

**HB**

**284**

# SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 5/2/98

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: \_\_\_\_\_

Resources Committee considered CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 284(FIN)

"An Act relating to infestations and diseases of timber."

and recommends:

- be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)
- adopt previous \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by \_\_\_\_\_ Committee
- further referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

**Senate Bill:**

- same title
- new title
- House Bill:**
- same title
- technical title
- new: SCR# \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNING <u>DO</u> PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	NR	DNP	AM
		<i>Johnson</i>	✓		
		<i>Drew A. Lunden</i>			X
		<i>Lyle Green</i>	✓		
CHAIR: <i>Rich Halford</i> ✓		CHAIR:			

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department                      Date              Zero              Fiscal


**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):\***

Department                      Date              Zero              Fiscal

<i>DNR</i>	<i>3/10</i>		✓

APPROPRIATION -- no fiscal note

\*include fiscal notes accompanying Governor's bill

# Alaska State Legislature



State Capitol  
Juneau AK  
99801-1152

Official Business

## SPONSOR STATEMENT

### HB 284-"An Act Relating to Infestations and Diseases of Timber"

**This legislation amends AS 41.17.082(d) to require the commissioner to implement necessary salvage measures when timber on state or municipal forest land is:**

- (1) infested or diseased and thereby poses a significant threat to surrounding healthy timber, or**
- (2) subjected to an environmental catastrophe, and as a result, is susceptible to infestation or disease, to prevent the spread of infestation or disease, the timber shall be salvaged as rapidly as practicable...if possible, salvage should occur before there is a significant loss of merchantability of the timber.**

# FISCAL NOTE

No: 1

**STATE OF ALASKA  
1998 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Bill Version: CSHB 284 (RES)  
(H) Publish Date: 4/9/98

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept Affected: Natural Resources  
 Title: Infestations and diseases of timber BRU: Resource Development  
 Component: Forest Management & Development  
 Sponsor: Hodgins  
 Requestor: (H)RES Component Serial No. 435

Expenditures/Revenues	(Thousands of Dollars)					
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY99</b>	<b>FY00</b>	<b>FY01</b>	<b>FY02</b>	<b>FY03</b>	<b>FY04</b>
PERSONAL SERVICES	390.6	390.6	390.6	390.6	390.6	390.6
TRAVEL	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0	45.0
CONTRACTUAL	180.0	180.0	180.0	180.0	180.0	180.0
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
<b>TOTAL OPERATING</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>
<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>CHANGE IN REVENUES (fund code)</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

FUND SOURCE	(Thousands of Dollars)					
1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF	615.6	615.6	615.6	615.6	615.6	615.6
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type)						
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>	<b>615.6</b>

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: \$ 0.0

POSITIONS	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04
FULL-TIME	3	3	3	3	3	3
PART-TIME	6	6	6	6	6	6
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

1) This bill would require more extensive insect and disease surveys to identify all infested or diseased areas and to determine where insect or disease outbreaks are likely to spread from one land ownership to another. Estimated cost would be 15 additional surveys @ \$10.0/survey = \$150.0 contractual services.

2) Declaration of infestation zones would require documentation and publicity. Estimate 15 declarations @ \$4.0/action = \$60.0 personal services.

3) DNR would need additional funding to develop infestation suppression agreements with all landowners in infestation zone. Estimate 30 agreements @ \$3.7 each = \$111.0 personal services for 3 weeks of a Forester II's time for each agreements. Plus 15.0 travel.

Cont. on attached page

Prepared by: Jeff Jahnke, Director *[Signature]* Imw Phone: 465-3375  
 Division: Forestry Date: 10-Mar-98  
 Approved by Commissioner: *[Signature]* Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency: Natural Resources

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ANALYSIS. cont.

- 4) DNR would require additional funding for salvage on state land. Currently the department relies on CIP funding to offer salvage timber sales in excess of the amount possible under operating funds. Estimated cost = 1 Forester II x 2 regions x 9 months x \$5.4/mo = \$97.2 + 3 For Tech III x 2 regions x 6 months x \$3.4/mo = \$122.4; + \$30.0 travel costs for layout and \$30.0 contractual funding for notice and equipment needs. Total = \$279.6. On average, this would fund salvage sale design and layout for approximately 5.4 MMBF/year and reforestation on approximately 540 acres. Sales could be in any part of the state depending on the location of infestations and availability of markets.
- 5) This would require a total of 3 new full-time Forester II positions and 6 new part-time Forest Tech III positions located primarily in Southcentral and Interior Alaska.
- 6) Change in net revenue is assumed to be zero. Some salvage sales would bring in net revenue, but many would be deficit sales.

Headquarters:  
217 2nd Street, Suite 201  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 586-2323 FAX 463-5515



February 3, 1997

Honorable Gail Phillips  
Alaska State Legislature  
State Capital  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Speaker Phillips,

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce has adopted two resolutions on timber issues as priorities for 1997. Resolution 97-8 asks for committed efforts in maintaining the viability of Alaska's Forest Products Industry and Resolution 97-10 is in support of a Spruce Bark Beetle Infestation Environmental Emergency Declaration. The extent of our members' concern for this single Alaska renewable resource is apparent with two out of the Alaska State Chamber's ten top priorities being timber issues.

