

HB

395

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

REPRESENTATIVE KURT OLSON

- Co-Chair, Community and Regional Affairs
- Member, Resources

Session: January - May
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
Phone: 907-465-2693
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Interim: May - December
145 Main Street Loop, Ste 221
Kenai, AK 99611
Phone: 907-283-2690
Fax 907-283-2763

Official business

TO: Senator Bert Stedman - Chair
Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee

FROM: Representative Kurt Olson *KEO*

DATE: April 3, 2006

RE: Hearing on CSHB 395 (FIN) (am)

I respectfully request a hearing in the Senate Community and Regional Affairs Committee on HB 395, An Act relating to the period of the fire season, at your earliest convenience.

Attached please find a copy of the bill, sponsor statement, and zero fiscal note. Additionally please find letters of support and maps of major Kenai Peninsula fires and fire starts on the Kenai Peninsula from 1990 to 2005.

If you need any further information, please contact Konrad Jackson at ext. 2693.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 2
 Bill Version: CSHB 395(FIN)
 (H) Publish Date: 3/6/2006

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Natural Resources
 Title An Act Extending the Period of the Fire Season RDU Statewide Fire Suppression
 Component Fire Suppression Program
 Sponsor Olson
 Requester HFC Component No. 2705

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below

| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | FY 2007 | FY 2008 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Personal Services | | | | | | |
| Travel | | | | | | |
| Contractual | | | | | | |
| Supplies | | | | | | |
| Equipment | | | | | | |
| Land & Structures | | | | | | |
| Grants & Claims | | | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | | | |
| TOTAL OPERATING | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1002 Federal Receipts | | | | | | |
| 1003 GF Match | | | | | | |
| 1004 GF | | | | | | |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts | | | | | | |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health | | | | | | |
| Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate) | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Estimate of any current year (FY2006) cost: 0.0
 Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2007 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time | | | | | | |
| Part-time | | | | | | |
| Temporary | | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: House Finance Committee
Rep. Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Rep. Mike Chenault, Co-Chair

Phone 465-4945/465-3779
 Date 3/2/2006

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

CSHB 395 (FIN) am FIRE SEASON START DATE

The spruce bark beetle kill on the Kenai Peninsula has created an enormous amount of dry grass and dead trees susceptible to lightning strikes and man made fires. The threat grows greater ever year.

For the past several years the climate in our area has been gradually warming earlier in the year, leaving wild areas dry and increasing the probability of a major wildfire early in or even before the start of the current fire season.

The largest uncontained fire on the Southern Kenai Peninsula ever recorded, the Tracy Avenue fire, started prior to May 1, 2005, threatening residents and property. This fire might have been contained had the equipment and personnel been available the first day.

The threat of early season fires is a statewide issue. These pre-green up fires are a very real threat in the Mat-Su Valley, the Anchorage bowl and the Fairbanks area. Since many of these fires are man made, they tend to be near populated areas thus increasing the risk to life and property.

Moving the fire season start date to April 1 will allow the state to become actively involved in fire prevention and control earlier in the fire season and hopefully stop the progress of a disastrous pre-summer fire.

The bill was amended to change the fire season end date to August 31 to allow for a zero fiscal note and to include an immediate effective date.

I respectfully ask for your support of this bill.



Fairbanks North Star Borough

Office of the Mayor

809 Pioneer Road

P.O. Box 71267

Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-1267

907/459-1300

Fax 907/459-1102

Email mayor@co.fairbanks.ak.us

February 12, 2006

Via Facsimile 907-465-2833

Co-Chair Mike Chenault
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

Via Facsimile 907-465-3476

Co-Chair Kevin Meyer
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska

Subject: Letter In Support of HB 395: Fire Season Start Date

Dear Messrs. Co-Chairman Chenault & Meyer:

I am writing today in support of HB 395: Fire Season Start Date.

Recent fire seasons in Interior Alaska have made no small secret of the dangers faced within the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Most memorable to us all should be the 2004 Boundary Fire.

Changing the start of fire season from May 1st to April 1st is both necessary and appropriate. The Fairbanks North Star Borough's typical fire danger begins in early to mid May. However, supplies, crews, and other resources may not yet be in place to react to our needs without this legislation. Allowing our commissioner to screen crews and order supplies will prepare a necessary pool of resources for our area to draw upon at a critical juncture saving valuable time and resources during an incident.

The fiscal note attached to this legislation is minimal, and appears unable to incorporate the savings that will undoubtedly occur due to expedited response to incidence. I anticipate that adoption of this legislation would also produce a savings to the department as fires are contained before requiring additional crews and equipment, and a reduction in campaign fires is realized.

Please support this legislation with a recommendation of Do Pass.

Thank you.

Jim Whitaker, Mayor

cc: Representative Richard Foster
Representative Jim Holm
Representative Bruce Weyhrauch
Representative Reggie Joule

Representative Mike Hawker
Representative Mike Kelly
Representative Beth Kerttula
Representative Carl Moses

JW:jy/csm

Memorandum**To:** Representative Kurt Olson**From:** Dennis Steffy **Date:** 17 February 2006**Subject:** Bringing forward the fire date

Kurt, I strongly support bringing the date of the fire season forward as described in the Clarion recently. My property was totally burned off in the Gas Well Fire in the early spring of 1969 and is just now beginning to lose the aspects of a desert. I have property on the east side of Kachemak Bay and am suitably terrified that the Kachemak Bay State Park's standing and beetle kill adjoining my property will go someday and take us along with it.

I believe this bill is a good and necessary response to the changing conditions of our spring weather.

Introduced by: Martin
Date: 01/17/06
Action: Adopted
Vote: 8 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH

RESOLUTION 2006-008

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE TO AMEND ALASKA STATUTE 41.15.050 TO CHANGE THE FIRE SEASON START DATE FROM MAY 1 TO APRIL 1 OF EACH YEAR

WHEREAS, the Division of Forestry is the lead agency on the Southern Kenai Peninsula for wildland fire protection; and

WHEREAS, recent climate change on the Kenai Peninsula has resulted in warmer weather starting earlier in the year, which has dried out the wildland fuels earlier in the year, increased the length of the wildland fire threat, and raised the mean summer temperatures; and

WHEREAS, the spruce bark beetle infestation has left the Southern Kenai Peninsula with a continuous fuel bed of dead spruce and dry grass; and

WHEREAS, the population growth into the Southern Kenai Peninsula wildland urban interface is rapidly increasing; and

WHEREAS, lightning fires were a common occurrence on the Southern Kenai Peninsula in 2005; and

WHEREAS, the largest uncontained wildfire recorded on the Southern Kenai Peninsula, the Tracy Avenue fire, started before May 1, 2005, and threatened hundreds of residents; and

WHEREAS, the Tracy Avenue Fire could possibly have been contained the first day had equipment been available in the state; and

WHEREAS, the Tracey Avenue fire came at a time of relatively low and benign winds; and

WHEREAS, in the spring of 2005, fires were also burning in other areas of the state; and

WHEREAS, moving the fire season start date to April 1 will improve the state's ability to be prepared for fires earlier each year, potentially saving the state millions of dollars in firefighting costs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:

SECTION 1. To reflect these changes in natural dynamics the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly requests the Alaska State Legislature to amend AS 41.15.050 to make the fire season effective April 1, rather than May 1, of each year, as well as the fire training season effective the same date.

SECTION 2. That copies of this resolution be forwarded to Michael Menge, Commissioner of

Department of Natural Resources; Senators Albert Kookesh, Con Bunde, Tom Wagoner, and Gary Stevens; Representatives Mike Hawker, Woodie Salmon, Kurt Olson, Mike Chenault, and Paul Seaton.

SECTION 3. That this resolution takes effect immediately upon its adoption

ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 17TH DAY OF JANUARY, 2006.

Southcentral Alaska Spruce Bark Beetle Outbreak, 1980 - 2005

