

SENATE BILL NO. 64

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR MICCICHE

Introduced: 2/17/17

Referred: Community and Regional Affairs, Labor and Commerce

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act adopting the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act; relating to environmental**
2 **real property covenants and notices of activity and use limitation at contaminated sites**
3 **to ensure the protection of human health, safety, and welfare, and the environment; and**
4 **providing for an effective date."**

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 * **Section 1.** AS 46.04 is amended by adding new sections to read:

7 **Article 2A. Uniform Environmental Covenants Act.**

8 **Sec. 46.04.300. Environmental covenant.** (a) An environmental covenant is
9 required if the department makes a remedial decision as part of an environmental
10 response project and that environmental response project results in

11 (1) residual contamination remaining in the environment in
12 concentrations that are safe for some, but not all, uses; or

13 (2) an engineered feature or structure that requires monitoring,
14 maintenance, or operation, or that will not function as intended if disturbed.

1 (b) An environmental covenant may be held by one or more holders. A holder
2 may own an interest in the real property subject to an environmental covenant. The
3 interest of a holder is an interest in real property.

4 (c) A right of the department under AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 or under an
5 environmental covenant, other than a right as a holder, is not an interest in real
6 property.

7 (d) The department is bound by any obligation it specifically assumes in an
8 environmental covenant, but the department does not assume obligations merely by
9 signing an environmental covenant. A person other than the department that signs an
10 environmental covenant is bound by the obligations the person assumes in the
11 environmental covenant, but signing the environmental covenant does not change
12 obligations, rights, or protections granted or imposed under law other than under
13 AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 unless otherwise provided in the environmental covenant.

14 (e) The following apply to interests in real property in existence at the time an
15 environmental covenant is created or amended:

16 (1) an interest that has priority under other law is not affected by an
17 environmental covenant unless the person that owns the interest subordinates that
18 interest to the environmental covenant;

19 (2) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not require a person that owns a prior
20 interest to subordinate that interest to an environmental covenant or to agree to be
21 bound by the environmental covenant;

22 (3) an environmental covenant may contain a subordination agreement,
23 or a subordination agreement may be contained in a separate record;

24 (4) the department may decide not to sign an environmental covenant
25 unless each person holding an interest in the land or any part of the land, including
26 each mortgagee, lessee, lienor, and encumbrancer, irrevocably subordinates the
27 interest to the environmental covenant; the department may waive the requirement in
28 this paragraph;

29 (5) an agreement by a person to subordinate a prior interest to an
30 environmental covenant affects the priority of that person's interest but does not by
31 itself impose any affirmative obligation on the person with respect to the

1 environmental covenant;

2 (6) if the environmental covenant covers commonly owned property in
3 a common interest community, the record may be signed by any person authorized by
4 the governing board of the owners' association.

5 **Sec. 46.04.305. Contents of environmental covenant.** (a) An environmental
6 covenant must

7 (1) state that the interest is an environmental covenant executed under
8 AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390;

9 (2) contain a legally sufficient description of the real property subject
10 to the environmental covenant;

11 (3) describe the activity and use limitations on the real property;

12 (4) identify every holder;

13 (5) be signed by the commissioner of the department, every holder,
14 and, unless waived by the department, every owner of the fee simple of the real
15 property subject to the environmental covenant except that for an environmental
16 covenant affecting a land or mineral interest of the Department of Natural Resources,
17 the signature of the commissioner of natural resources may not be waived; and

18 (6) identify the name and location of any administrative record for the
19 environmental response project reflected in the environmental covenant.

20 (b) In addition to the information required under (a) of this section, an
21 environmental covenant may contain other information, restrictions, and requirements
22 agreed to by the persons who signed it or required by the department, including

23 (1) requirements for notice following transfer of a specified interest in,
24 or concerning proposed changes in use of, applications for building permits for, or
25 proposals for any site work affecting the contamination on, the property subject to the
26 environmental covenant;

27 (2) requirements for periodic reporting describing compliance with the
28 environmental covenant;

29 (3) rights of access to the property granted in connection with
30 implementation or enforcement of the environmental covenant;

31 (4) a brief narrative description of the contamination and remedy,

1 including the contaminants of concern, the pathways of exposure, limits on exposure,
2 and the location and extent of the contamination;

3 (5) a limitation on the amendment or termination of the environmental
4 covenant that is in addition to the limitations contained in AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390;
5 and

6 (6) rights of the holder in addition to the right of the holder to enforce
7 the environmental covenant under AS 46.04.335.

8 (c) In addition to other conditions for the department's approval of an
9 environmental covenant, the department may require a specified person who has an
10 interest in the real property that is the subject of the environmental covenant to sign
11 the environmental covenant.