I am now working on the timber issues addressed by our resolutions and have two major concerns about the State's management of this important renewable resource. These two items alone are a direct reflection on the ability we have to manage the forests of Alaska.

What are the responsibilities by state statute of the Board of Forestry? Does the criteria of this board reflect the right emphasis and focus to establish the policy for managing this renewable resource as dictated by our state's constitution? The State of Alaska's Division of Forestry needs immediate direction and support to provide for the management of our forest's health and the harvest of our timber resources. The status of Spruce Bark Beetle Infestation alone demonstrates a neglect and lack of leadership in establishing a management practice for our Alaska's valuable forests.

Why hasn't the State of Alaska established a criteria of experience, background and education requirements for the job description of the State Forester's position? This is the person who is charged with the management responsibilities of our forests and should be instrumental in drafting a plan that will address all aspects of forest management. The applicant should have experience in providing for timber harvest of this resource and the credentials to put into affect an immediate plan of restoration for our forest's ecosystem in the dead and dying forests.

Looking at the decline of a timber industry in Alaska and the sad destruction in the management of our State's forests, it's time for someone to decide "who leads, who follows and who is to get out of the way".

I look forward to your response so that I may share the information provided to me with my Board of Directors. Thank You.

Sincerely,

  
Kathryn Thomas  
Chairman



Terry T. Brady, certified forester®  
forest products development and consulting

**Husky**  
**Wood & Forestry Services**  
3842 Wesleyan Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99508-4821

Phone (907) 333-9462  
Telefax (907) 333-9462  
email - Huskywood@compuserve.com

By Telefax: House Resources Committee  
Attn: Kathleen Moore  
1-907-465-32655

March 12, 1998

TESTIMONY RE HOUSE BILL 284  
An Act relating to infestations and diseases of timber

My Name is Terry T. Brady. I am a certified forester. I have a Master of Science degree from the College of Forest Resources, Univ. of Washington. I have been actively involved in Alaskan natural resource issues since the late 1950's, in all parts of the state. I have also been an international forestry and forest products consultant, with clients in Canada, Scandinavia and the Far East.

Three key Alaska forest related laws must be considered when contemplating proposed House Bill 284, and its strengthening of Alaska's Forest Resources and Practices Act., AS 41.17 et seq. These are:

**AS 41.15.010. Intent**

It is the intent of AS 41.15.010 - 41.15.170 to provide protection.

commensurate with the value of the resources at risk, for the natural resources and watersheds on land that is owned privately, by the state, or by a municipality.

#### **AS 41.15.020. Regulations**

The commissioner shall, by regulation, make provision for the protection of forested land in the state from fire and other destructive agents.

#### **AS 41.17.010. Declaration of intent**

The legislature declares that

(1) the forest resources of Alaska are among the most valuable natural resources of the state, and furnish timber and wood products, fish and wildlife, tourism, outdoor recreation, water, soil, air, minerals, and general health and welfare;

(2) economic enterprises and other activities and pursuits derived from forest resources warrant the continuing recognition and support of the state;

(3) the state has a fundamental obligation to ensure that management of forest resources guarantees perpetual supplies of renewable resources, provides nonrenewable resources in a manner consistent with that obligation, and serves the needs of all Alaska for the many products, benefits, and services obtained from them:

If the intent and legislative direction of these laws are being followed, then there is no need to implement HB 284.

However, on review, these laws are not being followed. The State is not protecting state, municipal and private land from fire and other destructive agents (AS 41.15.)

The state is not meeting its fundamental obligation to ensure management of forest resources to provide for the needs of forest consumers, whether industrial or not.

The evidence is in the millions of acres of dead, dying and threatened forests, impacted in great part by the largest infestation of bark beetles ever recorded.

Thus, the mandates of HB 284 are needed, provided the Legislature is willing to back its own laws. I advocate that HB 284 be passed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lloyd B. ...".

# Resolutions address education, road bills

By DAVE O LUCAS

Peninsula Citizen

The Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly Tuesday night passed three resolutions dealing with important state legislation that were added to the regular agenda.

Referred to by assembly members as "laydowns," the add-on resolutions are a common phenomenon when the legislative session begins to heat up, according to Borough Attorney Collette Thompson. Assembly committees or individual members acting on behalf of their constituents often pass these resolutions in response to proposed state legislation that might have a direct effect on the borough.

Resolution 98-016, "supporting increased educational funding in Alaska's public schools and encouraging the Alaska Legislature to provide an increase in the school foundation formula," introduced by Patrick O'Brien, passed the assembly without comment after being placed on the consent agenda for the meeting. Items on the consent agenda are passed automatically unless

an objection is raised.

The resolution further states that the assembly

"Supports the current efforts by the Alaska State Legislature to increase the education funding formula so that it more equitably distributes funding and support to all districts.

"Strongly supports the placing of additional funds into education and strongly supports inflation proofing the education funding formula."

"Supports the Legislature's utilization of the evidence supplied in the McDowell Report, simplified funding and providing 70 percent of all effort be used in the classroom."

