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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

January 28, 2015

The Honorable Kevin Meyer
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear President Meyer:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18 of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to the sale of timber on State land. The bill would amend AS 38.05.110 and 38.05.118 to expand the authority of the Commissioner of Natural Resources to negotiate the sale of timber at appraised value.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may offer timber sales either through competitive bid or through negotiation. Currently under AS 38.05.118, the Commissioner of Natural Resources may negotiate the sale of timber to a local manufacturer at appraised value. However, negotiated sales larger than 500,000 board feet may only be offered in areas of high unemployment, excess manufacturing capacity, and an underutilized allowable cut of timber. These criteria prohibit larger negotiated timber sales in many areas of the state that are actively managed for forestry, and where there is high demand for wood for timber products and biomass energy. The proposed bill would provide that, in addition to sales to local manufacturers of wood products, sales may also be negotiated with users of wood fiber. This change clarifies that negotiated sales may be used to support wood energy production as well as traditional products. In addition, the bill would eliminate the current limitations that negotiated timber sales be based on a finding that in the area of the sale there is a high level of unemployment, an underutilized manufacturing capacity, and an underutilized supply of timber that will lose value if not cut. The requirement that all three conditions be met substantially limits the Commissioner of Natural Resources' authority and flexibility to approve negotiated sales that would be in the best interest of the State.

Competitively bid timber sales are the preferred sale method under most conditions. However, negotiated sales provide the ability to tailor some sales to the needs of local processors in areas that lack competitive interest or where there is competition from round log export markets in a region with a constrained timber supply. The latter situation exists in Southern Southeast Alaska where the State of Alaska is a small landowner compared to the Tongass National Forest, and the State of Alaska's full allowable cut is a critical source of logs for the remaining sawmills.

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The provisions in the bill would enable the Commissioner of Natural Resources to better respond to the economic and geographic realities of the forest products sector in our state's economy. All timber sales, including negotiated sales, must comply with the constitutional requirement to manage State timber for sustained yield.

I urge prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,



Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure