

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 3, 2026
3:31 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Scott Kawasaki, Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman, Vice Chair
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson
Senator Cathy Tilton

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: 2025 FIRE SUPPRESSION UPDATE BY NORM MCDONALD~
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS BY BRYAN FISHER~ DIRECTOR OF
ALASKA DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 188

SHORT TITLE: TANANA VALLEY STATE FOREST

SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

| | | |
|----------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 05/02/25 | (S) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS |
| 05/02/25 | (S) | STA, RES |
| 02/03/26 | (S) | STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg) |

WITNESS REGISTER

BRYAN FISHER, Director
Division of Homeland Security and
Emergency Management (DHSEM)
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

JBER, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation on Disaster Preparedness.

NORM MCDONALD, Deputy Director
Division of Forestry & Fire Protection
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation on the 2025 Fire Suppression update.

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding the fire suppression update.

JEREMY DOUSE, State Forester and Director
Division Forestry and Fire Protection
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SB 188 on behalf of the sponsor.

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Natural Resources
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation on SB 188.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI called the Senate State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Wielechowski, Gray-Jackson, Tilton, and Chair Kawasaki. Senator Bjorkman arrived shortly thereafter.

PRESENTATION: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS BY BRYAN FISHER, DIRECTOR OF ALASKA DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY

[3:32:43 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI announced the presentation on Disaster Preparedness by the Alaska Division of Homeland Security.

[3:33:03 PM](#)

BRYAN FISHER, Director, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, JBER, Alaska, provided a presentation on Disaster Preparedness and moved to slide 2, Organization, and stated that his division, Homeland Security, is part of the

Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and reports to Major General Torrance Saxe, the Adjutant General. He said his division has 64 full-time state employees, with no military personnel assigned. He said his division operates the State Emergency Operations Center and coordinates field response, managing disaster recovery efforts, and leading statewide preparedness and planning activities.

[3:34:43 PM](#)

MR. FISHER moved to slide 3 and said the planning section includes three units: All Hazards Resiliency, Community Planning, and Mitigation. Most community and agency preparedness efforts are managed here. The division helps state agencies, municipalities, Tribal governments, and other partners develop continuity of operations plans during disasters. He said the division also provides training and exercises to support those plans. Community Planning develops Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs), Small Community Emergency Response Plans (SCERPs), and supports Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), which coordinate oil, hazardous substance, and all-hazards planning at the community level.

[3:36:54 PM](#)

MR. FISHER moved to slide 4, SCERP: a Document and a Process, and stated that in 2012, DHSEM created a Small Community Emergency Response Plan to bridge the gap between complex federal and state plans and local needs. He said SCERP is designed for communities under 2,000. SCERP provides a simple, customizable, action-oriented format focused on the first 72 hours of a disaster, especially sheltering and evacuation. DHSEM partnered with communities statewide to develop and regularly update about 200 of these plans.

[3:41:28 PM](#)

MR. FISHER moved to slide 5, Hazard Mitigation Plan Development Process, and stated that DHSEM also develops Hazard Mitigation Plans, which identify community risks and outline strategies and projects. He said to reduce the impact of disasters, these projects include fuels reduction, home elevation, and seismic retrofitting. The FEMA guided plans require strong community participation and are primarily federally funded; however, key pre-disaster mitigation grants are currently paused, limiting available support.

[3:44:23 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked how this state administration is evaluating the president's proposal to reduce FEMA's size and shift more responsibility to the states.

MR. FISHER replied that proposed FEMA reforms would shift greater financial risk and responsibility to states and local governments. He said an executive review is underway, and while final recommendations are delayed, discussions point toward fewer federal disaster declarations and reduced funding for response, recovery, preparedness, and mitigation. As a result, states may need to contribute more resources, though specific details are not yet available. He said United States H.R.4669, 119th Congress, Fixing Emergency Management of Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025, would reassess federal versus state and local roles in disaster funding and response. While the outcome is uncertain, momentum suggests increased responsibility at the state and local level.

