

**STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION TO SB88-THE ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH  
TRUST LAND EXCHANGE**

March 22, 2017

Hello Senate Resources Committee:

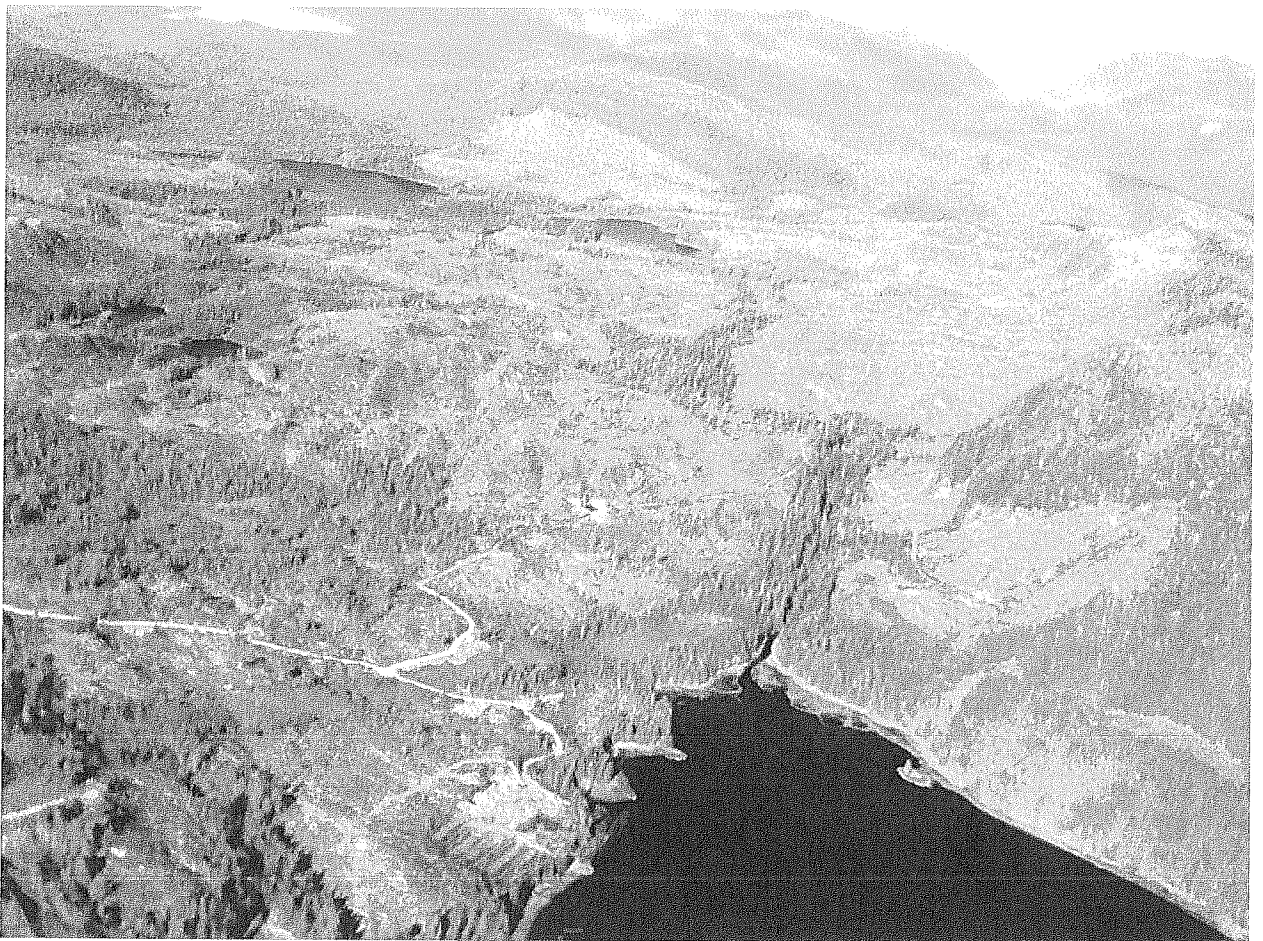
I respectfully submit the following testimony on behalf of myself today.

