



Responsible Cruising in Alaska

TO: House C&RA Committee

FR: T. Chip Thoma, RCA

RE: HB 134

DATE: Feb. 17, 2009

TCT

Chairman Herron, members of the committee, I am Chip Thoma, Responsible Cruising in Alaska, Box 21884, Juneau, 99802. The RCA is an advocacy group that helped win the 2006 initiative measure on cruise ship pollution, fair taxes, and consumer protection. This initiative passed 52-48%. 82,000 Alaskans voted yes. (This same primary election gave Frank Murkowski 12% and lobbyist John Binkley 19% of the popular vote for Governor).

The Alaska cruise law has been a great success for state taxes, revenue sharing, capital projects in cruise ports, pollution controls, monitoring by Ocean Rangers, and passenger consumer protection.

To address HB 134, my helpful comment is that the legislation is premature and likely unnecessary. Many ships in the Alaska cruise fleet are already meeting our Water Quality Standards on both ammonia & copper, those discharged substances that most harm anadromous salmon and marine life.

I recently reviewed the Notices of Violations (NOV's) issued by DEC for 2008 cruise ship discharges, and was amazed to find that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fleet were not cited for any metals violations, but that 5 of the 7 metals violators are Princess ships. I believe the copper problem has now been identified: those high discharges are centered in OLDER ships, like the Princess fleet, whose copper plumbing is leaching into treated discharge water. Dissolved copper is a big problem: it never goes away, it builds up in the water, and dis-oriens returning salmon. But most other ships have solved the on-board copper problem, by using flex-hose plastic plumbing, a 21st century fix for a 20th century problem.

Rather than get into details of ship plumbing and on-board water-making machinery, suffice it to say that copper pipes leach, and miles and tons of copper pipe leach a lot. Copper leaching from cruise ship plumbing will be discussed thoroughly tomorrow at DEC's 2009 conference on new technologies. I hope you can attend.

The gold sheet in your packet lists the different copper and ammonia-removing processes that will be discussed by industry and DEC, for both effectiveness and cost. This removal technology is improving at a very rapid pace, pioneered by the need for absolutely clean water in US computer manufacture. I'm confident that copper can soon be removed from all cruise ship discharges. That's why HB 134 is premature, because solutions are close at hand. DEC and the cruise industry will start solving them, tomorrow, here in Juneau.

Regarding ammonia on board ships, the sole source is urine. Ammonia removal has been achieved, and this technology is readily available. Ironically, the relatively high ammonia counts are likely due to low-flow toilet systems on some ships, where little water is used to flush. Since water dissolves urine and ammonia to manageable levels, I am also confident that all ammonia problems will be solved on-board, as most ships in the Alaska fleet are doing right now.

In conclusion, HB 134 is premature, because copper & ammonia discharge problems will be solved soon, with science, funding, and plastic plumbing. The cruise passengers want clean ships. Alaska subsistence, commercial & sport users want clean ships that take no chances to harm Alaska fish & marine resources. We should all agree to fully protect clean, marine waters, by statute.

The cruise laws passed in 2006 accomplish that. However, HB 134, the Princess Pollution bill, rolls back those protections and allows potentially harmful discharges. Also, 134 would primarily exempt one cruise line from the water quality standards being met by most of the 28 ships in Alaska fleet. HB 134 thus financially penalizes those who make discharge improvements, and now comply with Alaska cruise law. Finally, Alaskans want these discharge problems solved on board the cruise ships, not mixing in our pristine waters. Thank you.