THE STATE of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Natural Resources
DIVISION/OF FORESTRY
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March 31, 2017

Senator Cathy Giessel, chair
Senator John Coghill, vice-chair
State Capitol
Senate Resources Committee

Dear Senator Giessel and Senator Coghill,

The DNR Division of Forestry is pleased to convey its continued support for a land exchange between the Alaska Mental Health Trust (Trust) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in Southeast Alaska, as proposed in SB88. The parties propose a value-for-value administrative land exchange of Trust lands around communities for USFS lands that are suitable for sustainable commercial forest management activities.

The exchange involves Trust land that primarily supports old growth timber around Juneau, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Meyers Chuck, and Ketchikan. On the federal side, the exchange includes Tongass National Forest old growth and young growth near Ketchikan and on Prince of Wales Island.

The proposed exchange has multiple benefits for Alaska. It will:

- Support local communities in their efforts to protect and manage their watersheds and view sheds, reduce hazards from landslides associated with development activities, and promote tourism and public recreation.
- Contribute to the Trust's mission to manage Trust assets in perpetuity for Trust beneficiaries.
- Strengthen the Southeast Alaska timber industry – the industry has been sorely hampered by lack of supply from the Tongass National Forest. The timber industry provides high-quality jobs and economic diversity that are essential to support of small communities and school districts in Southeast.
- Help facilitate the USFS transition to harvesting only young growth on the Tongass. There are not yet enough young growth stands to make this transition successful; harvests of some old growth are necessary to sustain the harvesting, transportation, and milling infrastructure until sufficient old growth is available. The exchange will enable the Trust to offer timely interim old growth timber sales to support a successful transition.

In short, the proposed exchange creates a solution that benefits communities, the state, the US Forest Service, and the Trust.

We also note that the Board of Forestry has repeatedly endorsed the proposed exchange. The Board members include representatives of timber, fishing, and mining industries; Native

corporations; professional foresters and fish and wildlife biologists; and environmental and recreational organizations. This diverse group has worked to address issues of timber supply, reduction of landslide hazards, and protection of water quality and fish habitat and is on record in support of the exchange.

The Division of Forestry endorses SB88. We appreciate your support of the timber industry and communities of Southeast Alaska and mental health beneficiaries across the state.

Sincerely,

John "Chris" Maisch, State Forester
Chair, Alaska Board of Forestry

Cc: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan
Congressman Don Young
Senator Bert Stedman
Darwin Peterson, GO Legislative Director
John Morrison, Executive Director, Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office
Wyn Menefee, Deputy Director, Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office
Andrew T. Mack, DNR Commissioner
Ed Fogels, DNR Deputy Commissioner
Ed King, DNR Legislative Liaison
Beth Pendleton, USFS Region 10 Forester
Earl Stewart, Tongass Forest Supervisor

Alaska Board of Forestry

- Keith Coulter, Alaska Native Corporations
- Denise Herzog, Mining Organization
- Erin McLarnon, Recreation Organization
- Eric Nichols, Forest Industry Trade Association
- Will Putman, Non-governmental Professional Forester
- Chris Stark, Environmental Organization
- Mark Vinsel, Commercial Fisherman's Organization
- Bill Morris, Non-governmental Professional Fish/Wildlife Biologist