[3:48:12 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked if the state must assume more emergency response costs, how is DHS preparing and is DHS considering stronger resilience and land use strategies in high-risk flood and coastal areas.

[3:49:11 PM](#)

MR. FISHER answered yes and said the agency actively promotes resilience by urging communities to incorporate hazard mitigation data into infrastructure planning and rebuilding. He said in both new construction and post-disaster recovery, projects are designed to strengthen facilities and reduce future risk, ensuring communities are more durable and better able to recover from disasters.

[3:51:17 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked how the process works and how the federal government determines the amount it will reimburse the state for disaster costs.

[3:51:48 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that under The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), a presidential disaster declaration provides at least 75 percent federal reimbursement for eligible costs. Governor Dunleavy requested an increased federal share for this disaster, but President Trump denied it. As a result, the state is receiving the standard 75/25 cost split, consistent with most federal disasters, while awaiting a decision on appeal.

[3:54:30 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that Governor Dunleavy stated that the disaster declaration authorized a 100 percent federal cost

share. He asked whether that statement was incorrect, or did the federal cost share change after the declaration was approved.

[3:55:15 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that the governor requested a 100 percent federal cost share for 90 days; however, the official notice in the Federal Register did not include that approval. Although there were public statements indicating assistance was forthcoming, the formal documentation did not specify a revised cost share. He said Alaska did not receive confirmation until around December 19th that the request for an increased federal share had been denied. The declaration and notification process differed from past practice, and any clarification ultimately lies with the federal government.

[3:56:55 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI stated that in the October 22, 2025, press release, the governor stated that President Trump approved a disaster declaration authorizing a 100 percent federal cost share. He asked whether the disaster declaration said there was a 100 percent cost share.

[3:57:31 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that the initial press release was based on a verbal notification that the president had approved the disaster declaration. He said written confirmation was not received until a few days later, when the notice was posted in the Federal Register.

[3:57:56 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked why the governor stated the relief would reach 100 percent, since the standard federal cost share covers 75 percent. He inquired who indicated a 100 percent share and whether someone provided that information or if it resulted from an error.

[3:58:20 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that he cannot say and stated that the governor requested a 100 percent cost share and received verbal approval of the disaster declaration. However, on December 19th, the requested cost share adjustment was denied, and the state has appealed that decision.

[3:58:49 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked whether those seeking federal aid can access assistance under the current structure, or whether some individuals still await payments.

MR. FISHER answered no and all authorized assistance is currently available. Under federal law, individuals may receive up to \$44,800 for essential personal property and an additional \$44,800 for housing repair or replacement. He said FEMA has already issued hundreds of grants, totaling about \$32 million to Alaskans, and funds are being distributed as expected.

[4:00:24 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the President of the United States told Governor Dunleavy the federal cost share requested was 100 percent or was it someone else and is there any written confirmation of that.

[4:00:49 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that the State of Alaska didn't receive written information from the White House about the cost share until December 19th.

[4:01:04 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that there were several hundred displaced families affected by Typhoon Halong that fully relocated to communities like Anchorage or Fairbanks. He asked whether some families are still in temporary housing, are any residents still in the impacted area, and how have displaced students been transitioned into schools.

[4:01:57 PM](#)

MR. FISHER replied that after the storm, about 2,000 residents were evacuated, many to Bethel and Anchorage. More than 200 homes were destroyed, and most displaced residents remain away from home. About 80 households (around 400 people) are still in Anchorage hotels and are being transitioned into FEMA-funded long-term rentals for up to 18 months while recovery and rebuilding continue.

[4:03:58 PM](#)

MR. FISHER moved to slide 6, Mitigation Projects-Funding Sources, and stated that the agency administers several hazard mitigation programs. The BRIC program is temporarily suspended, and both pre- and post-disaster mitigation programs are under federal review, with recent requests, including for the Halong disaster, denied nationwide. He said despite funding uncertainty, the state continues updating hazard mitigation plans and pursuing available FEMA programs to strengthen infrastructure and housing during recovery, while other mitigation funds exist through separate federal agencies.

