

Betty Tangeman

From: Dulce Ben-East <dulce@alaskabirchsyrap.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2021 2:40 PM
To: Senate Resources; Sen. Joshua Revak; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Natasha Von Imhof; Sen. Jesse Kiehl; Sen. Scott Kawasaki; Sen. David Wilson
Subject: Comment on SB97

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To the Senate Resources Committee and Senators;

I am a forty year resident of Alaska, a small business owner of a tourism-related business, and a former DNR and ADFG employee. I was one of the many DNR staff that put countless hours into data collection and writing of the Susitna Basin Recreational Rivers Management Plan (RRMP) during the late 80's. I had hoped to, but was not able to comment during yesterday's public testimony on SB97. I am sending you my comments now to be included in the public testimony on SB97.

SB97 proposes to repeal the Recreational River statutes that protect six popular and anadromous Mat-Su rivers: The Little Susitna River, The Deshka River, The Talkeetna River, Lake Creek, Alexander Creek, and The Talachulitna River. These rivers were protected as essential anadromous fish habitat and riparian ecosystems for fish and wildlife - including the valuable Cook Inlet fishery, and for their recreational and cultural values.

As a lands officer for DNR Division of Lands from 1988-1989, I can attest to the incredible amount of work, analysis, and critical thought that went into the development of the RRMP. My job for the entire time I worked for DNR was to assess the recreational values of the river corridors. I held countless meetings with citizens, lodge owner, and other stakeholders in the Susitna Valley. I analyzed responses and data to create detailed reports on each area, to assess primarily recreational and cultural values associated with the area. All the hours devoted to development of the RRMP translated to a great deal of government money, legislative time, volunteer time, and citizen time that led up to the passage of the RRMP in 1988.

A similar (failed) effort last year by the Governor prompted this response from Mayor and Borough Manager of the Mat-Su Borough in a letter to Valley Legislators: **"The removal of these recreational rivers and special purpose areas could have devastating effects on the fish and wildlife populations within these waterways."** We know how important salmon are to the Mat-Su citizens, as they are to all Alaskans. Repealing protection for these important rivers undercuts ongoing arguments about the protection of regional salmon stocks. Going backward on river protection also goes against the important goal of mitigating climate change in order to protect salmon and all important fish and wildlife habitat and riparian ecosystems. There is no good reason to remove the essential protection from these rivers.

I am a business owner in the Mat-Su Valley for over 30 years. My business depends on tourism, as does so many Alaskan businesses - all of us struggling right now. Travelers from all over the world come to Alaska to see our pristine rivers, our wildlife, our mountains, and appreciate our cultural values and heritage. It is essential to Alaska's economy to keep these rivers protected. It is essential to the mental health and well-being of people everywhere that we maintain wild places, particularly in the face of the ongoing pandemic. We expect people to seek out wild places more and more as a balm to the shut-downs and restrictions of the past year.

In conclusion, there is no reason to remove protection from these six Susitna Valley rivers, and to do so would go against the will of the people as established by the Susitna Basin Recreational Rivers Plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dulce Ben-East

Dulce Ben-East; Owner/General Manager

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"Sustainable use of Alaska's forest resources"

Betty Tangeman

From: Margaret Stern <mstern@coa.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 4:45 PM
To: Senate Resources
Subject: SB97 Public Testimony

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AGAINST SB97, reiterating public testimony as it was not heard in its entirety due to my satellite connection.

My name is Margaret Stern,

IN an era of growing developmental pressure with a push for more resource extraction, coupled with an increasing population desiring land for recreation, the protections afforded by the Recreational Rivers designation seems to me to be more important for the State if we are to maintain our character.

Our expanding state needs increased protections to foster the responsible development of our state and protect what makes us unique—our fish, wildlife, and their essential habitat. The Recreational Rivers designation, which SB 97 seeks to dismantle and repeal, is essential to the protection of the waterways which support this.

We would like to echo the concerns that the Borough presented in 2020 when a similar bill was introduced, seeking to gut Rec Rivers designation. The protections inherent to our Mat-Su Borough Recreational Rivers are vitally important. The loss of these protections would result in an unnecessary and increase of risk to our important fish and wildlife populations within these waterways.

Additionally, if agencies are not required to conform to Borough platting requirements, we are further putting our assets at risk for irresponsible development and damage to our valuable waterways—which has the potential to require tax payer dollars to mitigate harm caused by the gutting of the Recreational Rivers Designation down the road.

This Bill and its intent to repeal and gut protections to recreational rivers, is a shortsighted move that will undoubtedly have detrimental effects and bolster the interests of industry over the interests of the people of Alaska and the Susitna Watershed.

It seems to me, that responsible development in the state would entail keeping protections, that were put in place for good reason, in tact. Not gutting them recklessly because they foster poorly managed development

— Thank you

Betty Tangeman

From: Molly Dischner <medischner@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 12:27 PM
To: Senate Resources
Cc: laddie.shaw@akleg.gov; josh.revak@akleg.gov
Subject: SB 97 comments

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To Whom It May Concern:

Please do not advance SB97. The recreational rivers designation is a useful tool that should remain in place. Although development is necessary in our state, so is protecting and managing certain places -- recreational value should be given priority in certain places. I have enjoyed using many of the recreational rivers in the Susitna Basin (hunting, fishing, floating and hiking on the Little Su; fishing on the Talkeetna) with plans to visit others in the future, and would like to see those opportunities continue with the designation remaining in place.

