

STATE OF ALASKA  
THE LEGISLATURE

1994

Source  
SCS CSHJR 56(RES)

Legislative  
Resolve No.  
51



Relating to an exemption for federal land in Alaska from the federal PACFISH management strategy.

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**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

**WHEREAS** the protection of anadromous fish habitat is a national goal shared by the people of Alaska; and

**WHEREAS** the protection of anadromous fish habitat has been part of the forest plan on the Tongass National Forest since the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA); and

**WHEREAS** the State of Alaska led the nation in 1990 with the passage of the State Forest Practices Act which designates stream buffers for the protection of anadromous fish habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, in the years since the passage of both ANILCA and the Alaska State Forest Practices Act, ample data has been collected to show that the present stream buffer programs are working; and

**WHEREAS** the braided stream channels in Alaska are unique in the nation and result in a very high ratio of stream bank to upland areas; and

**WHEREAS** the 300-foot buffers proposed by PACFISH would affect a very significant percentage of available harvest area because of these channeled streams; and

**WHEREAS** Tongass National Forest timber resources accounted for about 2,500 of the annual average 3,600 private sector jobs directly generated by the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska in 1992, the last year for which accurate figures are available; and

**WHEREAS** the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska accounted for 24 percent of basic industry employment (including government), and 34 percent of all private basic industry employment, in 1992; and

**WHEREAS** workers in the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska, including loggers, road builders, stevedores, sawmill workers and pulp mill workers earned approximately \$146,000,000 in wages and salaries during 1992; and

**WHEREAS** forest products industry employment in Southeast Alaska has declined sharply since 1990, marked by the loss of \$18,000,000 in payroll and more than 600 jobs, due to reduced timber harvests on the Tongass National Forest and the near-completion of the first harvest on private land; and

**WHEREAS** a decline in the availability of timber to harvest in the Tongass National Forest will continue to cause the loss of jobs in the timber industry in Southeast Alaska and will significantly impair the economic well-being of the area as many communities are totally or otherwise very dependent on the timber industry as the sole or one of the largest employers in the community; and

**WHEREAS** the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have cooperatively developed a comprehensive strategy referred to as PACFISH for managing Pacific anadromous fish watersheds and habitats on land administered by the United States Forest Service or the BLM in several western states that limits the development, including timber harvesting and mining, of that land so as to preserve, replenish, or restore Pacific anadromous fish stocks; and

**WHEREAS** the United States Congress has effectively exempted the Tongass National Forest from the PACFISH strategy by prohibiting the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, from expending funds to implement the strategy in Alaska until

October 1994; and

**WHEREAS** implementation of PACFISH requirements in the Tongass National Forest would effectively cripple the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska, causing large-scale unemployment and severe economic distress, in direct conflict with the federal government's policy for the past four decades of preserving jobs and maintaining community stability in the region; and

**WHEREAS** the forest land on the Chugach National Forest and Bureau of Land Management land in Alaska are experiencing growing forest health problems that could be remedied through forest management activities, including timber harvest, but these activities cannot go forward with the implementation of PACFISH on this land; and

**WHEREAS** anadromous fish habitat in the Tongass National Forest, Chugach National Forest, and on Bureau of Land Management land is already effectively protected by a network of overlapping federal and state laws and regulations, including the Tongass Land Management Plan, the Tongass Timber Reform Act adopted by the United States Congress in 1990 (with provisions mandating minimum 100-foot buffers on all anadromous streams in the Tongass), the Alaska State Coastal Zone Management Program, and the Alaska State Forest Practices Act; and

**WHEREAS** Southeast Alaska benefits from healthy anadromous fish stocks, historically high commercial salmon catches, and anadromous fish habitat in excellent condition at most streambanks; and

**WHEREAS** the State of Alaska maintains that the environmental goals of PACFISH, are already being achieved in Alaska by existing state and federal laws and regulations, including specific provisions for effective management of riparian areas and establishment of minimum and appropriate stream buffers on all land;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management to recognize the inappropriateness of applying the PACFISH strategy to Alaska, unless these agencies are able to demonstrate that current standards are inadequate and the provisions of PACFISH are amended to reflect conditions in Alaska.

**COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Michael Espy, Secretary of Agriculture; the Honorable Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior; to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress; Mr. Jack Ward Thomas, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service; and to Mr. James Baca, National Director of the Bureau of Land Management.