Resolution 98-018, "in support of Senate Bill 263, an act relating to secondary roads and Senate Bill 264, an act relating to municipal road maintenance" also passed on the consent agenda. The two bills are designed to help upgrade the states secondary roads and encourage local governments to take over maintenance of those roads by adding to the state's share of maintenance costs.

Resolution 98-017, "opposing passage of Senate Bill 208, which would require voter approval for the formation, alteration or abolishment of certain service areas," introduced by Ron Drathman, passed on a 6-2 vote. Assembly member Dale Bagley objected to putting the resolution on the consent agenda.

"I think this is something we should stay out of," said Bagley.

Both the borough's legal department and the Alaska Municipal League have concluded that the bill is detrimental to local governments, argued Drathman, limiting their ability to control the actions of their service areas. The resolution also states "Senate Bill 208 appears to violate the intent of the Alaska Constitution" and that it would "enable a minority of the affected population in proposed service areas to essentially veto an action that may be in the best interests of the municipality as a whole."

Complete copies of the resolutions can be obtained by contacting the borough clerk's office or on the borough's web site at borough.kenai.ak.us.

only, which might help alleviate some of the problem. Assembly member Dale Bagley objected to that line of discussion being allowed in the appeals hearing, saying it wasn't pertinent to the question at hand.

Nonetheless, the borough does have some options for managing the flow of people using the right of way that could be exercised in the future, such as erecting barriers or signs to prevent parking or overnight camping in the right of way.

Assembly member Ron Drathman said he opposed the appeal.

"The evidence is overwhelming that everybody in Seward uses this right of way all summer," he said.

Assembly member Drew Scalzi said that while he sympathized with Fischer, he couldn't support his appeal either. The borough's duty is to provide public access, he noted, and vacating the right of way might lessen the pressure on the state to create a viable alternative in the park. Scalzi also noted that the borough would likely be confronting this problem more often in the

Brown said afterward he was unhappy with the way some of the procedures in the hearing had been carried out. Drathman, a canny parliamentarian and always willing to needle Brown on procedural matters, pointed out the president could blame himself since he was in charge of the proceedings.

Brown said later he was mainly concerned that the proceedings be conducted as closely to the letter as possible, to ensure fairness for the person appealing.

"Taking on 'the government' can be really intimidating for normal people," said Brown. "I don't want anybody in that position to feel like they aren't getting a fair shot."

In other business, the assembly voted against passage of an ordinance that would have granted a sales tax exemption for Rolfers (a type of massage therapy) similar to the break provided for other health care providers.

The ordinance, sponsored by Merkes, failed on a 7-1 vote. An amendment that would have extended

solutions pertaining to bills pending before the state Legislature in Juneau.

Cooper Landing resident Sherman C. "Red" Smith gave a presentation on an "action plan for beetle kill timber utilization." Smith urged assembly members and the commission to use any possible steps to take to protect economic value from the dead and dying spruce trees on the peninsula.

Mayor Navarre also addressed the beetle problem, providing the assembly with a quick update on a 10-week's meeting of the federally-funded beetle task force. Navarre's comments focused primarily on fire prevention, an issue of great concern in the area as warm weather approaches.

If it turns out that federal grant money secured to fund the task force can't be spent on fire protection measures until after the group makes its report to congress, Navarre said he might ask the assembly to authorize spending some borough funds which could later be reimbursed. "I hope that

# ...Bears

Continued from page A-1

you add more and more to the mix, you have more DLPs - bears killing

of life and property - on a quota system - much like they are in Peninsula. The quota is the annual take of female

He characterized Bear Montana as an "island" by people, similar in some ways to the Kenai Peninsula - a narrow isthmus of territory what less than bear-free

In Montana, he said, food source is pine nuts. When sources fail, the bears starve in search of food and mortality naturally follows.

"The Kenai is really rich in salmon and lots of food for habitat," Schwartz said. "Conservation efforts here are much more likely to be successful than down here."

Some of the effects of increased human presence in the Yellowstone region are what's happened to Yellowstone's famous cutthroat

Bears used to benefit when the cutthroat cutthroat lake's tributary streams spring to spawn.

"It was sort of like a race run," Schwartz said.

# ...Plan

Continued from page A-1

Alaska Natives who settled in the Alaska Native Settlement Act of 1971.

The task force's plan is to mirror ANILCA Green's proposal would change in that law. Green discussed his plan with U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens and Frank Murkowski during a trip to Washington last weekend.

"What they want is to change that the people who need it - constitutionally," Green

In the past, both senators



# Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.

121 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 250, Anchorage, Alaska 99503-2035  
(907) 276-0700 Fax: (907) 276-3887 e-mail: rdc@aonline.com

Founded 1975

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April 20, 1998

Representative Mark Hodgins  
State Capitol 110  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Support for HB 284

Dear Representative Hodgins:

The Resource Development Council would like to lend its support to HB 284, legislation relating to the spruce bark beetle infestation on the Kenai Peninsula.

RDC is a membership-funded, non-profit trade organization made up of businesses and individuals from all resource sectors, Native corporations, labor unions, and business associations. RDC's mission is to grow Alaska through the responsible development of our natural resources.

