

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 17, 2025

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski, Vice Chair
Senator Matt Claman (via teleconference)
Senator Forrest Dunbar
Senator Scott Kawasaki
Senator Shelley Hughes (via teleconference)
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 105

"An Act relating to the lease and sale of state land for recreational cabin sites; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 105

SHORT TITLE: STATE LAND FOR RECREATIONAL CABIN SITES

SPONSOR(S): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

02/19/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/25	(S)	RES, FIN
02/28/25	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/28/25	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/12/25	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/12/25	(S)	Rescheduled to 3/14/25
03/14/25	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/14/25	(S)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/17/25	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

JOHN BOYLE, Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 105 on behalf of the administration.

CHRISTY COLLES, Director
Division of Mining, Land and Water
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation and answered questions on SB 105.

RENA MILLER, Special Assistant
Commissioner's Office
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Assisted with a presentation on SB 105.

CHRISTOPHER ORMAN, Assistant Attorney General
Natural Resources Section
Department of Law
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on SB 105.

PATT GARRETT, representing self
McCarthy, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 105.

ROBERT ARCHIBALD, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

SUE CHRISTIANSEN, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

GORDY VERNON, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 105.

WAYNE HALL, representing self
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 105.

JUDY BRAKEL, representing self
Gustavus, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified with concerns on SB 105.

KASEY ADERHOLD, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

MATTHEW ROBUS, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

JAMES SQUYRES, representing self
Deltana, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

MATT OBERMILLER, representing self
Tiekel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

ALAN PARKS, representing self
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

STEPHENS HARPER, representing self
McCarthy, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

ROD ARNO, Policy Director
Alaska Outdoor Council
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

WALTER MAAKESTAD, representing self
Lake Minchumina, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 105.

LILLIAN THORINGTON, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

MARY GLAVES, Alaska Chapter Coordinator
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to SB 105.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:10 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL called the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Dunbar, Myers, Kawasaki, Wielechowski, Hughes (via teleconference) and Chair Giessel. Senator Claman joined by teleconference during the course of the meeting.

SB 105-STATE LAND FOR RECREATIONAL CABIN SITES

[3:30:35 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 105 "An Act relating to the lease and sale of state land for recreational cabin sites; and providing for an effective date."

[3:31:34 PM](#)

JOHN BOYLE, Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself and Director Christy Colles, Division of Mining, Land and Water for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

[3:32:00 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE introduced SB 105 on behalf of the administration. He explained that SB 105 was driven by a high-level policy rationale - with less than one percent of Alaska in private hands, the relative dearth of private lands made it challenging for people who hoped to have a little piece of Alaska to make their own. He pointed out that limited supply means higher prices, and the governor's rationale was to increase the supply of land available to Alaskans so they can pursue more private, personal recreation and responsible use. He said SB 105 aimed to create a mechanism allowing people to select sites that are special to them—places where they recreate, find cathartic release from modern urban society, and remind themselves why they live in Alaska.

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COMMISSIONER BOYLE said the governor believed people should have the freedom to choose suitable places for themselves, rather than a command-and-control approach where government dictated where certain things can and cannot occur. He said this was about getting Alaska back to its roots, giving people the ability to stake out a piece of land and feel they have some skin in the game in making Alaska their home. He said SB 105 sought to streamline the process for leasing and purchasing recreational cabin sites, which had been thorny in the past, and to support economic opportunities tied to outdoor recreation and stewardship by enabling people to pick up a piece of the state and pursue their dreams.

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COMMISSIONER BOYLE emphasized that SB 105 would help level the playing field for those who recently entered the state and had not yet had a chance to find a piece of Alaska to call their own, build family memories, and develop a special connection to a place.

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SENATOR DUNBAR suggested the assertion that less than one percent of Alaska lands were in private hands was in error. He pointed out that Alaska Native Corporations were private corporations [holding large areas of land] and while there may be less than one percent of Alaska held in private individual hands, more than one percent of Alaska was privately owned.

[3:36:17 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER BOYLE deferred to experts regarding the accurate percentage and maintained that a very small percentage of Alaska lands was held by any form of a private entity.

[3:36:45 PM](#)

CHRISTY COLLES, Director, Division of Mining, Land and Water, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska, began a presentation on SB 105. She moved to slide 2:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 105: Purpose

Article VIII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution:

It is the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest.

The bill will provide opportunities for Alaskans to utilize state land and will increase the amount of Alaska land owned by individuals.

The bill aligns with the Governor's priority to put Alaska land into Alaskan hands.

MS. COLLES noted that Article VIII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution set a policy to encourage settlement and development of resources for maximum use consistent with the public interest. She said expanding private land ownership would directly support this policy by fueling economic growth, strengthening property rights, and fostering responsible land stewardship. She asserted that when individuals own land, they invest in improvements that drive demand for housing, infrastructure, and local businesses, stimulating job creation, raising property values, and broadening the tax base. She noted that SB 105 did not authorize commercial development but

predicted that private sales would naturally spur economic activity.