12 **Sec. 46.04.310. Validity of environmental covenant; effect on other**
13 **instruments.** (a) An environmental covenant entered into in accordance with
14 AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 runs with the land.

15 (b) An environmental covenant is valid and enforceable even if

16 (1) it is not appurtenant to an interest in real property;

17 (2) it can be or has been assigned to a person other than the original
18 holder;

19 (3) it is not of a character that has been traditionally recognized at
20 common law;

21 (4) it imposes a negative burden;

22 (5) it imposes an affirmative obligation on a person having an interest
23 in the real property or on the holder;

24 (6) the benefit or burden does not touch or concern real property;

25 (7) there is no privity of estate or contract;

26 (8) the holder dies, ceases to exist, resigns, or is replaced; or

27 (9) the owner of an interest subject to the environmental covenant and
28 the holder are the same person.

29 (c) An instrument that creates restrictions or obligations with respect to real
30 property that would qualify as activity and use limitations except for the fact that the
31 instrument was recorded before the effective date of AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 is not

invalid or unenforceable because of any of the limitations on enforcement of interests described in (b) of this section or because it was identified as an easement, servitude, deed restriction, or other interest. Except as provided in this section, AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not apply to an instrument described in this subsection.

(d) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not invalidate or render unenforceable any interest, whether designated as an environmental covenant or other interest, that is otherwise enforceable under the law of this state.

Sec. 46.04.315. Notice of environmental covenant. (a) A copy of the environmental covenant shall be provided by the persons and in the manner required by the department to

(1) each person that signed the environmental covenant;

(2) each person holding a recorded interest in the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

(3) each person in possession of the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

(4) each municipality or other unit of local government in which real property subject to the environmental covenant is located; and

(5) any other person the department requires.

(b) The validity of an environmental covenant is not affected by failure to provide a copy of the environmental covenant as required under this section.

Sec. 46.04.320. Recording of environmental covenant. (a) An environmental covenant and an amendment or termination of the environmental covenant must be recorded in every recording district in which any portion of the real property subject to the environmental covenant is located. For purposes of indexing, a holder shall be treated as a grantee.

(b) An owner of land may not record an environmental covenant unless the owner simultaneously records any subordination documentation required under AS 46.04.300(e).

(c) Except as otherwise provided in AS 46.04.325(f), an environmental covenant is subject to state law governing recording and priority of interests in real property.

(d) A holder shall provide a copy of the final recorded environmental covenant, an amendment made to the environmental covenant, termination documentation, and documentation of other matters related to the environmental covenant to the department.

Sec. 46.04.325. Duration; modification or termination of environmental covenant by administrative or court action. (a) An environmental covenant is perpetual unless it is

(1) by its terms, limited to a specific duration or terminated by the occurrence of a specific event;

(2) terminated by consent under AS 46.04.330;

(3) terminated under (b) or (e) of this section;

(4) terminated by foreclosure of an interest that has priority over the environmental covenant; or

(5) terminated or modified in an eminent domain proceeding, but only if

(A) the department is a party to the proceeding;

(B) every person whose consent is required under AS 46.04.330(a) is given notice of the pendency of the proceeding; and

(C) the court determines, after hearing, that the activity and use limitations subject to termination or modification are no longer required to protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

(b) The department may terminate or reduce the burden on the real property of an environmental covenant if the department finds that some or all of the activity and use limitations under the environmental covenant are no longer required to protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment, or modify the environmental covenant if the department determines that modification is required adequately to protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

(c) The department shall provide notice of any proposed action under (b) of this section to each person with a current recorded interest in the real property subject to the environmental covenant, each holder, all other persons who originally signed the environmental covenant, or their successors or assigns, and any other person with

1 rights or obligations under the environmental covenant. The department shall provide
2 60 days for comment on the proposed action by parties entitled to notice. A
3 determination by the department under this subsection is a final agency decision. Any
4 person entitled to notice under this subsection may request an adjudicatory hearing
5 under the procedures established by the department under AS 46.04.890.

6 (d) A person entitled to notice under (c) of this section may apply in writing to
7 the department for a determination under (b) of this section that an existing
8 environmental covenant be terminated, that the burden of an environmental covenant
9 be reduced, or that an environmental covenant be modified. The application must
10 specify the determination sought by the applicant, the reasons why the department
11 should make the determination, and the information that would support it. If the
12 department fails to begin a proceeding under (b) of this section within 90 days after
13 receiving the application, the applicant may bring a civil action in superior court for
14 termination, reduction of burden, or modification of the environmental covenant under
15 (e) of this section.