[4:06:29 PM](#)

MR. FISHER moved to slide 7, Preparedness, and stated that the preparedness team manages all FEMA training in the state, including incident command, mitigation, and emergency planning, and coordinates attendance at national training centers. They conduct local training, lead and support disaster exercises, and provide community outreach on individual and family preparedness, including public events and earthquake simulation demonstrations.

[4:09:41 PM](#)

At ease.

**PRESENTATION: 2025 FIRE SUPPRESSION UPDATE BY NORM MCDONALD,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

[4:10:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the presentation on the 2025 Fire Suppression update.

[4:10:58 PM](#)

NORM MCDONALD, Deputy Director, Division of Forestry & Fire Protection, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska, provided a presentation on the 2025 Fire Suppression update and moved to slide 2. He stated that the division structures Alaska's wildland fire program around an increasingly complex and intensifying global fire environment. With record-breaking seasons in California, the East Coast, Canada, Australia, and Maui, Alaska faces similar risks. He said there is no single solution to this growing challenge. He said Alaska's wildland fire program is built on four pillars: preparedness (a trained workforce), prevention (reducing the 60 percent of fires that are human-caused), mitigation (fuels reduction and resilient communities), and suppression (placing the right resources at the right time). All funding and efforts align with these priorities.

[4:12:59 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 3, Interagency Cooperation, and referenced the map on the left side of the slide. He stated that Alaska uses a unique interagency fire protection model. The state primarily protects state, private, and municipal lands but also covers some federal lands through agreements. In return, the Alaska Fire Service protects federal lands and assists with state lands on a reimbursable basis. The U.S. Forest Service manages the Tongass and Chugach National Forests.

[4:13:50 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 4, Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan, and stated that Alaska is huge and resources are limited. He said fires are prioritized into four categories: Critical (life and community protection), Full (cabins and high-value resources), Limited (monitored, natural role), and Modified (Full until July 10, then Limited). These statewide priorities guide initial attack decisions and are updated annually by all agencies.

[4:14:48 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 5, Emerging Challenges, and stated that wildfire activity in Alaska has increased significantly. Comparing 1984-2003 to 2004-2023 shows more fires and greater acreage burned, with two-million-acre seasons becoming more frequent. The growing trend presents ongoing challenges that agencies are working to address.

[4:15:45 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 6, Alaska's Growing Wildland Urban Interface, and stated that wildfire risk is increasing as more people move into fire-prone areas. About 75 percent of Alaskans live in urban areas, and 85 percent of new homes are built in the wildland-urban interface, compounding the challenge of protecting communities amid rising fire activity.

[4:16:20 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 7, Resilient Landscapes and Fire Adapted Communities, and stated that fuel breaks have proven critical to community protection. In 2025 and prior seasons, projects like the seven-mile Sunset fuel break in the Mat-Su Valley, the Murphy Dome break in Fairbanks, and the 13-mile Funny River break helped stop fires and protect neighborhoods. He said the fuel breaks safeguarded lives and an estimated \$1.7 billion in property. Expanding fuel breaks remains a key mitigation priority.

[4:18:07 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 8, Agreements and Compacts, and stated that preparedness means having the right resources at the right time. In addition to training in-state personnel, Alaska imports support through three mechanisms: state-to-state agreements, the Northwest Compact (including western states and Canadian provinces), and the Stafford Act agreement for federal and non-compact resources.

[4:19:09 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 9, Partner Agencies, and stated that the division coordinates closely with the State emergency

operations center (EOC), National Guard, Department of Transportation (DOT), and State Troopers for fire and disaster response. The National Guard provides Black Hawk helicopters and logistical support, while DOT and public safety assist with road closures, evacuations, and traffic control.