Timber harvesting is necessary to restore the forest's health and the Commissioner of Natural Resources needs the flexibility to act quickly and definitively under the provisions of HB 284.

Fish streams, wildlife habitat, and view sheds are in greater jeopardy from the aging spruce dying and falling down than from salvage operations that can be done properly and professionally to re-establish a healthy forest which has or will be deforested by the beetle.

Along with improving forest health, strategic harvesting also helps eliminate the fire hazard dead trees pose to life and property. Letting nature take its course could result in devastating wildfires and a forest that will likely evolve into grasslands void of evergreens for generations.

Salvaging portions of the Peninsula's dead and dying timber would generate new economic activity and jobs, as well as allow Alaskans to utilize the infested trees, which have a value for several years after the beetle kills them.

New roads built to reach harvest areas would diversify recreation opportunities and venues, allowing residents access to high country for mountain biking, hiking and skiing.

Forest scientists emphasize that a combined program of logging and reforestation can restore forest health much faster than doing nothing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 284. RDC strongly supports this legislation and we urge its passage this session to give the Commissioner of DNR the rapid ability to restore forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

Sincerely,

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
for Alaska, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ken Freeman  
Executive Director



This edition  
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# Resource Review

June 1997 A periodic publication

**1.1 million acres of dead and dying spruce, infestation increases 61 percent in two years, impacts are far reaching**

## Spruce beetle infestation reaches unprecedented proportions



A mechanical tree-planting system is used to plant spruce seedlings on lands logged near Ninilchik by Circle DE Pacific. The company planted nearly 500,000 seedlings last year on 1,600 acres of state and university land. All state-owned land must be reforested after logging. (Photo courtesy Circle DE)

The spruce bark beetle infestation in Southcentral Alaska has reached unprecedented proportions and is now the largest spruce beetle event ever recorded in North America.

Statewide aerial surveys mapped more than 1.1 million acres of dead and dying beetle-infested spruce in 1996, a 61 percent increase over the past two years. [The beetle infestation continues to have the most significant ecological impact of any natural agent of change in Alaska forests] according to the recently-released Forest Health Management Report, prepared by foresters from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Forest Service.

State and federal foresters estimate that 20 million to 30 million trees are being killed annually by the beetle attacks — more than 90 million in recent years.

[Foresters stress it's the intensity of the infestation that sets it apart from previous infestations. Because of its intensity, foresters are concerned about the lack of spruce regeneration and other far-reaching impacts.]

Jerry Boughton, Program Manager of the State and Private Forestry Section of the U.S. Forest Service, warned that impacts associated with the beetle infestation range from direct economic loss in lumber, forest fiber and real estate values to a decline in scenic beauty and wildlife species dependent upon mature spruce stands. Boughton noted that impacts to fisheries is also a concern as salmon spawning streams need a continual supply of large woody

(Continued on page 4)

# Forest health in sharp decline as beetle infestation spreads

(Continued from page 1)

debris, which will decline as large diameter spruce are killed by beetles. Boughton said the intense beetle outbreaks may also kill large amounts of interception vegetation, impacting the dynamics of stream flow, which in turn could pose a threat to the overall watershed.

Boughton warned that "fuel-loading" has increased throughout Southcentral Alaska forests because of the beetle-killed trees. Fuel loading on the Anchorage Hillside alone has risen from about two tons per acre to more than 35 tons per acre, increasing the risks of a catastrophic wildfire.

The areas of most intense beetle activity are in Southcentral Alaska where 837,499 acres were infested last year, an increase of almost 20 percent over the previous year. Spruce mortality in many areas of Southcentral now exceeds 80 percent. In the Copper River Basin, 234,581 acres were hit by the bug, an increase of 65,000 acres over 1995.

The beetle continues to make inroads into the central part of the Kenai Peninsula around Skilak Lake, the southwestern part of Kachemak Bay near Seldovia, the valleys of Turnagain Arm and the west side of Cook Inlet. In the Anchorage bowl, infestations are moving down the Hillside area and spreading across the city. Beetle pressure also seems to be building in the Mat-Su Valley.

In Anchorage, the beetle activity nearly doubled for the second consecutive year to 15,310 acres. Forty percent of the total, over 6,000 acres, occur on the Hillside.

More than 418,357 acres of state and private land have been hit by the beetle while 338,754 acres of Native timber have been infested. Some 26,772 acres of national forest lands have been impacted while 346,873 acres of other federal lands have been hit by the bug.

Boughton and other foresters point



At the 1996 Annual Board of Directors meeting, RDC Board member Paula Easley referred to a newspaper account of the 1996 Big Lake fire. Many large landowners risk the immediate, potentially catastrophic loss of an economic resource as the beetle infestation increases the risk of wildfires. Fire management costs may dramatically increase in coming years.

out that there are a variety of techniques that can be used to prevent, mitigate and reduce impacts associated with beetle infestations. However, before pest management options can be developed, the resource objectives for a particular stand, watershed and landscape must be determined.

Foresters note that properly applied silvicultural practices, including timber harvesting and fire management, can maintain the forest diversity needed to provide the range of products and amenities available in the forest.

