



May 5, 2022

Honorable House Resources Committee:

The Alaska Center is a non-profit organization that advocates for salmon habitat protection, clean energy policy, and citizen engagement in government processes.

We have significant concerns with HB 120. This bill increases the authority of The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to lease and sell state land for commercial development purposes, and to override land protected use designations in area management plans.

HB 120 seeks to give DNR the power to authorize commercial development and sale of state land which is a process that currently occurs under an area management plan and should remain under a clear public and stakeholder driven process.

We appreciate the removal in the two different draft committee substitutes of the repeal of the Recreational River statutes that protect six popular and anadromous Mat-Su rivers: The Little Susitna River, The Deshka River, The Talkeetna River, Lake Creek, Alexander Creek, and The Talachulitna River.

When Governor Dunleavy proposed to repeal the Recreational River statutes in the past, it prompted this response from the Mayor and Borough Manager of the Mat-Su Borough in a letter to Valley Legislators: "The removal of these recreational rivers and special purpose areas could have devastating effects on the fish and wildlife populations within these waterways." The Alaska Center agrees that these rivers and the salmon in them must be protected for the benefit of all Alaskans.

While issues of food security necessitate an increase in local agriculture, we believe that this bill proposes a much more complex and comprehensive revision of current land disposal practices than is warranted to meet the demand for new farms. HB 120 would circumvent the public by authorizing disposal of land for a wide variety of commercial uses - including sand and gravel extraction, oil and gas exploration, and commercial property development which may not be suitable for a specific area already designated for a specific use within a DNR area management plan.

The amendment to create an Alaska Native Vietnam Veteran Land Exchange and the removal of the recreational river repeal make HB 120 a better bill. However, authorizing widespread disposal of state land for commercial use which may likely conflict with existing uses established in area management plans will create a host of problems and divisions within communities. Section 13 of the bill is a poison pill and should be removed from the bill.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Jenny-Marie Stryker  
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