4:20:00 PM

MR. MCDONALD moved to slides 10-11, Seasonal Recap, and began discussion of Alaska's 2025 Fire Potential Outlook. He said the 2025 season was forecasted to start early due to low snow and dry conditions, prompting an early fire season declaration. However, a cool, wet spring delayed activity, with record-low fires through mid-June. Conditions shifted after June 15, when 55,000 lightning strikes ignited 173 fires, followed by red flag conditions that drove extreme fire growth in the Interior. He said the season resulted in 400 evacuations, 45 homes lost (primarily near Healy), infrastructure damage, and 176 miles of fire line constructed—highlighting the high cost and workload of emergency response compared to proactive mitigation.

4:23:34 PM

MR. FISHER moved to slide 12 and stated that the 2025 season had 467 fires burning about one million acres, around the 20-year average, but much of it occurred near communities and roads, creating significant challenges despite being below record levels.

4:24:17 PM

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 13, Bear Creek Fire, and stated that the Bear Creek Fire destroyed 44 homes, closed the Parks Highway for two weeks, disrupted travel, tourism, and commerce, and burned nearly 40,000 acres despite aggressive initial attack and red flag conditions.

4:25:19 PM

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 14, Nenana Ridge Fire, and said the fire grew rapidly during a red flag event. Initial resources focused on higher-priority fires, causing traffic delays compounded by highway construction. Road restrictions ensured the safety of firefighters and the public.

4:26:59 PM

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 15, Himalaya Fire, and stated that this fire north of Fairbanks in a frequent fire area. It threatened primary residences. He said pre-established fuel breaks helped protect the area, including the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and highways, though some traffic delays occurred.

[4:27:43 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 16, Nelchina Glacier Fire, and stated that the Nelchina Glacier Fire, a lightning-caused fire near Glen Highway, was managed by prioritizing resources. He said the firefighters used indirect attacks and National Guard Black Hawks, creating fuel breaks and protecting communities along the highway.

[4:29:04 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 17, Resources Mobilized to Alaska, and stated that by season's end, Alaska imported 3,500 firefighters, including 43 crews, 20 aircraft, and 2,600 overhead personnel, from about 40 states and federal agencies. This underscores the importance of interstate and international agreements to rapidly mobilize resources during peak demand.

[4:29:49 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD moved to slide 18, All-Hazard Response, and stated that in addition to fire response, the division supported three all-hazard incidents, including the typhoon. He said the division deployed 162 firefighters to Bethel for evacuations and recovery, mobilized boats, heavy equipment, aircraft, and shower units, and coordinated with the EOC and National Guard. The typhoon was one of the largest humanitarian efforts the division's personnel had supported.

[4:31:32 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked for an update on the Nenana Ridge Fire and the report of vandalized vehicles.

[4:31:45 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that it was the Himalyan Fire. He said there were engines vandalized on state park land and the state troopers never found out who committed the vandalism.

CHAIR KAWASAKI noted that the firefighters bring their own personal vehicles to the fires and park them for weeks at a time.

[4:32:24 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI asked what criteria guide the decision to let a fire burn, and what is the rationale behind determining that some fires are lower priority and allowed to continue burning.

[4:32:52 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that jurisdictional land managers and protection agencies jointly decide fire response based on values at risk, threats, and conditions. While some fires are managed

for ecological benefit, even "limited" fires are fully suppressed if conditions change or risks increase.

[4:34:09 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI noted that last session, the legislature passed a resolution raising concerns about wildfire preparedness, including early warning and response. Given those concerns and below-normal snowpack, he asked for explanation on the governor's decision to veto \$27 million for fire suppression funding.

[4:35:02 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that fire suppression is costly, especially in tight budget years. While he can't speak to the \$27 million veto, when funding is needed, the division uses an emergency declaration process to ensure there are resources to continue protecting lives, property, and infrastructure.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the previous year's budget was for fighting fires and fire suppression.

MR. MCDONALD replied that the fire fund for this fiscal year is still being finalized. A supplemental request has been submitted to ensure funding is ready for the start of the fire season. The budget is typically based on the five- or ten-year average. The ten-year average is about \$63 million.

