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Governor Sean Parnell
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January 17, 2013

The Honorable Mike Chenault
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Chenault,

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18 of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to the regulation of wastewater discharge from commercial passenger vessels in State waters in response to analysis and findings of the Cruise Ship Science Advisory Panel (Science Panel) convened as directed by the Legislature in Chapter 53 SLA 09.

This bill amends current law and allows the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to permit operation of wastewater discharges from commercial passenger vessels, including discharges from advanced wastewater treatment systems, consistent with standards for other permitted discharges throughout the state. The bill also amends current law to codify a reasonable schedule for the approval of plans for discharge from small commercial passenger vessels in State waters. No commercial passenger vessels may discharge wastewater in a manner that violates any applicable State or federal law governing the disposal or discharge of solid or liquid waste material.

By way of background, the Science Panel was charged with examining (1) the methods of pollution, prevention, control, and treatment in use by commercial passenger vessels; (2) identifying additional economically feasible methods of pollution that could be employed to provide the most technologically effective measures to control all wastes; and (3) the environmental benefit and cost of implementing additional methods of pollution, prevention, control, and treatment identified.

The Science Panel completed its analysis in accordance with law and submitted its findings to DEC. The Science Panel found, and DEC concurred, that the advanced wastewater treatment systems (AWTS) installed on cruise ships operating and discharging in Alaskan waters could consistently meet Alaska's marine water quality criteria at the point of discharge for all parameters except ammonia, copper, nickel, and zinc.

The panel did not identify any new or additional technologies that would consistently meet the criteria for these remaining four parameters. When comparing the wastewater quality from AWTS to discharges from municipal treatment plants, the AWTS in operation are significantly more effective

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and produce a higher quality discharge than most municipal systems. Even without incremental improvements to cruise ship wastewater quality, aquatic life and human health are protected through provisions in the current cruise ship General Permit that restrict the location of discharge and when ships must be underway before they discharge.

The Science Panel concluded that given the current level of wastewater treatment and quality of effluent along with very large dilution factors there would be little, if any, demonstrable environmental benefit in requiring cruise ships to adopt, in the future, potential additional treatment methods.

Where Alaska's small and mid-sized businesses create jobs and opportunities for Alaskans, and where Alaska's wastewater standards can be implemented in a way that protects our marine and coastal environments, I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Parnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Parnell
Governor

Enclosure