16 (e) The superior court for a recording district in which the real property
17 subject to an environmental covenant is located may, in a de novo action, under the
18 doctrine of changed circumstances, terminate an environmental covenant, reduce an
19 environmental covenant's burden on the real property, or modify the terms of an
20 environmental covenant if the department fails to begin a proceeding within 90 days as
21 provided under (d) of this section. The applicant under (d) of this section, a holder of
22 the environmental covenant, or another person identified in (c) of this section may
23 begin an action under this subsection. The person beginning the action shall serve
24 notice of the action on the department and any person entitled to notice under (c) of
25 this section. The person bringing the action shall make the department a party to the
26 action. The court shall terminate, reduce the burden of, or modify an environmental
27 covenant if the court determines that the person bringing the action shows that some or
28 all of the activity and use limitations under the environmental covenant do not or are
29 no longer required to protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

30 (f) An environmental covenant may not be extinguished, limited, or impaired
31 through issuance of a tax deed, foreclosure of a tax lien, or application of the doctrine

1 of adverse possession, prescription, abandonment, waiver, lack of enforcement,
2 acquiescence, or a similar doctrine.

3 **Sec. 46.04.330. Amendment or termination of environmental covenant by**
4 **consent.** (a) An environmental covenant may be amended or terminated if the
5 amendment or termination is consented to and signed

6 (1) by the department;

7 (2) unless waived by the department, by the current owner of the fee
8 simple of the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

9 (3) by each person that originally signed the environmental covenant,
10 unless the person

11 (A) waived the right to consent to termination or modification
12 in the environmental covenant or in another signed and acknowledged
13 instrument recorded with the recording district;

14 (B) fails to object to the amendment or termination within 60
15 days after a party to the covenant mails, by certified mail, return receipt
16 requested, to the person's last known address, a notice requesting the person's
17 consent to amendment or termination and the return receipt is signed by the
18 person; or

19 (C) cannot be found, as determined by a court, because the
20 person no longer exists or cannot be located or identified with the exercise of
21 reasonable diligence; and

22 (4) except as otherwise provided in (d)(2) of this section, by the holder.

23 (b) If an interest in real property is subject to an environmental covenant, the
24 interest is not affected by an amendment of the environmental covenant unless the
25 current owner of the interest consents to the amendment or has waived in a signed
26 record the right to consent to amendments.

27 (c) Except for an assignment undertaken under a governmental reorganization,
28 assignment of an environmental covenant to a new holder is an amendment.

29 (d) Except as otherwise provided in an environmental covenant,

30 (1) a holder may not assign its interest without consent of the other
31 parties specified in (a) of this section;

1 (2) a holder may be removed and replaced by agreement of the other
2 parties specified in (a) of this section; and

3 (3) a court of competent jurisdiction may fill a vacant holder position.

4 **Sec. 46.04.335. Enforcement of environmental covenant.** (a) The department
5 is the administrating agency for AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 and is empowered to
6 administer and enforce AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 using the civil or administrative
7 authority granted to it in AS 46.03. However, the department may, but is not required
8 to, assume any administration or enforcement functions other than those directly
9 related to the environmental covenant.

10 (b) A civil action for injunctive or other equitable relief for violation of an
11 environmental covenant may be maintained by

12 (1) a party to the environmental covenant;

13 (2) the department;

14 (3) a person that the environmental covenant expressly grants the
15 power to enforce the environmental covenant;

16 (4) a person whose interest in the real property or whose collateral or
17 liability may be affected by the alleged violation of the environmental covenant; or

18 (5) a municipality or other unit of government that governs the real
19 property subject to the environmental covenant.

20 (c) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not limit the regulatory authority of the
21 department in an environmental response project.

22 (d) A person is not responsible for or subject to liability for environmental
23 remediation solely because the person has the right to enforce an environmental
24 covenant.

25 **Sec. 46.04.340. Notice of activity and use limitation.** (a) If a legal
26 impediment prevents an environmental covenant from being entered into, an owner of
27 real property shall, after receiving authorization from the department, record a notice
28 of an activity and use limitation into the appropriate public land records. Failure to
29 record a notice of an activity and use limitation may result in disapproval of the
30 environmental response project.

31 (b) Once the owner or other person assumes an obligation under a notice of

1 activity and use limitation, that owner or person shall comply with those obligations in
2 accordance with AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390.

3 (c) The enactment, modification, or termination of a notice of activity and use
4 limitation is not valid until it is approved by the department. A notice of activity and
5 use limitation is an agency action based on the state's police power.

6 (d) A notice of activity and use limitation is binding on current and subsequent
7 owners of the affected land and any person using or possessing an interest in the land.

8 (e) A person who proposes to create, modify, or terminate a notice of activity
9 and use limitation shall provide written notice of the person's intention to the
10 department, to all persons holding an interest of record in the real property that will be
11 subject to the notice of activity and use limitation, to all persons known to the person
12 to have an unrecorded interest in the property, and to all affected persons in possession
13 of the property before the creation, modification, or termination, and shall provide the
14 department with

15 (1) a copy of the notice provided;

16 (2) a list of the persons to whom notice was given and the address or
17 other location to which the notice was directed; and

18 (3) title information required by the department.