[4:36:43 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI referenced the \$27 million cut and asked whether the division had sufficient funds or drew from other reserves.

[4:36:53 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that the division had enough reserve to start the fire season. He said when the reserves got low the division submitted an emergency declaration. It was approved and helped the division get through the rest of the fire season.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how much they were over budget.

MR. MCDONALD replied that he would follow up with the committee.

[4:37:50 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the Forestry Division recommended that the Governor not veto the \$27 million.

MR. MCDONALD replied that the division did not recommend that the Governor veto. He further explained that the Division felt

confident it was in a good position to get through the season, especially since a declaration of emergency was available if needed.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the Governor is asking for \$63 million in the supplemental budget.

[4:38:39 PM](#)

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage, Alaska, answered questions regarding the fire suppression update. He stated his belief that the supplemental budget requests were an additional \$2 million in statutory designated program receipts and \$500,000 in interagency receipts for the fire fund.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked what the division is requesting in the supplemental for fire suppression, and does it cover last year's costs.

MR. GOODRUM replied that the supplemental identifies \$55 million, which includes a \$30 million declaration followed by a \$25 million declaration. Both amounts are included in the document.

[4:39:29 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked how quickly the division needs the money and would it benefit the division to get the money sooner rather than later.

[4:39:41 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that by statute fire season begins April 1 and costs start accruing in April and May. By that time, startup funding is in place for fire suppression, preparedness, and pre-positioning resources.

[4:40:11 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked if Mr. McDonald understands that at this point the Legislature will need to go into the Constitutional Budget Reserve to access the funds.

MR. MCDONALD answered that's his understanding. He stated that the fire fund was updated 2 years ago and now receives recovered funds from sources like FEMA and federal protection agreements. This year is the first time those reimbursements return to the fund, reducing the state's budget need.

[4:40:55 PM](#)

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked the division if it is advocating for the legislature to pass an early budget and take money from the Constitutional Budget Reserve to prepare for the upcoming fire season.

[4:41:09 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM replied that the division will let the Legislature decide the best way to help.

SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI asked whether the division was aware the Legislature will need the Governor's help to secure a three-quarter vote or does the division prefer a hands-off approach.

[4:41:27 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM answered that the Division understands.

[4:41:37 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked how decisions are made to let a fire burn, and on average, how long does it take for a fire to die.

[4:41:55 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that fire plans are set before the season by land and suppression agencies., The agencies decidede whether fire can burn naturally. He said when a fire starts, the agencies reassess to either follow the plan or suppress it, prioritizing life safety, homes, then natural and recreational resources.

[4:43:04 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked how long it takes for a fire to burn out.

[4:43:11 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that fire duration varies: most naturally die out by late July with rain, but dry conditions can extend burning into fall or year-round. He said snow and precipitation ultimately extinguish them, while fires are continuously monitored.

[4:44:44 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN referenced the Funny River fire on slide 7 of the presentation. He asked if there is a state program to build out fuel breaks each winter and does the state need a more robust plan to better protect communities.

[4:45:58 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD answered yes and stated that over the past five years, the division has developed a fuels program to build

strategic fuel breaks around communities. There are 16 fuel breaks underway and 20 more in planning. The program is considered critical as fire seasons increase, and the state has invested over \$17 million and continues pursuing state and federal funding to expand these projects and reduce wildfire risk to communities.

[4:47:15 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked what the All-Hands All-Lands (AHAL) process looks like, and how people can engage in it.

MR. MCDONALD answered that All-Hands All-Lands is an opportunity for the land managers and management agencies to work together to come up with fire problem solutions.

[4:49:40 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked about concerns over restructuring the state's wildland fire dispatch system, specifically the removal of dispatchers from local communities like Soldotna. He requested an update on the transition, including how drills went and how operations are functioning now that the restructuring is largely complete.