In Southcentral Alaska, the logging of beetle-killed timber is the first stage in a reforestation process that will lead to healthier forests faster than if nothing is done. On some federal, state and private lands, trees are being replanted and modern silviculture practices are being implemented to encourage natural regeneration.

The U.S. Forest Service has designed a series of timber sales in the Chugach National Forest to address specific recreation, wildlife and visual resource interests while still

accomplishing the objective of logging dead or dying spruce while lowering the fire danger through "fuel removal." Those sales, however, continue to draw opposition from environmentalists who contend nothing should be done.

Logging opponents have dominated the public process in determining appropriate approaches to addressing the decline in forest health. Their influence within government agencies has blocked any significant actions toward mitigating the impacts of the infestation and restoring forest health.

RDC urges its members to write letters to the Forest Service and the State Division of Forestry supporting timber sales targeting dead or dying spruce. Members are encouraged to write their local newspaper, especially in response to anti-logging letters from environmental activists.

*Editor's Note: For residents in outbreak areas, the window of opportunity to protect large, live spruce trees may be as short as this spring. Contact the Alaska Cooperative Extension at 279-6575 for information.*

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

### OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

400 WILLOUGHBY AVENUE  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801-1796  
PHONE (907) 465-2400  
FAX (907) 465-3886

3601 C STREET, SUITE 1210  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503-5921  
PHONE: (907) 269-8431  
FAX: (907) 269-8918

April 23, 1998

Rep. Mark Hodgins  
State Capitol Room 110  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Hodgins,

This is in response to your request for information on past studies of the bark beetle epidemic on the Kenai Peninsula. Three past efforts have looked at parts of the issue:


- In 1992, DNR completed the Forest Health Management Plan for the Western Kenai Peninsula and Kalgin Island. DNR has been steadily implementing the recommendations of that report for state land.
- In 1994, the DNR Commissioner convened an Advisory Panel to review the FY 94-98 Five-year Schedule of Timber Sales for the Kenai Area. DNR has incorporated the consensus recommendations from the Panel into subsequent Five-year Schedules.
- In 1995, DNR and the US Forest Service completed the Moose Pass Cooperative Project. DNR has been implementing the recommendations from the project on state land, including salvage sales in the Moose Pass area. The US Forest Service has held no Moose Pass sales since the project was completed.

In addition, the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) compiled a bibliography of research related to the infestation. Unfortunately, few of the studies were done in Alaska – much of the research is from other infestations in the Lower 48. ADF&G and the US Forest Service have several research projects in progress.

In 1996, the House and Senate Resources Committees also held joint hearings on the infestation, coordinated with a review by the Society of American Foresters. At the hearing, experts from British Columbia recommended that the state spend \$50 to \$100 million dollars per year on forest management to respond to the infestation and prevent future outbreaks.

The Kenai Spruce Bark Beetle Task Force, currently underway, is the most comprehensive of the reviews. It addresses all land ownerships, and is considering health and safety issues as well as timber management. The Task Force has drafted a list of priority projects that will be finalized at their meeting on May 6, 1998. DNR continues to support this process and recommends that legislative action be coordinated with the Task Force priorities.

Sincerely,

  
Carol Carroll,  
Legislative Liaison

*"Develop, Conserve and Enhance Natural Resources for Present and Future Alaskans"*

# Fire threat heightens in Homer

## Spruce bark beetle, dry weather to blame

By JON LITTLE  
Daily News Peninsula Bureau

SOLDOTNA — Homer's East End Road may become a wildfire-response model this summer under plans being generated by the Kenai Peninsula Borough's spruce bark beetle task force.

The rural road may see wider shoulders, cleared "sites of refuge" and repairs along rutted side roads so heavy emergency trucks can get through.

Also, people living on the southern Kenai Peninsula probably will be deluged with all the pamphlets and meetings they can handle as various agencies try to get the word out on how to avoid losing lives and homes to wildfire.

The beetle task force plans to issue its complete list of ideas later this week, but fast action around Homer was high on the group's agenda Wednesday at the end of a two-day discussion.

East End Road, from eight to 20 miles outside Homer, is a narrow country road crowded on both sides by old stands of tightly packed spruce, now dying from the ongoing infestation of bark beetles. People have built homes among the trees.

While fire risk from dead spruce is a complex issue, task force members are operating under the assumption that dead trees will ignite easier than moist living trees. On a dry day, they say, dead forests will ignite with little more than a dropped match. Add wind to the mixture, and the result could be the kind of fast-moving wildfire that ravaged Big Lake in June 1996.

The fear is, such a wildfire could bear

# FIRE THREAT: Homer facing dangerous season

Continued from Page B-1

down on East End Road and trap people on the wrong side of the dead-end road.

One idea kicked around by the panel was to accelerate parts of the state's road construction plans for East End Road. The rutted old pavement is due for repairs in a couple of years, but Borough Mayor Mike Navarre said perhaps the state can get a jump on clearing the right of way of trees. Paving still could be completed later.

Another idea was to carve small clearings along the road that might serve as refuges — places where someone could hunker down a few hours if fire blocks the road.

While East End Road is considered a critical fire risk, it is not the only place where people have carved out homes on the edge of the Peninsula's vast wildlands. Task force members suggest governments come up with a list of all the Peninsula's high-risk areas.

