

SJR

41

Requesting amendment of the Organic Act of 1897 to permit management of the national forests in Alaska according to modern silvicultural techniques.

# COMMITTEE REPORT

1/15/76

HOUSE

Mr. Speaker:

Date 1-16-76

The Committee on RESOURCES has had SJR #1 am

under consideration. A Majority of the members of the Committee

recommends it DO PASS

recommends it DO NOT PASS

recommends it DO PASS WITH ATTACHED AMENDMENT(S)

recommends it BE REPLACED WITH CS FOR \_\_\_\_\_ AND THAT

CS FOR \_\_\_\_\_ DO PASS

"and" recommends it BE REFERRED TO THE \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE

reports it back WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION

"other"

Members signing the Majority report:

_____	_____	_____
<i>W. B. Anderson</i>	<i>John M. ...</i>	_____
<i>John ...</i>	<i>John ...</i>	_____
<i>...</i>	<i>...</i>	_____

Members NOT concurring in the Majority report:

\_\_\_\_\_ recommends:

\_\_\_\_\_ recommends:

\_\_\_\_\_ recommends:

\_\_\_\_\_ recommends:

\_\_\_\_\_ recommends:

*W. B. Anderson* Chairman

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE  
P.O. Box 1628, Juneau, Alaska 99802

1560

January 23, 1976



Honorable Nels Anderson  
Chairman  
House Resource Committee  
Alaska State Legislature  
Pouch V  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Bob Tracy has informed me of some of the testimony given by Alan Stein on January 16 when the House Resources Committee was deliberating on SJR No. 41 regarding clearcutting.

Mr. Stein is one of the plaintiffs in the case Zieske vs. Butz, et al. We are well aware of his views on logging practices in southeast Alaska.

We have not seen any of the photos he displayed to the committee. They are obviously purported to show unacceptable resource damage. We do know that pictures, as well as words, are rather easily taken out of context and it would be impossible for us to comment specifically on them without knowing their exact location, the time and circumstance in which they were taken, the duration of the condition shown, and whether or not the condition still exists. We suspect that most of them are not nearly so alarming once that information is known. We can assert very positively that our present environmental analysis procedures, strict timber sale contract requirements, and increased contract administration abilities do not permit any widespread and flagrant abuse of National Forest lands and waters. Occasional mistakes, accidents, or even rare intentional violations will occur, but these would be picked up and corrected almost immediately.

One of our current contract requirements, for example, is that if logging debris does get into a stream, it is required to be removed within a period of 48 hours. We vigorously enforce this requirement. Mr. Stein made some statement to the effect that 80 miles of fish stream were damaged by logging last year. We deny that this is even close to a true statement and challenge anyone to present such specific evidence. Again, this is not as satisfactory a response to you as would be possible if we knew the specific 80 miles Mr. Stein is referring to.

We would welcome the opportunity to respond to specific charges of damage. As a matter of fact, Alaska Department of Fish and Game named 150 streams in southeast Alaska they claim were damaged by logging. We have no information from them as to what they consider to be damage, the extent of the damage, or whether or not the streams remain in a damaged state. But we have asked our fisheries biologists on each Area to report their

findings on the streams so that we can discuss and reach a common understanding with ADF&G as to just what has happened on the streams they have named.

You heard Commissioner Brooks mention mud from logging in streams discoloring water as much as 10 miles out from their mouths. We don't know what streams those would be either, but will ask him to have them identified. Commissioner Brooks also told the Forest Practices Committee of the Alaska Loggers Association that he does not consider logging to be the significant reason for reduced salmon runs.

Mr. Stein testified that 158 culverts were installed improperly last year, and, as a result, fish passage was blocked. He has never discussed this with us, and we can't comment specifically without knowing what culverts are referred to. However, many culverts are designed for road drainage only and do not need to pass fish. Those culverts in streams that do need to pass fish are designed to do that, but we have learned that our design has not always accomplished what was intended, nor were design specifications always followed precisely in the past. Consequently, we do find occasional examples of inadequate design and installation. This concerned us enough that we formed a task force of our engineers, biologists, and hydrologists to determine what changes are needed to prevent future problems in design and installation and to correct existing culverts that are, in fact, barriers to fish passage. We can't speak more to the 158-culvert charge without knowing specifics, but we believe this charge is not remotely close to being accurate.

Another of Mr. Stein's statements was that many streams on Prince of Wales Island did not meet State water quality standards for temperature. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act amendments of 1972 do require conformance to State water quality standards for both temperature and turbidity. We are establishing a responsive water quality monitoring program throughout the Tongass and Chugach National Forests to help us with meeting these standards. To implement this program, we hired hydrologists for each of our Forest Supervisor's offices. They, in turn, ordered equipment and instrumented some monitoring sites during last year. We know, from our own and other agency measurements, that several streams in their natural state (no logging) do exceed State allowable maximums for temperature fluctuations. Once again, there may be information available on specific streams, but we cannot speak to Mr. Stein's charge without knowing his source of information or what streams he refers to.

One last comment we would make is with regard to Mr. Stein's references to leaving buffer strips along streams. Past practices did indeed permit cutting adjacent to both sides of streams for long, unbroken stretches. Our current practices do not permit this. We may or may not leave buffer strips, depending again on the specific needs of a given stream and location. We may have a buffer on one side of a stream and not the other. Or if we do cut to the edge of a stream from both

sides, it will not be for long unbroken stretches of stream in any one logging entry or time period. To protect stream temperature regimes, subsequent streamside cutting is not permitted until adequate shade is established in previous cutting units. It should be noted, however, that mature trees are not the only vegetation that can provide adequate shade and temperature control. In many cases, especially the smaller streams, alders and other smaller brushy vegetation are just as effective in providing shade as are taller forms of vegetation. Each stream is considered on its own merits. This seems far preferable to a blanket requirement for buffer strips which are often either subject to windthrow, or, if wide enough to be protected from windthrow, would make serious inroads into the volume of timber available for harvest. We believe sound multiple use practices do allow us to optimize (not maximize) timber use in harmony with water quality and fish habitat protection.

This has been a lengthy discussion, difficult to write because of the lack of specifics for us to speak to. I hope it is of some help to you. If your committee is interested, we would welcome the opportunity to prepare a more specific background report on our current activities and practices. We, too, have slides that depict our current standard of performance, including the good, the bad, and the most common. Without claiming to be perfect, we do believe our planning procedures and careful dedicated administration are accomplishing a good job of resource management that is a credit to Alaska. That is our goal. We appreciate your interest and help in seeing that we achieve it.

Sincerely,



C. A. YATES  
Regional Forester

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE  
P.O. Box 1628, Juneau, Alaska 99802

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