[4:50:15 PM](#)

MR. MCDONALD replied that the dispatch restructuring was largely successful. Dispatch operations moved from Kenai to Palmer, and after-action reviews helped improve the process during the season. Despite some challenges and public preference for local dispatchers, centralized dispatch has worked well and aligns with the model used across other states.

[4:51:43 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN stated that during discussions about creating a Department of Agriculture, some positions in your department were proposed for transfer. He asked whether those positions remain vacant, and if so, how those funds are being used in the current budget process.

[4:52:09 PM](#)

MR. GOODRUM replied that the two vacant wildland fire positions were set aside during discussions about creating a Department of Agriculture. They remain unfilled, with no funds spent, pending a court or legislative decision.

SB 188-TANANA VALLEY STATE FOREST

[4:53:10 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 188 "An Act expanding the Tanana Valley State Forest; and providing for an effective date."

[4:53:43 PM](#)

JEREMY DOUSE, State Forester and Director, Alaska Division Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Fairbanks, Alaska, introduced SB 188 on behalf of the sponsor and stated that the bill proposes expansion of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF).

[4:54:01 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 2, Tanana Valley State Forest, and stated that state forests are designated by the legislature under AS 41.17.200 for timber management while allowing other beneficial uses. He said the Tanana Valley State Forest, established in 1983, is one of three state forests and is managed under AS 41.17. TVSF has a wildlife habitat objective under AS 41.17.400, requiring coordination with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to protect habitat during timber management. He said that a Citizens Advisory Committee helps guide management, and the forest supports activities such as mining, material sites, recreation, hunting, trapping, and snowmachining.

[4:55:35 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 3, Expanding Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF), and stated that SB 188 proposes expanding the state forest by about 600,000 acres. The map shows existing state forests in green and the proposed additions in yellow. He said some of these areas are already being actively managed, including current timber sales and infrastructure development. All proposed lands are designated for forestry in the DNR area plan, which also recommends adding them to the state forest.

[4:56:37 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 4, Why Increase TVSF, and stated that the division is actively managing some of these areas by building roads, planting, and developing infrastructure to support future timber crops. These productive sites ensure long-term timber availability and signal to the industry that future timber sale opportunities exist for business growth.

[4:57:26 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 5, State Forest Expansion Process, and stated that foresters identified these areas as productive for forestry using remote sensing and soil data. During DNR area

plan updates, the division recommends designating such sites for forestry, as done in the Eastern Tanana and Yukon-Tanana area plans. Through the area plan process, the division can recommend adding lands to the State Forest—typically adjacent or connected areas for best land use. After a public process, including notices and hearings in Tanana Valley communities, feedback is considered. He said if supported, the administration prepares a legislative proposal with public testimony, preliminary forest inventory (from 2014), and a Forest Management Plan. Any additions would require only a focused update to the nearly completed plan.

[5:00:25 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 6, Plan Recommendations, and stated that the areas on the map were recommended in the Eastern Tanana and Yukon-Tanana area plans, as well as the State Forest Management Plan, each through separate public processes.

[5:00:47 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 7, Public Comment, and stated that public meetings were held May 5-28 in Fairbanks, Antioch, and Delta Junction, plus two virtual sessions. He said overall, there was general support for expanding the state forest, with most questions focused on technical issues like local vs. export markets, carbon projects, and land management processes.

[5:01:56 PM](#)

MR. DOUSE moved to slide 8, Non-Timber use of TVSF, and stated that non-timber uses, like recreation, in the Tanana Valley State Forest are common. He said various organizations provide programs in the state forest, and TVSF remains publicly accessible.

[5:02:55 PM](#)

BRENT GOODRUM, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources, Anchorage, Alaska, testified by invitation on SB 188 and stated that he is in favor of increased use of the forests and management of the resources. He said that the state forests provide access, recreational opportunities, and easier resource care. Adding these lands to the state forest ensures future investment and better management.

[5:03:50 PM](#)

CHAIR KAWASAKI held SB 188 in committee.

[5:04:28 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee,
Chair Kawasaki adjourned the Senate State Affairs Standing
Committee meeting at 5:04 p.m.