



Responsible Cruising in Alaska

House Resources Committee

Juneau, Alaska 99801

January 25, 2013

Testimony RE: HB 80, Cruise Ship Discharges

The preference of Responsible Cruising in Alaska is that cruise ships discharge only in federal waters, beyond the 3-mile state limit, where there are no direct salmon, whale or subsistence impacts in the coastal waters of Alaska.

Ship discharges in near shore and coastal waters pose a distinct risk to wild salmon populations. Of all the potentially toxic constituents in cruise ship wastewater, copper is the one heavy metal that is uniquely harmful to wild salmon at all their stages of development and in tiny concentration levels, a few parts per billion.

Metal polishing technology available today for large marine vessels will remove over 50% of the copper generated onboard, and many ships achieve better removal levels, but HB 80 would exempt the entire fleet from high Alaska water quality standards.

A very few older ships, primarily the Princess fleet, are riddled throughout with copper piping and also have small wastewater holding issues, yet their seven ships usually discharge into the Juneau treatment plant. The remaining 23 ship Alaska fleet is clean, nearly clean, or willing and able to discharge both solids and wastewater in federal waters.

That is the shame and irony of HB 80 - Alaska and the cruise industry have made great strides in 6 years to address legitimate wastewater issues, yet SB 29 throws the fleet laws and regulations aside to exempt a few Princess 'copper ships.' These ships will soon be exchanged and re-deployed for newer ships with plastic flex-pipe, eliminating the dissolved copper found onboard their fleet today. HB 80 is unnecessary legislation.

Copper is generated solely by leaching copper pipes on cruise ships. One huge factor causing copper leaching is water softener, but that product is deemed important for cruise passenger showers and shampoos.

Ships built 30+ years ago are copper-piped in over 1000 state-rooms, the galley, engine room, crew quarters, etc. These 'copper ships' have the highest copper counts in discharge waters, such as Princess Cruise Lines.

Conversely, all recently built cruise ships have plastic flex- pipes and generate the lowest copper counts from just water heaters and separators with copper piping, such as Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

HB 80 is unnecessary and puts at risk many salmon populations in state waters. Cruise ships are now legally permitted to discharge outside the 3 mile state limit, in federal waters, and Juneau has dock hookups for ships to discharge into the municipal water treatment plant. Princess Cruises uses the Juneau hookup daily during summer for their Alaska fleet of seven ships because, as noted, these ships are older, riddled with copper and have small wastewater holding tanks.

Responsible Cruising in Alaska wants cruise ships that must discharge in northern SE Alaska do so in the Juneau treatment plant and thus into one, municipal mixing zone that's been permitted by DEC without incident for 40 years. The alternative posed by HB 80 is that all of SE Alaska, Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet become cruise ship mixing zones, open for discharge whenever ships decide to do so.

HB 80 is looking for a problem that is already 95% solved. Wastewater discharge is available today in Juneau, and federal, offshore discharge for cruise waste solids is legal and permitted. I urge the committee to put aside HB 80 without making unnecessary exemptions to Alaska water quality standards for cruise ships.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Chip Thoma

Chip Thoma, President
Responsible Cruising in Alaska