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MS. COLLES said as populations grew in newly developed areas, demand for goods, services, and public infrastructure would increase, encouraging small businesses and service providers to establish themselves. Private ownership would enable diverse and efficient development, allowing communities to grow organically while keeping local decision making at the forefront. She noted that selling state land was already a long-standing practice, and DNR facilitated both competitive and noncompetitive sales. SH said SB 105 would provide another opportunity to fulfill the constitutional mandate and advance the governor's vision of expanding private land ownership. She said by placing more land into the hands of Alaskans, the state would unlock new pathways to home ownership, business expansion, and responsible resource development, building a stronger, more self-sufficient Alaska. She concluded it was the time to invest in the future by empowering Alaskans with the opportunity to own and develop land.

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MS. COLLES moved to slide 3, State Land, a map of Alaska designating ownership throughout the state. She affirmed Senator Dunbar's assertion that the Native Corporations increased the total Alaska lands under private ownership to two to three percent, but said private individuals held less than one percent.

[3:39:33 PM](#)

MS. COLLES moved to slide 4, Available Land, a map of Alaska illustrating:

- Vacant, Unappropriated, Unreserved
- Current Remote Recreation Areas
- Available Subdivision Parcels

MS. COLLES explained that the map showed land withdrawn from the public domain by legislative action, including state parks and game refuges. She noted the map highlighted unreserved and unappropriated lands, also known as VU lands, defined by AS 29.65.130. She said that SB 105 extended beyond these classifications, resulting in additional lands beyond the approximately 47 million acres indicated on the map.

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MS. COLLES moved to slide 5: She said subdivision sales served individuals who wanted established lots designed by the

department, with platted or developed roads. Fair market value was set, and buyers could bid the minimum fair market price or higher through the sealed bid process. If a parcel received no bids, it was either moved to the following year or placed in over-the-counter sales. SB 105 would not change the way subdivision sales were conducted.

[Original punctuation provided.]

Current Land Sale Programs

- Subdivision Sales
 - Create subdivision through platting
 - Complete survey and appraisal
 - Provide auction for purchase

MS. COLLES said the remote recreational cabin staking program appealed to those with a pioneer spirit who wanted to stake their own boundaries within large areas the state designated for this type of sale.

- Remote Recreational Staking Program
 - Identifies and develops staking area
 - Offers land and holds drawing to stake
 - Applicant staking, leasing, and purchase

MS. COLLES said SB 105 sought to maintain these existing offerings while adding an option that would allow individuals to nominate a site the department had not already identified.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked to return to slide 4. He asked for an explanation for the meaning of the colors on the map.

[3:41:52 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said the blue represented vacant, unappropriated, unreserved lands. She said the focus of the map was that blue land, about 47 million acres. She said the classification of the land allowed for its disposal.

[3:42:26 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the [DNR] commissioner could dispose of vacant, unappropriated land.

MS. COLLES said [the blue] lands had classifications that made [disposal] allowable, but that it was not legislatively

designated and was still included in public domain. She said the lands were eligible for reclassification.

[3:42:48 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether refuges and state parks were included [as vacant, unappropriated land].

[3:42:55 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said state parks and refuges and other legislatively designated lands were not included. She said there were components of SB 105 that would allow some types of land that had been pulled out through the personal use cabin program to be considered, but she said it was a very limited amount in the sense that not everybody can go and look at a legislatively designated area and select lands out of that land base.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what use could be allowed on these lands. He asked what disposition rights the commissioner or the state would have with the blue designated lands.

[3:43:51 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that land was classified by the state and that there were a variety of classifications. She said the commissioner could issue a lease, grant an easement, or sell land depending on its classification. Some land was already classified for settlement, but some areas may not be. In those cases, she said DNR conducted reclassifications: they talk to the public, complete agency reviews, and determine whether an area is a good candidate for a subdivision sale or a remote recreation sale. She said when the decision is made, the land is reclassified for example as settlement land so it can be disposed of accordingly.

[3:44:40 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that DNR was already able to take these actions. He asked why SB 105 was necessary.

[3:44:53 PM](#)

MS. COLLES affirmed that many actions were already possible. She said SB 105 would allow someone to nominate land. She said under current statute, only areas already designated by DNR were eligible for purchase in a competitive process.

[3:45:27 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the commissioner would consider opening a particular area [for sale] if someone approached DNR with a specific request.

[3:45:41 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that it was possible for DNR to consider [selling] areas that people nominated. She noted that the presentation would cover the current process as well as change proposed by SB 105.

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MS. COLLES moved to slide 6. She said the staking program offered designated areas where individuals could select and mark parcel boundaries within defined acreage limits. She said parcel sizes were usually between 10 and 20 acres, subject to minimum and maximum thresholds. Participants choose their parcel size and establish their own corner points.

MS. COLLES said the program began in 2001. Since its inception, DNR opened staking opportunities 16 times across 66,940 acres within 86 staking areas. To date, 830 parcels—totaling 10,929 acres—have been sold. Slide 6 illustrates several example staking areas:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Examples of Staking Areas

[Slide 6 includes photos of each area.]

- Mankomen Lake: 8,030 Acres
25 Staking Authorizations
- East Fork Pass: 16,350 Acres
60 Staking Authorization
- Mount Ryan II: 35,700 Acres
30 Staking Authorizations
- Snake Lake: 25,395 Acres
50 Staking Authorization

[3:47:26 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how many of the properties sold had been developed.

[3:47:34 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said DNR did not track whether areas were developed. She cited time and manpower limitations. She said the initial staking was followed by a survey and once the purchase at fair market value was complete, DNR would revisit the property only if they received a report of non-compliance regarding set-backs or other violations.