The entire region south of Tustumena Lake, the location for most of the Peninsula's

beetle infestation, is seen as a hot zone, they said.

Beyond immediate fire risk, the panel is considering recommendations for future studies of the Peninsula's vegetation patterns and the effect of roads on fire risk to help agencies make decisions as they react to the spread of beetles.

The task force was funded by a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service. It has until June 30 to file a report.

Fire season, meanwhile, begins Wednesday along the south-facing Homer benchlands as snow melts and before moist spring grasses have emerged.

A series of public meetings has been scheduled to discuss the beetle problem and the panel's conclusions. They are set for April 14, from 1 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. at the Borough Building in Soldotna; April 15, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Borough Building and then 7 to 9 p.m. the same day at the Bidarka Inn in Homer; and April 16, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. again in the Borough Building, followed by a 7-to-9 p.m. meeting at the Moose Pass school.

*People living on the southern Kenai Peninsula probably will be deluged with all the pamphlets and meetings they can handle.*

THE GREAT ALA  
SPORTSM



Please see Page B-3. FIRE THREAT

# Beetle-kill panel agrees on fire risk

By JON LITTLE  
Daily News Peninsula Bureau

**SOLDOTNA** — A federally funded task force grappling with the Kenai Peninsula's spruce bark beetle epidemic has embarked on a four-month fact-finding mission by agreeing on one point: Trees killed by the infestation pose an immediate safety risk to homes.

But finding agreement on just what to do about that risk is another matter. Some people want to log trees for fire breaks. Others contend that grasses that grow in fire breaks are just as flammable as dead trees.

Such are the questions facing the 17-member panel made up of foresters, landowners, loggers, recreationalists and firefighters. Led by Borough Mayor Mike Navarre, the group has until June 30 to issue a report.

Navarre said he hopes the

report will act as a kind of road map of options for the broad group of affected landowners. Since the beetles know no boundaries, any approach will involve federal, state, borough and private property owners.

The task force kicked off its first brainstorming session Wednesday at the Borough Building in Soldotna. The issue of immediate fire risk this spring cropped up.

"There are probably some things that could be fleshed out quickly and mechanically done this year," said Phil Janik, Alaska regional forester of the U.S. Forest Service. "If we could jumpstart that portion of this process, realizing the rest is going to be more complicated, it would serve us well."

One community seen as a tinderbox is East End Road outside downtown Homer, where houses are tucked into

a forest of tightly packed spruce. Bark beetles already have killed about 70 percent of those trees and only one road leads in and out.

Some of the \$500,000 Forest Service grant that is paying for the task force might be spent to reduce immediate fire risks such as that, Navarre said. But he warned that the scope of the infestation would quickly outstrip those funds.

The panel also wants to address broader issues, such as forest policy in wildlands where the beetles have killed virtually all the old spruce. Is logging and reforestation the best response, or should the forests be left to regenerate on their own?

While some people have proposed a rapid timber sale program that would remove unsightly trees while the dying spruce still have economic value, members of the task

force said Wednesday timber sales would not cover the costs of the epidemic.

Janik suggested the panel seek research into the nature of Peninsula forests. "We need to know what's happening out there, what has happened and what will happen in 50 to 100 years," he said.

Since the mid-1980s, an epidemic of spruce bark beetles has burrowed into Peninsula forests from Cooper Landing to Homer, killing trees by eating away their inner bark.

Various reports have indicated between 1 million acres and 3 million acres of the 10 million-acre borough are affected.

Some say the epidemic is part of a centuries-old cycle of forest growth. Others urge government to mow down the dead trees for their remaining lumber value and to cut fire risk.

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

3601 C Street, Suite 1034  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5937

File No: 9-3185.5

January 30, 1998

*Good for  
beetle update*

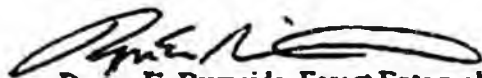
Dear Friends and Forest Users:

Enclosed is a summary--1997 Alaska Forest Insect and Disease *CONDITIONS IN BRIEF*-- of the 1997 statewide aerial insect and disease survey conducted by the U.S. Forest Service and State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry. Also enclosed is a listing of forest health and survey information that is available, how to access the information (via Internet, e-mail, etc.), and sample map products from the surveys, showing primarily spruce beetle activity in the state. A more detailed description of the survey, recently published in report form, is available on request.

> A few important points should be noted from our survey results: (1) While the number of acres of active insect infestation were "down" for most of the major forest pests including spruce beetle, cumulative effects on the forest landscape are significant. For example, since about 1992, more than 5 million acres of Alaska's forests have been affected by insects with spruce beetle-caused tree mortality accounting for 2.3 million acres of this total. A significant level of bark beetle activity can still be expected over the next several years in some areas especially if moderate climate patterns continue and adequate numbers of uninfested large diameter host trees remain in the infested areas. (2) Forest diseases are also a significant disturbance agent in Alaska's forests, although much of this damage is not evident from aerial surveys. Yellow-cedar decline, the most spectacular forest problem in southeast Alaska, is present on more than 477,000 acres. Heart and butt rot fungi also affect a large proportion of the gross volume in spruce/hemlock and white spruce forests in Alaska. In some stands on the Kenai Peninsula, for example, up to 2/3 of the standing volume of living spruce can be infected by rot fungi yet show little or no visible damage.

