

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR MACKIE

Introduced: 3/18/97

Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 Relating to the Tongass Land Management Plan and to continued Congressional
2 oversight of that plan.

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

4 WHEREAS employment and economic prosperity in Southeast Alaska are inextricably
5 linked to the resources of the Tongass National Forest and are dependent on the management
6 of those resources; and

7 WHEREAS jobs in the forest products industry are an important element of the
8 economic diversity of Southeast Alaska and should provide an opportunity in the region for
9 communities to maintain healthy economies; and

10 WHEREAS approximately 60 percent of timber industry jobs have been lost since
11 passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990; and

12 WHEREAS the establishment of a value-added forest products industry in Southeast
13 Alaska can occur only as a segment of a fully integrated forest products industry capable of
14 the harvesting, transporting, and primary processing of raw forest products into a form usable
15 by the value-added sector of the industry; and

16 WHEREAS the Alaska Congressional delegation has consistently supported the

1 historic sustainable harvest levels from the Tongass National Forest that are of vital
2 importance to all Southeast Alaska communities and continues to work for the restoration of
3 the socioeconomic vitality of communities devastated by the failure of the federal government
4 to meet contractual and Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP) commitments; and

5 **WHEREAS** the Governor’s Timber Task Force has determined that an annual harvest
6 of 300 MMBF is the minimum level necessary to sustain an integrated timber industry in
7 Southeast Alaska; and

8 **WHEREAS** the draft TLMP Environmental Impact Statement indicates no viability
9 problem for any species of wildlife or fish on the Tongass National Forest under any of the
10 proposed plan alternatives for at least the next 10 - 15 year planning cycle; and

11 **WHEREAS** the United States Forest Service testified before oversight hearings held
12 by Senator Murkowski last summer that the draft TLMP was based on the best science
13 available and indicated no current viability problem for any species of fish or wildlife on the
14 Tongass National Forest; and

15 **WHEREAS** the United States Forest Service’s wildlife conservation model is based
16 on inadequate data and science extrapolated from models developed for use with South Seas
17 Islands species; and

18 **WHEREAS** the lack of any near-term viability crisis for any species of fish or wildlife
19 on the Tongass National Forest provides the opportunity for maintaining a steady course while
20 the necessary Tongass-based science on which to base a long-term conservation strategy is
21 developed; and

22 **WHEREAS**, after 10 years of data gathering, analysis, and planning by the United
23 States Forest Service, the people of Southeast Alaska are still burdened by the uncertainty of
24 a stable, reliable timber supply; and

25 **WHEREAS** adoption of a final TLMP alternative incapable of providing for a
26 minimum 300 MMBF harvest level will almost certainly cause substantial additional job loss
27 and economic dislocation in the communities of Southeast Alaska that are dependent on a
28 stable supply of timber for all or part of their economic well-being;

29 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports the efforts of the
30 Alaska Congressional delegation, in its oversight responsibilities, to ensure that the Tongass
31 National Forest restores and continues to provide for the socioeconomic vitality of the

1 communities of Southeast Alaska; and be it

2 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports, at a minimum,
3 the recommendation of the Governor’s Timber Task Force that a harvest level of 300 MMBF
4 be maintained, because any decision to further reduce the harvest level in the Tongass below
5 that volume will continue the devastation of the existing timber industry infrastructure
6 throughout Southeast Alaska and preclude the reestablishment of an integrated forest products
7 industry in Southeast Alaska; and be it

8 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature strongly objects to any
9 reduction below an annual harvest level of 300 MMBF from the Tongass National Forest and
10 urges that the Tongass Land Management Plan Record of Decision be issued without further
11 delay; and be it

12 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports continued
13 Congressional oversight and review of the adequacy of the science, social and economic
14 analysis, and process employed by the United States Forest Service in order to ensure that any
15 decisions by the United States Forest Service are not detrimental to the social and economic
16 well-being of the communities and people of Southeast Alaska and that all decisions are
17 scientifically credible and legally defensible.

18 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the
19 Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S.
20 Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.