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI observed that SB 105 would expand [land disposal by the state] and said it was important to understand whether people were developing on the land [after purchase]. He also asked how many people were returning land to the state.

[3:48:35 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said failure rates should be available to provide to the committee. She said access challenges and financial constraints were sometime factors.

[3:48:58 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked for failure rates from public auctions and over-the counter land sales as well.

[3:49:28 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said that failure rate data could be provided to the committee. She clarified that sales at auction were to Alaska residents, but that over-the-counter sales could be to non-residents.

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MS. COLLES moved to slide 7, SB 105: Process, illustrating the following steps prescribed by SB 105:

1. Commissioner Lists Available Lands or Nomination Received
2. Application Approved
3. Public Notice
4. Lease or Sale
5. Private Ownership

MS. COLLES explained that SB 105 would restructure the remote recreational cabin staking program by allowing cabin sites to be created in two ways:

- (1) through the department's scheduled land offerings, which continue the existing model and allow the commissioner to set acreage limits; or
- (2) through a new nomination process, which fixes parcel size at 10 acres. All classified general domain land would be eligible for staking, except lands classified for mineral or oil and gas use, unless the applicant holds a valid five-year mining claim.

MS. COLLES said SB 105 specified that nominated sites must be spaced at least one-quarter mile apart, except for applicants with a qualifying mining claim or applicants participating in the personal use cabin site provisions in Section Eight. She said that although applicants could seek sites either through scheduled offerings or nominations, all applications would

require commissioner approval. Once approved, DNR must issue public notice, during which the decision may be appealed. Successful applicants may receive a lease of up to 10 years or purchase the parcel once survey and appraisal work was completed, with the overall intent of enabling eventual private ownership.

[3:51:08 PM](#)

MS. COLLES moved to and narrated slide 8:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 105: Lease to Purchase

- Lease
 - 10-year leasing period
 - Allows for the assignment of a lease
 - Fees for leases shall ensure a fair return to the state
 - May purchase the site at any time during the term of the lease
 - Termination of lease for non-compliance
- Purchase
 - Purchase price set at fair market value, set at the time of entry
 - Lease fees will be applied to the purchase price
 - Applicant must pay for appraisal, survey, and platting
 - Contract term up to 30 years

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that the current process required public notice. He said it appeared that no public notice would be required under SB 105 and asked for clarification.

[3:52:17 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said public notice was required as constitutionally mandated. She said after an application was approved, DNR would issue a formal decision and then public notice that decision. The public may appeal during this notice period. She said DNR could not proceed with selling the parcel until any appeal was resolved by the commissioner. If the appellant disagreed with the commissioner's determination, the matter may be taken to court.

[3:52:57 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for an explanation of SB 105, Section 7. He read Section 7(a): "This section establishes the requirements for notice given by the department for the following actions: (1) classification or reclassification of state land under AS 38.05.300, **except for land reclassified for lease or sale under AS 38.05.600,** " noting the addition of the exception. He argued that it appeared that public notice was being excluded.

[3:53:29 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said DNR would not be doing a 945 for public notice of reclassification, but would necessarily provide public notice for the disposition of public lands. She noted that there were different types of public notice.

[3:53:49 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for clarification of a 945 notice.

[3:53:52 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that the type of notice following AS 38.05.945 prescribed a specific type of [public] notice that was not required for every action that required public notice.

[3:54:25 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI observed that DNR was not required to provide [public] notice but does provide [public] notice and asked whether Section 7 of SB 105 could be removed.

[3:54:36 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said the legislature could so choose. She said DNR used AS 38.05.945 when required. She said AS 38.05.035 which pointed to public notice for certain authorizations under AS 38.05.945. She said DNR divisions other than the Division of Mining, Land and Water also used [AS 38.05.035].

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SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted the liberal use of acronyms [and statute references]. He observed that SB 105 attracted significant attention. He asked for an explanation of the intent for excepting [land reclassified for lease or sale under AS 38.05.600] from notice.

[3:55:26 PM](#)

MS. COLLES answered that the intent was to streamline the process by not requiring the same level of public notice [prescribed by AS 38.05.945]. She reiterated that, per the

constitution, DNR always provided public notice on land disposals and would continue to do so.

[3:55:59 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asserted that it seemed like DNR would be using a lesser degree of public notice and for the benefit of the public audience, he asked for an explanation of the practical implications for lesser notice.

[3:56:10 PM](#)

RENA MILLER, Special Assistant, Commissioner's Office, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska, suggested that Chris Orman from the Department of Law (DOL) was available online and might be able to provide an explanation for the committee.

[3:56:36 PM](#)

CHRISTOPHER ORMAN, Assistant Attorney General, Natural Resources Section, Department of Law, Juneau, Alaska explained that Article VIII, Section 7 of the Alaska Constitution required public notice of a disposal, and there was substantial case law on what constitutes a disposal. He suggested that the core issue at hand was distinguishing what public notice means under the Alaska Constitution versus what is required under AS 38.05.945. He said the 945 notice was a legislatively crafted process, and Section (a) listed eight types of actions, such as general classification or reclassification of land, zoning, best interest findings under AS 38.05.035, and competitive disposals, that the legislature determined require this higher level of notice. Subsection (b) outlined what that notice looks like, including posting on the Alaska Online Public Notice System for at least 30 consecutive days and publication in display-advertising form. Subsection (c) adds requirements to notify municipalities, regional and village corporations, and even the postmaster of nearby settlements. He noted that, compared to these detailed statutory requirements, constitutional public notice under Article VIII, Section 7, while still mandatory, was not, arguably, as stringent.

