

**SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 56(RES)**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**EIGHTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION**

**BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Offered: 5/2/94**

**Referred: Rules**

**Sponsor(s): HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE BY REQUEST OF THE HOUSE ECONOMIC TASK FORCE**

**A RESOLUTION**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31           **WHEREAS** implementation of PACFISH requirements in the Tongass National Forest  
32 would effectively cripple the forest products industry in Southeast Alaska, causing large-scale

1 unemployment and severe economic distress, in direct conflict with the federal government's  
2 policy for the past four decades of preserving jobs and maintaining community stability in the  
3 region; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

**1 Land Management.**