If you would like to receive more specific information about forest pest surveys for your area, obtain a copy of the 1997 Alaska Conditions report, or have land included in the 1998 survey, please mail or fax a completed Survey & Information Request Form (enclosed). If you have additional questions or comments you may also contact me by e-mail <rogerb@dnr.state.ak.us> or visit our local office in Anchorage.

Sincerely,



Roger E. Burnside, Forest Entomologist  
Resource Management - Insects & Disease  
ph: (907) 269-8460/8463 or fax: 561-6659;

Enclosures

*"Develop, Conserve and Enhance Natural Resources for Present and Future Alaskans"*

# Tongass National Forest Fact Sheet

- AS  
of 1996

• Size:  
17 million acres, largest in America

• Forested lands:  
10 million acres, 5.4 million acres commercial timber

• Forested lands opened to logging:  
1.7 million acres (31% of commercial timber)

• Areas of the Tongass closed to logging:  
63% of all forested lands closed to logging, 8.3 million acres  
58% of old-growth, commercial forest closed to logging  
6.6 million acres designated Wilderness (closed to logging)

• Average annual timber harvest:  
10,000 acres, 302 million board feet

• Harvest rotation:  
100 years

• Total timber harvest since 1954:  
340,000 acres, 17% of area allocated for logging  
9% of Tongass old-growth acreage

*Maybe 360,000 today?*

• Total potential harvest of old-growth acreage in 100-year rotation:  
37%

• Sustainable timber harvests (from 1.7 million acre base opened to logging):  
556 million board feet annual potential on 100-year rotation cycle  
302 million board feet is average annual harvest from Tongass  
450 million board feet is allowable harvest under current TLMP  
297 million board feet is new annual harvest under TLMP Revision

• Products from Tongass Timber:  
Dimensional lumber, window and door cut stock, decking, lumber, boats and boat repair, paneling, fencing, roof shingles, chips for paper and dissolving pulp which is a component of textiles, fabric garments, upholstery, curtains, carpeting, industrial belting, hosing, tires, cellophane/packing, sponges, sausage casing, artificial kidneys, nonwoven disposable protective clothing, encapsulate electronic equipment, bakery goods, emulsifiers, low calorie ice cream, cosmetics, cellophane (biodegradable wrap), toothpaste, formica, artificial leathers, molded luggage, laminates, tissue, photo film and artificial vanilla.

*Ken → This figure is 2 years old, but only several thousand acres are harvested yearly.*

The frozen wilderness  
**ARCTIC  
ARE '97**

**Going for the gold in 2001** PAGE 4

**LOCAL NEWS**

Vying for a seat on the phone board PAGE 24

Supervising suspended students PAGE 4

Serving Anchorage, Eagle River and the Valley

**50¢**

# Alaska Star

24 pages plus inserts

Successor to Chugiak-Eagle River Alaska Star

March 1997



## Beetle outbreak largest in history

*Eagle River area kills double,  
Eklutna area tree kills quadruple*

By KRISTEN SEINE  
Alaska Star News Editor

According to a report soon to be released by the U.S. Forest Service, spruce bark beetle damage to Anchorage, Eagle River and Eklutna area trees has reached unprecedented proportions. That has caused the risk for wildfire to skyrocket as well, making Eagle River one of the state's top hazardous areas.

In the last year, the Forest Service has mapped 21,350 acres of infested or killed trees — up from just over 8,000 the year before, a 260 percent increase, said Integrated Pest Management Technician Michael Fastabend of Alaska Cooperative Extension.

Eagle River Valley saw a similar increase, he said, up from 2,300 acres a year ago to 5,800 this year — roughly 250 percent.

Some of the worst numbers in the state, however, are found in the Eklutna Lake and valley area. Damage there has more than quadrupled in the last year, from 2,000 acres to 8,900, Fastabend said.

The destruction will reshape our state's forests, Fastabend said, and Anchorage is sitting "almost dead center" of this disturbance.

### The ramifications

That will have several effects on local land and homeowners, Fastabend said. First off, property values of affected areas may go down substan-

(Please see BEETLES, Page 2)

## STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

3601 C Street, Suite 1034  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-3937

## DIVISION OF FORESTRY

May 5, 1998

Sen. Rick Halford, Chair  
Senate Resources Committee  
State Capitol Room 121  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Chairman Halford,

DNR is continuing to salvage and reforest infested timber on state land. For example, we have held 23 salvage sales on the Kenai Peninsula since 1994.

We would like to reaffirm our position on HB 284. The Department of Natural Resources continues to oppose this bill because:

- It would not reduce the impacts of major infestations, but will be expensive to implement.
- It doesn't provide effective new tools to address infestations. DNR already has the authority to do emergency sales and below cost sales. The authority to waive the Forest Practices Act notification requirements risks water quality and fish habitat protection but has little effect on beetle populations. The Forest Practices Act requirements have not significantly hampered salvage operations.
- The Spruce Bark Beetle Task Force has completed its recommendation for near-term action. The recommendations for long-term action have been drafted and will be finalized on May 8. The Task Force recommended that timber harvest focus on reducing risks from fires near populated areas, but did not recommend other salvage. Most of the land adjacent to the populated areas where fire risks are greatest is private or municipal land, not state land. DNR is working to identify ways to implement the Task Force recommendations. We believe that this bill does not reflect the Task Force recommendations.