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SENATOR DUNBAR asked whether existing law already provided a way to structure a lease that included a lease-to-purchase option or a first right of refusal. He noted that the presentation referred to "lease or sale" as separate actions and questioned whether it must always be one or the other, or whether a lease can be structured so that it effectively allows a lease-to-buy arrangement under current statutory authority.

[4:01:33 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that, for private individuals, the only current lease structure was used in the remote recreational cabin sites program, where the lease served as a temporary step that allows the lessee to complete the survey and appraisal needed before purchasing the land. In contrast, true lease-to-sale arrangements existed mainly in public-to-public, charitable, or some long-term commercial leases, where a preference right might be granted at the end of the lease and a separate decision process was required before a sale occurred. She said for individual, private-use programs, the lease functioned essentially as a stop-gap on the way to an eventual purchase rather than a standalone lease-to-buy option.

[4:02:34 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR referred to slide 8 and asked whether it was possible under current law to move from lease to purchase.

[4:02:55 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said a lease-to-sale approach was possible under current law, even though the statute does not expressly authorize it for the remote recreational cabin program. In practice, DNR used a lease as a practical tool to give individuals temporary rights to the land so they can enter, build, and complete the required survey and appraisal before purchasing. Lease payments can later be credited toward the purchase price and survey costs. She said SB 105 would provide a longer 10-year lease term. Current leases were usually about three years. SB 105 would allow enough time for both applicants and DNR to complete survey and appraisal work.

[4:04:02 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR asked what SB 105 would provide that was not possible under current law. He asked whether there were restrictions in the law that would prevent extending a lease beyond three years.

[4:04:25 PM](#)

MS. COLLES deferred the question to Department of Law (DOL).

[4:04:42 PM](#)

MR. ORMAN said he would have to review the relevant statutes before responding in full. He noted that AS 38.05.600 governed lease-to-purchase arrangements and, to his knowledge, did not specify lease duration. He compared with general leasing statutes, 38.05.070 and 38.05.075, which clearly distinguished between short-term and long-term leases using a 10-year threshold. He wanted to verify he was not overlooking any

requirements in how DNR was implementing statute 38.05.600 and offered to follow up.

[4:05:58 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI noted a lot of the requirements for public were less stringent under SB 105 and asked for more details. He specifically noted provisions for public notice under [AS 38.05.] 945 and surmised they would not be required under SB 105:

- posting in a conspicuous location in the vicinity of the action,
- notification of parties known likely to be affected by the action, and
- another method calculated to reach affected parties

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MS. COLLES affirmed that the public notice standard would be different. She said DNR would post public notices on their website and encouraged the public to look there. She said that would be DNR's standard.

[4:07:33 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI surmised that the following methods of public notice would no longer be provided under SB 105:

- a publication of notice displaying advertising,
- display advertising describing the proposed action and
- reference in a newspaper of statewide

[4:07:58 PM](#)

MS. COLLES affirmed that under SB 105, DNR would not provide those types of notice.

[4:08:07 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI asked whether municipalities would be notified [if disposal lands were located within their boundaries].

[4:08:14 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said Department of Natural Resources (DNR) often went "above and beyond" to provide notice, but that it was not mandatory.

[4:08:44 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI surmised that regional corporations, village corporations, postmasters and non-profit corporations would no longer be provided with notice [of land disposal by DNR].

[4:09:00 PM](#)

SENATOR CLAMAN arrived via teleconference.

[4:09:27 PM](#)

MS. COLLES affirmed Senator Kawasaki's summary.

[4:09:53 PM](#)

12:29

MS. COLLES moved to and narrated slide 9:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Personal Use Cabin Program

- SB 105 would allow previous and current Personal Use Cabin Program (PUCP) permit holders to nominate their cabin sites
- In 1984, the Legislature established the Personal Use Cabin Program
- 421 applications were received and permits were issued
- In 1997, the Personal Use Cabin Program was repealed
- Status of permits today across the State:
 - 119 permits are issued and active
 - 140 permits are closed
 - 162 cabins exist but the permit is not active or is under appeal

[4:12:23 PM](#)

MS. COLLES moved to slide 10 and explained that the map of Alaska on the slide illustrated the location of cabins in the Personal Use Cabin Program.

[4:12:32 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR noted that the map showed far fewer cabins than actually existed in Alaska. He asked for an explanation of those other cabins and their relationship to PUCP cabins.

[4:13:13 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that cabins on state land exist for many legitimate and varied reasons, including different types of land ownership and inholdings such as Native allotments, authorized cabins in state parks. She said there were legally permitted trapping cabins, cabins associated with state land sales programs, and some unauthorized trespass cabins.

[4:13:53 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR observed that many Anchorage residents had cabins in the Mat-Su and other areas. He asked for confirmation that they were likely acquired through private land sales or programs other than the PUCP.

[4:14:06 PM](#)

MS. COLLES concurred.

[4:14:26 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS noted concerns expressed to legislators centers on Section 8 regarding state parks and other designated areas. He asked whether it was true that SB 105 would apply only to the limited number of sites within those areas that were already legislatively designated under the personal use cabin program.

