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Senate Finance Committee

Support for Capital Request TPS 57008V3

Alaska Association of Conservation Districts (AACD)

Local soil & water conservation districts are Alaska's front line of defense for invasive plant and weed species. These invasive species include Elodea, which is a plant that Alaskans need to be concerned about because it can replace native plant species, alter aquatic habitat, impede recreation, and even reduce property values.

Funding from the state impacts all of Alaska. Other states and provinces currently spend millions of dollars fighting invasive species and plants. In Alaska, the local SWCDs are the front line defense. Districts spend several million dollars combating invasive weed species. Our efforts impact all of our natural resources such as fisheries, forests, watersheds, and agricultural lands.

In the Since FY2008, the Alaska Legislature has provided funding to the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts through appropriations in the Capital Budget. The funds are spread throughout the state to fund the 12 districts.

These appropriations have been used to match federal grants that otherwise would not have been available.

Over the past four years, a total of \$3.1 million in state appropriations has matched over \$32.5 million in federal grants.

In areas of the state where federal contracts are awarded, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) relies on the soil and water districts staff to provide needed assistance to the landowners in the state. There are some NRCS services that would not be possible without the soil and water districts. Without the districts providing this service the state will have to spend many millions of dollars to fight the ongoing problem. The districts truly need state funds to keep their doors open. Without the districts, the federal money will go away. Those funds are used for mitigation, stream bank restoration, trails, and invasive plant management. Thousands of personal contacts with landowners are made each year in districts around the state. Local districts work with numerous agencies, organizations, local government, and private citizens to deliver our programs.

Other key programs of our SWCD'S;

- v Conservation planning
- v Nutrient management
- v Technical assistance for invasive plant management

- v Land capability surveys and investigations of potential agricultural areas and soil conservation and erosion control.
- v Trails, ATV/ORV, hiking, cross country skiing and horse riding
- v Technical and land management assistance to farmers
- v Stream bank restoration and removal of fish migration barriers
- v Forestry management plans,
- v Construction of rain gardens
- v Development of community gardens and farmers markets and schoolyard gardens
- v Promotion of Alaska Grown products
- v Youth Conservation Corps programs and resource education to local schools.

Thank you,

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