

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 56
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE HOUSE ECONOMIC TASK FORCE

Introduced: 2/11/94
Referred: Resources

A RESOLUTION

1 Relating to an exemption for federal lands in Alaska from the federal PACFISH
2 management strategy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 **WHEREAS** the United States Congress has effectively exempted the Tongass National
13 Forest from the PACFISH strategy by prohibiting the United States Department of Agriculture,
14 Forest Service, from expending funds to implement the strategy in Alaska until October 1994;
15 and

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

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

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

30 **WHEREAS** the State of Alaska maintains that the environmental goals of PACFISH,
31 are already being achieved in Alaska by existing state and federal laws and regulations,
32 including specific provisions for effective management of riparian areas and establishment of

1 minimum and appropriate stream buffers on all lands;

2 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the United
3 States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the United States Department of the
4 Interior, Bureau of Land Management to recognize the inappropriateness of applying the
5 PACFISH strategy to Alaska, and permanently exclude lands in Alaska managed by the Forest
6 Service or the Bureau of Land Management from the PACFISH requirements.

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