[4:15:07 PM](#)

MS. COLLES affirmed and clarified that no new sites could be nominated on legislatively designated lands, including state parks, and that there were currently no personal use cabin program sites in state parks. She said existing sites were located within game refuges or critical habitat areas, with approximately 421 on record, though that number was uncertain. She said the exact number that would qualify must be determined on a case-by-case basis because the statute required that a cabin be maintained, and some cabins no longer existed due to fire, removal, or other reasons.

[4:15:58 PM](#)

MS. COLLES moved to slide 11, a summary of the Sectional Analysis for SB 105 and provided an overview:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Sectional Analysis

Senate Bill 105 - State Land for Recreational Cabin Sites (34-GS1026\A)

Section 1 - Amends AS 38.04.020(i) to remove the word "remote."

Section 2 - Amends 38.05.035(e)(6) to add a new paragraph (I) to exclude a recreational cabin site lease or sale from written finding requirements.

Section 3 - Amends AS 38.05.045 to include repealed and re-enacted AS 38.05.600 in list of statutes under which land may be disposed.

Section 4 - Amends AS 38.05.065(b) to include the repealed and re-enacted AS 38.05.600 in the requirements for land sale contract payments.

Section 5 - Amends AS 38.05.125(a) to include the repealed and re-enacted AS 38.05.600(a) in existing statute providing reservations that must be included in the sale, lease, or grant of state land, and in each deed to state land, properties, or interest in state land.

Section 6 - Amends AS 38.05.600 by repealing the existing remote recreational site statute and re-enacting it as follows:

- (a) Provides and intent statement for this section of statute that draws from the Constitution of the State of Alaska and the Alaska Land Act.
- (b) Directs the Commissioner of DNR to administer a program to lease and sell state lands for recreational cabin sites and to make sites available through both a scheduled offering program and a nomination process.

[4:17:08 PM](#)

MS. COLEES continued to provide a summary of the Sectional Analysis for SB 105:

- (c) Modifies existing staking program to allow eligible applicants to apply for the lease or sale of land from the schedule of land offerings published annually by the department.
- (d) Allows an eligible applicant to nominate and apply for the lease and sale of up to 10 acres of general domain state lands not included in the schedule of land offerings and requires that all nominated lands have legal access, including access provided through generally allowed uses. The applicant has the burden on demonstrating that nominated land is eligible for lease and sale.
- (e) Prohibits the commissioner from approving the sale or lease of land under this program that is classified as mineral or oil and gas land unless the applicant has held a valid mining claim

located on the parcel or contiguous to the parcel for the preceding five years. Allows an applicant holding a valid mining claim to nominate land that is within one-quarter mile of another recreational cabin site.

- (f) Requires the department to provide public notice of the intent to lease or sell land if the commissioner approves the application.
- (g) Authorizes the commissioner to issue a lease for up to 10 years to an eligible applicant. Limits use of leased land to recreational purposes only during the term of the lease, February 19, 2025 34-GS1026\A Page 2 of 3 unless the applicant also have a valid mining claim on the land. Requires leased land to be surveyed at the cost of the lessee no later than five years after commencement of the lease. Allows the commissioner to terminate a lease if the lessee fails to comply with lease terms. Allows the lessee to purchase the land at any time during the term of the lease.
- (h) Requires the commissioner to set lease fees to ensure a fair return to the state based on the use granted. Directs the department to manage improvements or remaining personal property consistent with existing statutes at AS 38.05.090 regarding removal or reversion of improvement when a lease is terminated on state land. Allows assignment of a lease.
- (i) Provides discretionary authority to sell lands to an eligible applicant and requires the sale be at fair market value. Requires the sale price to a lessee to be determined as of the time of entry and allows lease payments to be credited toward the purchase price. Requires the purchaser to pay for appraisal, survey, and platting fees.
- (j) Provides discretionary authority to the commissioner to adopt regulations necessary to implement these statutes.
- (k) Defines the terms "eligible applicant" and "resident" as they apply to this section of statute. Provides that an eligible applicant must be at least 18 years of age and has not leased or purchased a recreational cabin site in the previous 10-year period.

[4:17:10 PM](#)

MS. COLLES continued to provide a summary of the Sectional Analysis for SB 105:

Section 7 - Exempts reclassification of land under AS 38.05.600 from notice requirements under AS 38.05.945.

Section 8 - Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska to add a new section that addresses the transition of personal use cabins permitted under a previous program into the new recreational cabin sites program established in Sec.6:

(a) Allows limited exemption from provisions in existing statutes (AS 16.20 or AS 41.21) and regulations adopted by DNR under specific statutes (AS 38.04.035, AS 38.05.020, AS 41.21.020, and AS 44.37.011) that state a personal use cabin permit does not convey any interest in state land or grant any preference right, and provides discretionary authority for the commissioner to:

(1) Approve a nomination to purchase or lease land as a recreational cabin site by a current valid permit holder of a cabin site and surrounding land.

(2) Approve a nomination to lease or purchase land as a recreational cabin site by a former permit holder, or an immediate family member of a former permit holder, whose permit for a cabin site and surrounding land expired, if the personal use cabin was maintained.

(b) Allows the department to authorize recreational cabin sites from prior permits under this section less than one-quarter mile from another recreational cabin site.