I oppose SB 88 on a variety of grounds:

1. Support for this legislation and similar legislation before Congress was the direct result of the Trust's tactics which placed local citizens in a Sophie's Choice style position—either support the legislation or have our backyards logged. Notified of the Trust's threat, they were faced with a very close deadline of Jan. 30, 2017 for the legislation to pass Congress—or the Trust would log the lands in question. Worried about their safety from risk of landslides on over-steepened slopes, impacts to their scenic backdrop and related loss of tourism dollars, loss of favorite recreation areas, and water quality, the local citizenry had no option but to support the legislation. This support was absent little consideration of the consequences shifting of AMHT landscape level impacts elsewhere. AMHT intended it to force a stampede of support for the legislation and many regard this as a case of extortion.
2. According to an Aug. 18, 2016 email (attached), by the Trust's Paul Slenkamp, the AMHT was, "in final negotiations with Viking Lumber for purchase of all timber on POW associated with this proposed exchange." From my reading of this as well as minutes of the Alaska (government) Board of Forestry (of which one of Alcan's principals is a member) and statements made by him in news stories, as well as AMHT's eagerness to log in the Ketchikan area (e.g. Deer Mountain), suggests that similar negotiations have been made with Alcan. It should be noted that the lands in question were public lands on Aug 18—as they are now. How can the Trust enter into "final negotiations" when they do not even own the land? It appears the public was cut out of any influence regarding this exchange from the beginning and their forced support was only window dressing. A concise clarification about the possible existence of timber sale contracts is needed before your Committee SB88 moves any further. Do contracts exist (either in draft or final form) with these companies and/or dependent on the outcome of the legislation?
3. The lands in question would be logged under the Alaska Forest Resources and Practices Act regulations which are far weaker than federal regulations. FRPA is in dire need of revision. The threatened logging in the communities would ruin cherished viewsheds and, because the slopes are steep,

jeopardize residences and domestic and municipal waters supplies. Giving up forestland from the Tongass is equally problematic. Under state law, clearcut size is unlimited, the public process is far weaker, there are no enforceable provisions for wildlife habitat or risks to public safety from landslides. Fish stream no-cut buffers are narrower

4. There is a much better way—a federal buyout of the Trust Lands which the Trust has previously said it is open to during community meetings last fall and in the media. Clearly, the federal buyout option would achieve multiple beneficial outcomes by providing revenue to the Trust, protecting the well-being of the communities and their threatened residents, and preventing clearcuts of unrestricted size on 21,000 acres of public forest on Revilla, Gravina, and Prince of Wales Islands.



Recent typical logging practices - nearly 4,000 acres - at Leask Lakes, Revilla Island by the Alaska Mental Health Trust. The legislative exchange would give AMHT an additional 8,000 acres adjacent to this.” (photo credit R. Knight)

Sincerely,

*Rebecca J. Knight*

Rebecca Knight

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From: Slenkamp, Paul E (DNR) <paul.slenkamp@alaska.gov>  
Date: Wednesday, August 17, 2016  
Subject: August 18th POW LAT Meeting - Can you attend?  
To: Wayne Benner <administrator@thornebay-ak.gov>

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Thank you for including me in your updates. I won't be able to attend, I will try to catch up soon. There are some important pressing issues that the State and AK Mental Health Trust are working on. We are working with Senator Murkowski to move S.3006, the AK Mental Health Trust Land Exchange of 2016 through. We are in final negotiations with Viking Lumber for purchase of all timber on POW associated with this proposed exchange. Viking has said he will be unable to continue operations without this wood. So this legislation looks critical for that portion of the POW economy. It is hoped that the USFS is able to at least fulfill their commitment to keep the small mills in wood.

Thank you,  
Paul

*Attachment #1*