

Dear Senator Kelly,

I am an Associate Professor of Regional & Land Use Planning in the School of Natural Resources and Extension at UAF, and am writing today to urge the Legislature to support completion funding for the BAKLAP capital project.

The project addresses two key Alaska State Constitutional mandates: sustained yield natural resource management (Article VIII) and public education at both the K-12 and university levels (Article VII). The integrated research-education-outreach approach that BAKLAP uses conforms to the best practices I teach in my land use and natural resource decision-making classes at the university.

I am impressed with the BAKLAP1's accomplishments in its first 21 months of existence. On the research side, BAKLAP1 completed the first systematic assessment of long-term growth on state timber harvest units in Interior Alaska. We've been waiting for this type of long-term, widespread assessment of forest stand types across the state forest for decades. Areas of increasing and decreasing forest growth potential have been identified, and plots with a long history of measurements have been renewed so that they may function long into the future. Taken together, these activities provide a strong foundation for sustained yield forest management. Considering the current interest in biomass, this is a particularly timely accomplishment.

On the K-12 STEAM Education side, the project worked with more than 850 students and 30 teachers in a dozen Fairbanks North Star Borough School District schools. Its emphasis on developing skills in scientific inquiry enhances critical thinking in our new generation. It also strengthens their ability to create new forest products and consider ways to start their own businesses, which is very exciting for young students.

With regard to K-20 STEAM, I lead the International Peace Corps Masters Program for the School of Natural Resources and Extension. Since BAKLAP's inception, six graduate students from my Peace Corps program have chosen to become "service learners" with BAKLAP's K-20 STEAM programs. These graduate students leverage the funding provided by the state by bringing their own fellowships to their internship service. They are very enthusiastic about the program, love working with the young students, and have really grown professionally through their participation in BAKLAP classrooms. Teachers, young students and graduate students collaborate and grow together through this energetic program.

It would be a shame to lose the momentum built on both sides of the project by stopping it prematurely. I realize this is a particularly difficult year for the Legislature and that financial constraints are a reality. Please make completion funding for BAKLAP2 a priority of the Legislature's version of the capital budget so that critical information for statewide forest management decisions and essential skills in scientific rigor, artistic expression and inspiration can continue for hundreds of our youth across Alaska.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Susan Todd