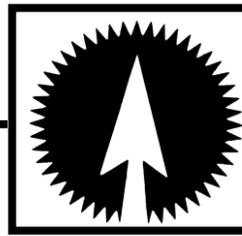


Alaska Forest Association



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March 15, 2017

Representative Dan Ortiz
120 4th St, Room 3
Juneau, AK 99801
representative.daniel.ortiz@akleg.gov

Dear Dan,

Thank you for sponsoring HB 155. The Alaska Forest Association supports the land exchange between the Alaska Mental Health Trust and the US Forest Service. It is vital to our timber industry that the State enact HB 155 this legislative session.

The Alaska Forest Association (AFA) is a non-profit business association that was formed in 1957 to represent the interests of the timber industry in Alaska. The AFA currently manages a pension program, a group health insurance program, a scholarship program for the timber industry and also sponsors the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program for Alaska.

The Forest Service manages more than 90% of the commercial timberland in Southeast Alaska and that federal agency has failed to provide sufficient timber to keep our manufacturing facilities operating. We have lost two pulp mills and several large sawmill over the last 20+ years and we have only a single mid-size sawmill remaining. Now that last sawmill is at risk of closure because the Forest Service has mismanaged its timber sale program again and has provided a timber sale schedule that indicates there will be very little federal timber available to our last sawmill until at least 2020. The State Division of Forestry has continued to supply timber for our industry, but the State manages only 2% of the commercial timberland in the region. The State alone cannot supply our last surviving sawmill.

If the Alaska Mental Health Trust exchange is completed this legislative session, our last mid-size sawmill should be able to utilize timber from that exchange to keep the mill operating until 2020 when the Forest Service projects it will again be able to supply timber.

This value-for-value exchange has a lot of support within the region because in addition to helping preserve our remaining timber manufacturing jobs, the exchange will enable the Alaska Mental Health Trust to avoid harvesting land adjacent to Ketchikan and Petersburg that the local communities want preserved.

Sincerely,

Owen Graham
Executive Director
Alaska Forest Association

Copy: Paul Slenkamp
Steve Silver
Kirk Dahlstrom