

NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH

P.O. Box 1110

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February 3, 2009

Honorable Senator Donny Olson
Capitol, Room 514
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Honorable Representative Reggie Joule
Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 4 and HB 74 Alaska Coastal Management Program

Dear Senator Olson and Representative Joule:

The Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) would like to thank you for the introduction of SB 4 and HB 74 on the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP). On behalf of the Borough, I would like to address the substance of HB 74 because we understand the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee will consider adoption of the provisions of HB 74 into a senate committee substitute.

The NWAB supports the proposed legislation that would restore the ability of coastal districts to effectively participate in the program and establish meaningful policies under the ACMP; therefore providing valuable local input to development that happens in a very large and unique state. Another important provision in the bills would establish a board made of Alaskans to oversee the major aspects of ACMP as a publicly funded program. The proposed board would jointly represent state agencies and local coastal districts thereby restoring effective public engagement in the ACMP.

Currently, only the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as a single agency makes all coastal management decisions. This has proved to be very one-sided and frustrating. For example, as you may know, during 2008 the NWAB attempted mediation with DNR to improve the decisions regarding our coastal management plan. Unfortunately, the mediation ended in an impasse with the majority of the proposed plan flat out denied. According to the

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ACMP now, our only re-course for a fair review is again to go back to the DNR commissioner for re-consideration of a decision that has already been made by the commissioner and his staff. As you can see, the ability to obtain a third party review that involves the public is not possible under the current program, and the new provisions in this bill will help prevent such a future problematic situation and provide state staff the clear criteria and direction for approval of coastal district policies with involvement of the coastal policy board.

The NWAB also supports the addition of subsistence to the ACMP objectives in AS 46.40.020. Until changes made by the Murkowski Administration, the ACMP has been an effective tool balancing resource development and protection of our coastal resources that support healthy subsistence. It is very important that Alaskans have the ability to propose local policies that demonstrate the real life connection of people and communities to coastal areas and actually reflect the close relationship Alaskan residents have to this land, the coastal zones and our valuable subsistence way of life. For the NWAB, the ability to cooperatively work with developers and the state to address subsistence impacts is the primary reason for participating in the ACMP so that development honors our long-time and permanent Alaskans lifestyles.

We also support provisions in the bill that would bring activities covered by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation back into the ACMP consistency review process. Impacts to air and water quality also affect habitat and subsistence, and it makes sense to address these issues together in a consolidated format during a single consistency.

The NWAB encourages responsible development of our natural resources. We recognize the economic importance of development in providing new revenues to fund local public services and facilities, and to provide steady employment opportunities in rural areas. However, it is important that local coastal districts have a role in voicing valid concerns and potential impacts to subsistence and other coastal uses and resources - all to ensure that we are doing resource development the right way.

In closing, these bills restore a meaningful role for coastal districts to facilitate effective future development opportunities. I appreciate your interest in improving the ACMP, and I look

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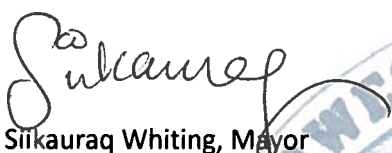
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forward to working with you during this legislative session. Please contact me or Ukallaysaaq Tom Okleasik if you have any questions about our proposed plan at (907) 442-2500.

Sincerely,



Siikauraq Whiting, Mayor

Cc: Ukallaysaaq Tom Okleasik, Planning Director
Alagial Grant Hildreth, Deputy Planning Director
Kill'aq John Chase, Community Planner & Coastal Area Specialist