(c) States that the eligible lands in regard to this section are those sites listed in the 2025 Personal Use Cabin Permit Master List located in the office of the director of the division of lands.

(d) For personal use cabins previously permitted on land set aside as special purpose sites, provides that the land can be leased or sold regardless of its classification and directs the commissioner to consider whether the disposal is consistent with the use of the land, including the

[4:17:25 PM](#)

MS. COLLES continued to provide a summary of the Sectional Analysis for SB 105:

Section 9 - Amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska to add a new section relating to transition as follows:

- (a) Provides that existing leases under AS 38.05.600 before the effective date of this act are not subject to AS 38.05.600 as repealed and reenacted and will continue pursuant to the lease terms.
- (b) Provides that land leased or sold before the effective date of this act will be considered a recreational cabin site for the purpose of establishing future program eligibility.

Section 10 - Repeals section 9 on June 30, 2030.

Section 11 - Provides for an immediate effective date under AS 01.10.070(c).

[4:17:43 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how much acreage the commissioner could allow an individual to bid on or purchase. He asked whether there was a maximum acreage.

[4:17:58 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said SB 105 set a maximum of ten acres for an individual to nominate once every ten years.

[4:18:09 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the ten acre limit applied to subdivisions.

[4:18:17 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said DNR set the acreage for subdivisions and that the area for them could vary. She said some were as high as twenty acres, but that they were typically ten acres.

[4:18:32 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how many acres would be able to be sold [through SB 105].

[4:18:40 PM](#)

MS. COLLES said, including VU lands, which were not legislatively designated, and not a park or critical habitat, 47 million acres or more [would be available]. She noted that not all classified lands would be included.

[4:19:10 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for an explanation for excluding SB 105 from requiring a written best interest finding.

[4:19:19 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that a variety of authorizations were excluded from best-interest finding to allow for less burdensome decision processes. While a decision record would still be maintained for appeals or court review, the intent was to streamline the process so the program could handle high public demand without requiring excessive staffing.

[4:19:56 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR said there had been bills similar to SB 105 recently and asked how SB 105 differed. He also asked whether the ten acre per ten year per individual limit would allow a family of five to acquire 50 acres.

[4:20:31 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that SB 105 differed from earlier versions of the bill in that it shifted away from long-term permitting or leasing and emphasized purchase and ownership of land. She said SB 105 also included the personal use cabin program (PUCP) to address long-standing issues with transferring cabins, especially when permit holders die.

MS. COLLES said that under SB 105 ownership would apply to individuals, with a quarter-mile spacing requirement to prevent blocking access to lakes and rivers. She noted that exemptions to the quarter-mile rule would apply to PUCP participants and holders of valid mining claims.

[4:22:28 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR affirmed the thoughtfulness of the quarter mile separation policy. He asked whether the nominating individual was required to be at least 18 years old.

[4:22:42 PM](#)

MS. COLLES affirmed that an individual would have to be 18 years of age and a resident to qualify to make a nomination.

[4:22:48 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS noted that SB 105 referred to recreational cabin. He asked for a clear definition and description of the intended structure.

[4:23:15 PM](#)

MS. COLLES clarified that the [PUCP] program was intended for private, recreational use during the lease term. She said after a parcel was sold, the state would not monitor commercial use or restrict the size or type of structures built. She noted that, if a purchaser was not able to complete the purchase, SB 105 required cleanup of the land or allowed the state to retake and resell it, potentially returning a portion of the proceeds from any infrastructure to the individual. She said that the goal was to avoid termination whenever possible.

[4:24:11 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked for clarification about SB 105, Section 8, questioning why it was uncodified. He expressed concern about language that appeared to allow the commissioner to lease or sell land within state parks, forests, and wildlife or game refuges, noting an apparent contradiction between requiring consistency with land use and permitting lease or sale regardless of land classification.

[4:25:21 PM](#)

MS. COLLES confirmed that Senator Wielechowski's interpretation was correct and explained that the provision applied only to personal use cabins. She noted due diligence had been done to identify where such cabins existed and suggested the language may be intended to cover any unknown cabins in legislatively designated areas. For further clarification, she deferred to Mr. Orman.

[4:25:58 PM](#)

MR. ORMAN concurred that Section 8 applied only to personal use cabin permit (PUCP) sites. Subsection D listed various protected land types to ensure all existing PUCPs were included, regardless of location, as identified on the Department of Natural Resources' PUCP master list. He said the provision allowed these identified sites to be nominated and considered for disposal under the process described by SB 105. He clarified that PUCP sites would not require the standard land classification process for disposal, because [through SB 105] the legislature was explicitly authorizing it, avoiding complications given the protected status of these lands.

[4:28:35 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI said he had a lot more questions but advocated for public testimony to be heard.

[4:28:48 PM](#)

SENATOR KAWASAKI noted that cabin properties that were in the [protected] land areas were already on a list. He asked that the committee be provided with that list.

MS. COLLES agreed to provide the list for the committee.

[4:29:24 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked for clarification that a nomination process was already in place for other programs.

[4:29:35 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that there was no individual nomination process to request a specific parcel. She said someone could propose an idea or location for land to be sold, the state evaluated it, and if approved, the land was opened for staking by multiple interested parties.

[4:29:54 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS observed that SB 105 moved toward allowing individuals to target specific parcels for purchase, while still requiring public notice and a competitive bidding process. He questioned whether this could discourage nominations if potential buyers feared being outbid by those with greater financial resources.