Further, I do not trust that the state would not authorize incompatible commercial use on those waters or others if it was able to do so. This administration has shown us why sound regulations and management tools are important to deter the administration from taking unilateral action that is contrary to the public good, and in this case, it is imperative that the existing designations and tools remain in place.

Thank you for discussing this bill and providing the opportunity for the public to weigh in. I hope you will not advance this bill, and that if a similar idea comes up in the future, it is much more narrow in scope and allows DNR to authorize some activity in some situations without removing the designations entirely.

Thank you,
Molly Dischner
Anchorage Resident

CLARIFICATION REGARDING SECTIONS 19 AND 20 OF SB97A

First, I want to clarify one of the statements that the Director of Mining, Land and Water Parsons made in the 3/17 Senate Resources Committee SB 97 hearing about sections 19 and 20 which would repeal the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan (SBRRMP) and the enabling state legislation. What he stated was not completely accurate. I will provide the exact language to back this up below.

His statement that the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers (SBRR) are covered by the DNR land management plans Southeast Susitna Area Plan (SESAP) and Susitna Matanuska Area Plan (SMAP) is wrong. SBRR are designated and classified under those plan classification orders. However, the management intent and administrative aspects, which are important parts of these plans, DO NOT cover them.

The SBRRs are considered Legislatively Designated Areas (LDA). Here is the exact wording of the plans regarding them.

- Page 3-121 of SMAP Resource Allocation Table- Legislatively Designated Areas regarding Unit L-01 the State Recreation Rivers the Designation is Habitat and Recreation dispersed.

"Management Intent: State Recreational Rivers: Manage uses consistent with the legislative purposes described in AS 41.23.500 and with the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan. DMLW is responsible for the management of State Recreational Rivers. Administrative Aspects and Other: The requirements of this area plan do not apply to State Recreation Rivers. SRRs are closed to locatable mineral entry, but are open to coal and mineral leasing and to oil and gas exploration and development. Specific regulations exist that provide management guidance to DMLW."

- Page 3-69 of the Southeast Susitna Area Plan under Chapter 3 Navigable Rivers and Lakes under Legislatively Designated Areas.

"LDAs are special purpose sites that are managed according to the requirements of the legislation specific to the site and to the general class of LDA (Article VIII, paragraph 7 of the State Constitution), and any subsequent management plans or regulations that implement the requirements of the legislation. The effect of the LDA designation is to reserve state land out of the public domain and use or protect it for the purposes stipulated in enabling legislation.

For these reasons, area plans do not apply to the types of LDAs in the planning boundary, except for the plan designation that is assigned, which is subsequently converted to a land classification in a Land Classification Order. Certain types of authorizations issued by the Department involve a disposal of state land and administrative regulation requires that the land, with certain exceptions, must first be classified....These designations are not intended to provide a general management direction similar to the way that designations are applied in other parts of this plan, however Management direction for authorizations within LDAs is provided either through the enabling legislation, state administrative regulation, or management plan. If management plans or administrative regulations are not available, the general management intent specific to the LDA or to the category of LDA are to be followed."

Second, concerns amongst the public about the way the SBRR are managed or rather not managed are legitimate. The main problem is that DMLW never really followed through in its responsibilities of the

legislative mandate and management plan. If there was an advisory board, as allowed under the plan, there would be flexibility with issues such as dock lengths. The SBRRMP public process was rigorous. I participated in it. There were many compromises.

A member of the public who testified at your Senate hearing complained that there has never been a 5 year review of the plan. Well, DMLW had no five year review of their other land management plans either. The Susitna Area Plan was signed in 1985. It finally got public review when DMLW split the area and passed the Southeast Susitna Area Plan in 2008 and the Susitna Matanuska Area Plan in 2011.

Thirdly, part of the SBRRMP was to mandate acquiring Instream Flow Reservations on these rivers to protect water quality, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat. **If SB 97 passes, will these important water rights be null and void and repealed as well?** This is an important question that needs answers.

Becky Long

Betty Tangeman

From: Lori Landstrom <ljlndstrom81@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 12, 2021 5:42 PM
To: Senate Resources; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Bill Wielechowski;
senator.kevin.meyer@akleg.org; senator.bert.stedman@akleg.org; Sen. Natasha Von
Imhof; senator.john.coghill@akleg.org; senator.cathy.giessel@akleg.org
Subject: SB 97

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Senators,
SB 97 needs to die in your committee. I'm shocked it was sponsored. Removing protection from protectioned rivers harms salmon and wildlife. Allowing the authorization of commercial activity on State Refuge lands and State Park lands is crazy. These lands were set aside for public enjoyment. Hiking, wildlife viewing, fishing, all the things Alaskans love to do. Why would we want to allow them to lose their protected status? There are plenty of general state lands, if we need to allow the permitting of commercial activities on state lands.
Please keep protected public state lands, refuges and state parks for all alaskans, not just those who can afford the future commercial activity.
Please allow SB 97 to die in your committee and not advance any further.

[Lori Landstrom, Seward](#)

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better,"

-Maya Angelou