

April 18, 2021

Dear Representatives of the House Resource Committee:

These are my comments on HB 98.

Please do not delete requirement that negotiated sales can only be for local manufacture. Local value added use of timber maximizes economic benefit and jobs in local communities. Export of our timber does the opposite.

Do not dilute the value and use of Forest Land Use Plans (FLUP) or curtail the public's opportunity to meaningfully participate in the forestry decisions.

I view FLUPs as step-down plans from the Best Interest Finding. FLUPs consider not only timber, but other values and uses of the forest. Public process and local knowledge is very important at this level to ensure appropriate design of a timber harvest in order to protect these non-timber uses and values.

For example, FLUPs are important because it is at that level that our salmon lakes and streams are identified and the sale designed to protect them. According to the ADF&G website, fewer than 50% of our anadromous water bodies are included in the Anadromous Water Catalogue. The public process, which takes advantage of local knowledge, is very effective in informing DOF decision makers of the waters used by salmon for spawning, migrating, and residence at the early life stages. Salmon are a foundation species on which so much depends, and every effort should be made to protect and enhance their habitat.

I live in the northern Susitna Valley, where local economies depend on outdoor recreation; hunting; sport fishing; subsistence fishing and hunting, guiding businesses for hunting, fishing, hiking, and rafting; tourism; flight seeing; the list goes on.

These are things that affect our day to day lives as well as our pocketbooks. The public has important information that is relevant to a forest harvest decision and design. The public should be given every opportunity to participate, and the DOF should listen.

Please keep the FLUP process as it is now. Please don't weaken it.

If DOF has problems with the timing of FLUPs then fix the schedule. Get them done so the completion times coincide.

When you think of how integral the many values and uses of the forest are to local communities, such as those in the northern Susitna Valley, the problem is much more complicated than the scenario presented by State Forester Timothy Dabney, Division of Forestry, in March 2021, and reflected in the current version of HB 98.

HB 98 addresses DOF's perspective, but omits the concerns of local communities which depend on other values and uses of the forest.

HB 98 needs more work to address this deficiency. I urge you to not move HB 98 out of your committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Strassenburgh
Talkeetna