[4:30:24 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that if someone nominated a parcel, they would not be subject to competitive bidding. If the land was eligible for disposal and accessible, the state would issue a decision with public notice, after which the nominator may purchase the parcel at fair market value and cover the costs of appraisal and survey.

[4:31:03 PM](#)

MS. COLLES moved to and narrated slide 12:

[Original punctuation provided.]

SB 105: Fiscal Note

- One Land Surveyor position (\$148.3) - survey remote cabin sites, survey instructions, and plat reviews

- Two Natural Resource Specialist 3 positions (\$124.7 each) - adjudicating nomination requests and identifying lands available through the annual offering; completing title work and issuing patents

MS. COLLES explained that the fiscal note from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), OMB Component Number 3002, dated February 25, 2025, anticipated that the program described by SB 105 would be very popular, requiring additional personnel to implement.

[4:31:44 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked whether the expected high level of interest had been translated into estimates of how much land would be sold and the approximate annual revenue that could be generated.

[4:32:06 PM](#)

MS. COLLES explained that while she didn't have exact numbers, there had been significant interest in the PUCP, which included 421 participants. She estimated that at least half, around 200 plus, of those participants would likely qualify, resulting in decisions needing to be written for over 200 locations across the state, in addition to other nominations. She explained that this anticipated workload was why DNR requested additional positions.

[4:32:53 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL opened public testimony on SB 105.

[4:33:36 PM](#)

PATT GARRETT, representing self, McCarthy, Alaska, said she was a 22-year resident, and that she restored a historic cabin on private land within the park. She said she was concerned about access and infrastructure. She said the McCarthy Road was unreliable, and that the two existing outhouses required summer pumping at the residents' expense. She said the outhouses couldn't support additional use. She said the bridges couldn't handle heavy equipment, and residents currently use the land for firewood, mushrooms, and berries.

[4:35:35 PM](#)

ROBERT ARCHIBALD, representing self, Homer, Alaska, said he opposed SB 105 due to access and environmental concerns. He argued that proposed cabins in critical habitat areas, such as state parks, led to damage from ATVs and other access methods, harming the landscape. He observed conflict with the purpose of state parks to preserve and protect the land. He recommended

that private inholdings be repurchased by the state when they become available.

[4:37:03 PM](#)

SUE CHRISTIANSEN, representing self, Homer, Alaska, said she strongly opposed SB 105 and advocated for much greater scrutiny. She said she was particularly concerned about impacts to refuges and state parks that were established to preserve land and water, arguing that allowing private or commercial activities would conflict with founding statutes. She cited existing problems with litter and poor stewardship in remote areas. She thanked the committee for considering her concerns.

[4:38:34 PM](#)

GORDON VERNON, representing self, Homer, Alaska, said he was a remote parcel owner and praised the program offered in the 1980s. He noted that about three of four cabin plans failed and said there were areas along the Skwentna River where people tried to homestead and shop at Walmart, leaving a terrible pile of plastic and discarded baby carriages behind.

[4:39:26 PM](#)

WAYNE HALL, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, said he was a 47-year Anchorage resident. He argued that the provisions in Section 8b were unclear and recommended explicit prohibition of parcels in the 14 categories of protected state land. He warned of negative impacts on wildlife and habitat, increased wildfire risk and state costs, and the loss of public access as private parcels become scattered across public lands. He also objected to allowing commercial use, subdivision, and resale of parcels, and said lease assignments could encourage speculation and allow non-residents to ultimately acquire the land.

[4:41:11 PM](#)

JUDY BRAKEL, representing self, Gustavus, Alaska, said she was a lifelong southeast Alaska resident. She urged clearer language in SB 105 to limit affected lands exclusively to sites already on the personal use cabin permit list. She said there was widespread concern in Gustavus about SB 105, noting decades of community effort to preserve wild lands. She opposed the idea of randomly selling cabin sites, warning that people tend to settle in areas most important to wildlife, which could cause significant harm even outside formally designated refuges.

[4:43:20 PM](#)

KASEY ADERHOLD, representing self, Homer, Alaska, said she opposed SB 105, arguing that Alaska's low level of private land ownership allowed the state to manage public lands for long-term

public benefit. She noted that existing processes already allowed Alaskans to access state land for recreation and advocated instead for investing in state parks and public use cabins. Citing the statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP) survey, she emphasized that public use cabins were the top recreational priority for Alaskans and would provide broader recreational and economic benefits.

[4:44:22 PM](#)

MATTHEW ROBUS, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, described his experience in land disposal policy as a former Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation and argued that settlement in resource-rich but limited-access areas inevitably restricted public access to those resources. He urged the legislature to be cautious about allowing private residence decisions to drive land use outcomes. He concluded by opposing SB 105 and particularly Section 8, stating that the state should not permanently dispose of land within designated special areas and should respect past legislative decisions protecting those crown jewels of the state's public lands.

[4:46:16 PM](#)

JAMES SQUYRES, representing self, Deltana, Alaska, said he opposed SB 105, arguing that it applied broadly to nearly all state land, not just designated settlement areas. He contended that SB 105 seriously underestimated fiscal impacts, particularly the increased wildfire suppression costs and the strain on Forestry resources when new cabins are built outside planned development zones. He asserted that the fiscal note was incomplete and warned that SB 105 would trigger a one-time land rush for prime locations. He argued that the siting and spacing provisions of SB 105 would allow individuals or families to effectively control large, high-value areas and restrict public access.

