to survive. We are supporting efforts to significantly increase the size of the State Forests in Southeast Alaska because we have confidence in the States forestry program. We are similarly confident that the State will effectively manage the Susitna State Forest lands.

We also believe that the management requirements of the Alaska Forest Practices Act will insure that the water, fish and wildlife in the Susitna State Forest will be maintained and even enhanced, just as they have been in the State Forests in Southeast Alaska. Further, the access that will be provided by the timber sale program will provide additional opportunities for recreation, fire protection and other resource development projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Owen Graham
Executive Director
Alaska Forest Association
111 Stedman Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901



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Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

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Congressman Don Young

Governor Sean Parnell

March 19, 2014

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair, Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Senate Bill 28, Susitna State Forest

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Resource Development Council (RDC) is writing to support SB 28, which would create the Susitna State Forest on 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 (DNR) currently manages 9.5 million acres of state land in the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys. The bill would establish the Susitna State Forest from land classified for forestry – lands managed by DNR for timber harvest and other multiple uses. Remaining land is designated for other uses, including land sales, recreation, water resources, agriculture, 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 large tracts of land would remain available for long-term forest management that maximizes the sustainable supply of timber from the state timber base; develops access and encourages a broad range of uses on state forest land, including motorized uses; and provides economic and recreational opportunities to communities, businesses, and residents.

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 help meet growing regional demand for state timber sales and personal use firewood harvesting. The state forest would also help meet increasing demand for logs, chips, and biomass feedstock for commercial, public school, residential space heating, and wood pellet manufacturing. Local processors depend on a stable long-term supply of state timber for their raw materials. In fact, a dependable long-term supply is required to justify major private investment in processing and manufacturing facilities or expansion of such facilities.

An enhanced long-term timber supply would not only help support the forest products industry, it would create new jobs, and provide important economic opportunities to local communities, businesses, and residents.

There has been some concern expressed by local residents and user groups that the proposed forest may block public access and traditional uses. RDC would not be supporting this bill if that were indeed the case. RDC has a long history of fighting for and preserving access to both federal and state land for the responsible development of natural resources, economic development, job creation, recreation, and traditional uses, including motorized uses. We would be writing in opposition to the bill if it were yet another impediment to access.

DNR is serious about developing access to a newly-designated state forest in the region, including an all-season road to the Little-Su, as well as a permanent bridge crossing. Clearly, the forest would be open for public use and enhance access, wildlife habitat management and harvest, and recreational activities.

Public access on state forests is typically greater than on other state land because active timber management requires expansion of the road system. Access is a major focus of the state forest planning process as plans provide detailed guidance on road design, construction, and maintenance. In fact, DNR has a demonstrated track record of providing access in state forests, with design and management tailored to the resource management needs of each forest.

It is important to keep in mind that SB 28 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, Susitna would be the fourth state forest in Alaska after the Haines, Tanana, and Southeast State forests. These land units have demonstrated that legislatively-designated forests are a desirable means of ensuring timberlands are available for management while allowing access for other uses.

RDC supports SB 28 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, including public access that doesn't exist today for other multiple uses. We urge the committee to pass SB 28.

Sincerely,



Carl Portman
Deputy Director

cc: Chris Maisch, State Forester
Sen. Mike Dunleavy
Sen. Charlie Huggins



February 22, 2013

Resolution:

The Yukon River Chapter of the Alaska Society of American Foresters supports the establishment of a Susitna Valley State Forest through HB79 and SB 28.

The Yukon River Chapter of the Alaska Society of American Foresters is confident that the establishment of the Susitna Valley State Forest will convey many benefits for generations to come. In Interior Alaska, the Tanana Valley State Forest offers watershed protection, numerous recreational opportunities, a source for local firewood and timber, and other benefits. By designating this land as a State Forest, these benefits will be protected in the future. With continued development in south-central Alaska, it is important to protect large tracts of forested land for responsible management and public use.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jessica Guritz", is positioned above the printed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jessica Guritz

Chair, Yukon River Chapter SAF