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Governor Sean Parnell
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January 17, 2013

The Honorable Charlie Huggins
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear President Huggins,

Alaskans deserve more timely, consistent permitting decisions, and the bill I transmit today is designed to better accomplish those ends. Under the authority of Article III, Section 18 of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to the Alaska Land Act, including certain authorizations, contracts, leases, permits, or other disposals of State land, resources, property, or interests; relating to authorization for the use of State land by general permit; relating to exchange of State land; relating to procedures for certain administrative appeals and requests for reconsideration to the Commissioner of Department of Natural Resources; and relating to the Alaska Water Use Act.

The permitting functions of State government necessarily balance protecting the environment with utilization to provide the economic means for Alaskans to sustain themselves. This legislation encourages responsible development of our State land and water resources. An efficient permitting process with clear rules contributes to Alaskan economic growth and creates more Alaskan business opportunities.

The bill reforms and streamlines procedures for obtaining, issuing, and appealing permits, leases, best interest findings, and other authorizations issued by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), particularly concerning land and water. Below is a list of key provisions of the bill.

Except for the surface coal program, in order to retain primacy, the bill explicitly authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources to allow an activity on State land through the issuance of a general permit if the commissioner finds that the activity is unlikely to cause significant and irreparable harm to State land or resources. Providing explicit authority for the issuance of a general permit streamlines the permitting process for activities on State land by clearly making it unnecessary for each individual to receive a separate permit for the allowed activity.

The bill reforms the current land exchange statutes to simplify the procedure for DNR to authorize land exchanges.

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It modifies the procedures for appeals from DNR decisions, clarifying who has standing to appeal and providing for a more streamlined appeals process. The bill would modify the Alaska Water Use Act to improve administration of the act.

In addition to these changes, the bill modifies and clarifies public notice and comment procedures for certain best interest finding decisions and small changes that otherwise streamline existing procedures of DNR.

The bill is consistent with the State's ongoing efforts to streamline permitting requirements for the public to use and enjoy Alaska's land and resources.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sean Parnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sean" and last name "Parnell" clearly distinguishable.

Sean Parnell
Governor

Enclosure