[4:47:59 PM](#)

MATT OBERMILLER, representing self, Tiekel, Alaska, introduced himself as a long-time Tiekel resident, general contractor, and wilderness user. He strongly opposed SB 105, arguing that it was poorly conceived and carried significant unintended consequences. He noted that all Alaskans had broad access to public lands and cabins, but once land was sold it would be permanently lost to public use. He warned that SB 105 would degrade high-quality wilderness through increased development and access trails, citing past land disposal programs as financial losses to the state. He concluded that SB 105 would impose costs on all residents while disproportionately benefiting a small, wealthy few.

[There was a problem with sound transmission and recording between testimony from MR. OBERMILLER and MR. PARKS. The chair called for an at-ease and subsequently reconvened the meeting and public testimony.]

[4:49:21 PM](#)

[At ease.]

[4:49:44 PM](#)

[CHAIR GIESSEL reconvened the meeting.]

[4:49:52 PM](#)

ALAN PARKS, representing self, Homer, Alaska, opposed SB 105, stating that it was poorly thought out and echoing concerns raised by prior public testimony. He highlighted the importance of strong public notice processes, noting that the elimination of the Coastal Zone Management Plan significantly reduced effective local awareness and participation. He concluded by clearly stating that SB 105 was a bad bill.

[4:51:11 PM](#)

STEPHENS HARPER, representing self, McCarthy, Alaska, opposed SB 105, arguing that selling cabin sites on state land in the McCarthy area would harm existing subsistence and recreational uses, increase the risk of human-caused wildfires, and strain already limited emergency services. He emphasized that the community lacked local government capacity to manage these impacts and contend that SB 105 improperly bypassed the ongoing Department of Natural Resources area planning process and established public review mechanisms.

[4:52:39 PM](#)

ROD ARNO, Policy Director, Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC), Palmer, Alaska, AOC's opposition to SB 105, emphasizing the organization's long-standing mission to protect public access to public resources. He cited reduced opportunities on federal lands for many Alaskans and stresses the importance of retaining state lands in public ownership. He affirmed the Council's support for existing law (AS 38.05.015) prioritizing the public interest in keeping state land public.

[4:53:55 PM](#)

WALTER MAAKESTAD, representing self, Lake Minchumina, Alaska, said he was a second-generation Alaskan and expressed strong support for SB 105 as a rare opportunity for remote interior residents to gain limited land ownership. He described decades of personal and family investment in a trapping cabin on state land that had become increasingly burdened by complex

regulations and costs, without the ability to pass it on to future generations. Having lost most of his trapping camps to wildfire, he emphasized that owning a small parcel around his remaining cabin would preserve a meaningful site with no broader public impact. He concluded by thanking the committee for what he saw as the first real chance to secure personal ownership of a small piece of state land.

[4:56:28 PM](#)

LILLIAN THORINGTON, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, testified in opposition to SB 105. She introduced herself as the reigning Miss Juneau and an intern with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers of Alaska. She emphasized the importance of public lands for accessibility, equity, and well-being. She explained that her advocacy platform centered on making the outdoors available to everyone and described how access to public lands was critical to her own development through scouting, particularly growing up in a low-income household. She highlighted the role of public lands in providing recreation, personal growth, and mental health benefits, noting Alaska's elevated rates of suicide and depression, and warned that reducing access to public lands could harm vulnerable communities.

[4:57:43 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR advocated for the testifier to complete her reading of a quote by Henry David Thoreau.

CHAIR GIESSEL concurred.

MS. THORINGTON read:

"At present, in this vicinity, the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom. But possibly the day will come when it will be partitioned off into so-called pleasure-grounds, in which a few will take a narrow and exclusive pleasure only, when fences shall be multiplied, and man-traps and other engines invented to confine men to the public road, and walking over the surface of God's earth shall be construed to mean trespassing on some gentleman's grounds. To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it. Let us improve our opportunities, then, before the evil days come."

Henry David Thoreau, Walking

[4:58:41 PM](#)

MARY GLAVES, Alaska Chapter Coordinator, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA), Juneau, Alaska, opposed Senate Bill 105, arguing that it would reduce public access to state lands and limit resources currently available to all Alaskans. She emphasized that Alaska's outdoor opportunities depended on intact public lands and warned that SB 105 would contribute to habitat fragmentation, negatively affecting wildlife. She said BHA urged the Senate Resources Committee to reject SB 105, citing both immediate impacts and the broader precedent it would set for public land management in Alaska.

[4:59:39 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL left public testimony open, encouraging the submission of written testimony.

[5:00:16 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNBAR clarified a disagreement at the beginning of the meeting with the DNR commissioner, noting that, according to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Forestry, 12.1 percent of Alaska's land was privately owned, not one percent. He emphasized that most of this private land, over 10 percent was owned by Alaska Native corporations, which should be recognized as private landholders. He explained that development on Native corporation lands was possible through leasing or ownership, but only via fair-market negotiations subject to normal market conditions.

[5:01:05 PM](#)

CHAIR GIESSEL held SB 105 in committee.

[5:01:38 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Giessel adjourned the Senate Resources Standing Committee meeting at 5:01 p.m.