19 (f) Before unilaterally issuing a notice of activity and use limitation, the
20 department shall provide a copy of the proposed notice of activity and use limitation to
21 all persons holding an interest of record in the real property subject to the notice of
22 activity and use limitation, all persons known to the department to have an unrecorded
23 interest in the property, and all affected persons in possession of the property, and
24 shall offer the persons a minimum of 30 days to comment on the proposed notice of
25 activity and use limitation, unless notice has already been provided under (e) of this
26 section. In determining whether to issue the notice of activity and use limitation
27 unilaterally, the department shall consider any comments received. For a notice of
28 activity and use limitation affecting a land or mineral interest of the Department of
29 Natural Resources, concurrence from the Department of Natural Resources is
30 required.

31 (g) The department shall review and make a determination regarding all

1 requests to create, modify, or terminate a notice of activity and use limitation within
 2 90 days after receiving a request that includes all the information described in (a) of
 3 this section.

4 (h) Upon issuance or approval of a notice of activity and use limitation, the
 5 department shall record the notice in every recording district in which a portion of the
 6 real property subject to the activity and use limitation is located. For approved notices,
 7 the department may allow the owner of the property to record the notice. A person
 8 may not record a notice without the department's written approval.

9 (i) The department may authorize any notice of activity and use limitation
 10 created in accordance with this section to be replaced by an environmental covenant.
 11 The department may condition its authorization and approval of the termination of the
 12 notice of activity and use limitation on the terms of the notice of activity and use
 13 limitation, department approval and acceptance, and the effective recording of the
 14 environmental covenant.

15 (j) Modification or termination of a notice of activity and use limitation shall
 16 be recorded as provided in (h) of this section. A person may not record a modification
 17 or termination of a notice of activity and use limitation without the department's
 18 written approval.

19 (k) A determination by the department to issue, approve, modify, or terminate
 20 a notice of activity and use limitation is subject to appeal under the procedures
 21 described in AS 46.04.890.

22 **Sec. 46.04.345. Relationship to other land-use law.** AS 46.04.300 -
 23 46.04.390 do not authorize a use of real property that is otherwise prohibited under
 24 AS 29.40 or AS 38.05.037, by law other than AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 regulating use
 25 of real property, or by a recorded instrument that has priority over the environmental
 26 covenant or a notice of activity and use limitation. An environmental covenant or a
 27 notice of activity and use limitation may prohibit or restrict uses of real property that
 28 are authorized by zoning or by law other than AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390.

29 **Sec. 46.04.350. Registry.** (a) The department may maintain a registry that
 30 contains all environmental covenants and notices of activity and use limitation and any
 31 amendment or termination of those instruments. The registry may also contain any

1 other information concerning environmental covenants and notices of activity and use
 2 limitation and the real property subject to them that the department considers
 3 appropriate.

4 **Sec. 46.04.355. Uniformity of application and construction.** In applying and
 5 construing AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390, consideration must be given to the need to
 6 promote uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that
 7 enact similar provisions.

8 **Sec. 46.04.390. Definitions.** In AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390,

9 (1) "common interest community" means a condominium, cooperative,
 10 or other real property with respect to which a person, by virtue of the person's
 11 ownership of a parcel of real property, is obligated to pay property taxes or insurance
 12 premiums, or pay for maintenance, or improvement of other real property described in
 13 a recorded environmental covenant that creates the common interest community;

14 (2) "environmental covenant" means a servitude arising under an
 15 environmental response project that imposes activity and use limitations;

16 (3) "environmental response project" means a plan or work performed
 17 or maintenance of work performed under a federal or state program

18 (A) including this chapter, AS 46.03, AS 46.09, 42 U.S.C.
 19 9601 - 9675 (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and
 20 Liability Act), as amended, and 42 U.S.C. 6901 - 6992k (Resource
 21 Conservation and Recovery Act), as amended, governing environmental
 22 remediation and management of contaminated real property; or

23 (B) governing maintenance, closure, or corrective action of a
 24 solid waste disposal facility or hazardous waste management unit;

25 (4) "holder" means the grantee of an environmental covenant as
 26 specified in AS 46.04.300(b);

27 (5) "notice of activity and use limitation" means a restriction or
 28 obligation created under AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 with respect to real property;

29 (6) "record" has the meaning given in AS 40.17.900.

30 * **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
 31 read:

1 TRANSITION: REGULATIONS. The Department of Environmental Conservation
2 and the Department of Natural Resources may adopt regulations necessary to implement this
3 Act. The regulations take effect under AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), but not
4 before the effective date of the law implemented by the regulation.

5 * **Sec. 3.** Section 2 of this Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).