



January 23, 2013

Senator Cathy Giessel
Chair, Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 427
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

Thank you for scheduling SB 29, regarding Commercial Passenger Vessel permits. The Alaska Cruise Association supports the bill as a mechanism for the Administration to implement the findings of the science panel and allow DEC to issue permits in a consistent manner with other industries.

During the public debate over the 2006 ballot initiative, the initiative sponsors published several articles indicating the initiative would require, "cruise ships to meet and verify compliance with all Alaska pollution rules like every other industrial and municipal discharger." In fact, the language did the exact opposite. It held one industry to a standard that was proven to be unobtainable even with the most advanced treatment systems.

In 2009, many Alaskans requested the Legislature correct the statute and give DEC the ability to issue permits to the cruise industry in a manner which was consistent with "every other discharger." In fact, 45 statewide organizations, local organizations, and local governments across Alaska passed resolutions, requesting the Legislature act on this issue. Even though the Department of Environmental Conservation found that no technology could meet the initiative standards, the Legislature provided great deference to the ballot initiative process. They decided to create an independent science panel to study and draw their own conclusion.

During the last three years, we worked with the science panel, providing information about our current systems, work done to improve the performance on board, pilot projects and other efforts to look at new or modified technology, and the challenges with installing and operating equipment in a marine environment.

The panel findings confirmed that the industry still has the best available technology, which is far superior to municipal systems in Alaska. They also recognized that no system can meet the initiative standards and that there are significant challenges with adopting emerging land based technologies to ships. More importantly, they confirmed the treatment was at such a high level, the marine environment is currently protected

and there would be little, if any, additional environmental benefit in requiring the “point of discharge” standard.

There remains strong statewide support to amend the statutes and with the recent findings of the state’s panel of experts, there is even more scientific justification for the change. We would appreciate your support and early passage of the legislation in order to provide sufficient time for DEC to issue a permit for the 2013 season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Binkley", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

John Binkley
President
Alaska Cruise Association