HB 284 would have little or no effect on large infestations because it does not address the main factors that cause insect outbreaks and limit their control. First, climatic conditions play a key role in determining the size of outbreaks, and are not controllable by agency action. Pests such as bark beetles occur naturally throughout Alaskan forests, and their populations can explode when weather conditions are favorable. Second, feasible salvage harvesting is limited by weak markets for low value timber, funding for timber sales and reforestation, and multiple use concerns about impacts of timber harvest and roading on other resources and activities.

HB 284 increases state costs by requiring the state to develop agreements with private landowners, regardless of the private owners' interests. Landowners respond to infestations in a variety of ways depending on their management intent and authorities for their land. It is unclear whether Section 1, paragraph (d) would require the state to pay for "necessary salvage measures" on private land.

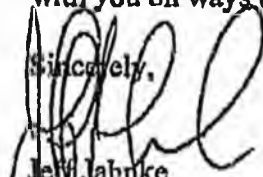
*"Develop, Conserve and Enhance Natural Resources for Present and Future Alaskans"*

Implementing this bill will be costly, since it applies statewide. In 1997, surveys recorded seventeen different types of insects or diseases that damaged more than 100 acres of forest land in Alaska, affecting a total of 2.5 million acres.

The fiscal note submitted by DNR is very conservative. In 1996, the Society of American Foresters invited infestation experts from British Columbia to view the bark beetle infestation in southcentral Alaska. The experts recommended that the state spend at least \$50 million dollars per year to respond to the infestation.

We respectfully request that you do not forward HB 284 at this time. We would be glad to work with you on ways to implement the Task Force recommendations.

Sincerely,



Jeff Jahnke  
Director

**Bruce H. Baker**

Natural Resource Consultant

Phone & Fax:  
(907) 789-9354P.O. Box 211384  
Auke Bay, Alaska 99821e-mail:  
bbaker@alaska.net

May 5, 1998

**To:**

Senator Rick Halford	465-4928 (fax)
Senator Bert Sharp	2070
Senator John Torgerson	4779
Senator Georgianna Lincoln	2652
Senator Loren Leman	3810

**Subject: HB 284**

Dear Senate Resources Committee Members:

As a graduate forester, forest insect specialist, and private small woodlot owner, I strongly urge you to vote against HB 284. This bill would require salvage logging when it isn't even necessary or appropriate. HB 284 would result in government overregulation and interference with the rights of private property owners in the wise use of their forest land. By requiring salvage logging where it can't even pay its own way, it would be a waste of scarce public funds, a fiscal conservative's nightmare.

The timber salvage problems that this bill purports to address are not statewide problems. They're geographically localized situations that vary depending on the site-specific circumstances. They are situations in which sensible and responsible public officials, private land managers, and, where appropriate, the general public need to be involved in developing solutions on a case-by-case basis.

The best known current forest insect or disease condition in Alaska is the spruce bark beetle on the Kenai Peninsula, and that situation is being dealt with by the Kenai Borough's Bark Beetle Task Force. Let's let local government do its job without Legislative interference.

And finally, this bill offers no new solutions. The Department of Natural Resources already has the authority to put up emergency and below cost timber sales if circumstances call for that.

Thank you for the chance to comment.

Sincerely,



To SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
From Mary Shields - Fairbanks

Dear Senator Halford and committee.  
Please do not pass #248.

In our community we have been working to open up the public process in the Tanana Valley State Forest...so the people who really own the resource are in the planning process from the bottom up.

The recent flap about the Surprise Side Sale <sup>tsa</sup> ~~is~~ blatant examples where the public was left out.

I have been working on various forestry working groups for the past 3 years.

If DOF is mandated to log where ever insects threaten the forest...this will be a bomb going off in the public process. The whole forest fits this description. DOF can salvage log now, but to say they MUST log is not a decision to be made in Juneau. DOF needs the flexibility to manage in response to conditions as they change, not by some all inclusive order from Juneau.

Most important is the protection of the public process.

**Please do not pass 284.**

Thank you Mary Shields

box 80961

Fairbanks Alaska 99708



**FAX** ~~~~~ **FAX** ~~~~~

May 6, 1998

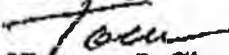
To: Senator Rick Halford

From: Thomas J. Classen

Subject: HB 284

Senator Halford I urge you to take no action on HB 284. This is a bad bill that tends to destroy more of the wilderness areas in Alaska. Bark beetles are a natural phenomena and should be treated that way. The loggers will do more damage to the wilderness removing the trees than will the beetle. The cycle will ultimately end and nature will restore itself but damage done by man usually remains forever. In my humble opinion all logging in Alaska should be terminated as it is the ultimate destruction of the land.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Classen  
P.O. Box 80505  
Fairbanks, AK 99708