Southeast Conference Announces New Food Security, Marine Industry, and Timber Coordinators

Juneau, ALASKA –

Significant changes and growth have been taking place at Southeast Conference recently. Southeast Conference is pleased to announce the addition of three new programs at Southeast Conference, and three new staff members to oversee these programs.

Food Security in Southeast Alaska: Lia Heifetz

In 2010 the Southeast Conference introduced food security in the region as a new focus for the Conference. However, the initiative lacked the right person to move it forward. That all changed when Southeast Conference partnered with Sustainable Southeast Partnerships and hired Lia Heifetz to be the Food Security Coordinator for Southeast Alaska. Lia’s previous work experience includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and she has a biology degree from the University of Oregon.

Lia's job is to increase food-related sustainability in Southeast Alaska in an effort to promote self-reliant communities. Lia was born and raised in Southeast Alaska and wants to see our communities and people prosper. "Food not only provides caloric value, it is a fundamental part of cultures and traditions. Food can bring people together, has cultural and place-based significance and can serve as medicine for physical, spiritual and mental well-being. In addition to these benefits, we have an opportunity to replace the large quantities of food that is imported from out of state and support local
food producers,” Lia explains.

Through her work, Lia is shaping a resilient food system that decreases our dependence on outside sources, sparks food-based business startups and improves household and community health. This vision for a prosperous regional food system includes a reliable supply of wild foods, thriving agricultural enterprises, and improved access to fresh and nutritious foods for all residents across our region. Her work is predominantly focused on rural communities in Southeast.

Maritime in Southeast Alaska: Kaleigh Holm

When Southeast Conference published it’s work, the Maritime Economy of Southeast Alaska, showing that one-quarter of the regional economy is driven by jobs connected to the ocean, it changed the way people think about the Southeast Alaska economy. Since that time the Conference’s work in the maritime sector has become one of the organization’s key focus areas, and a full time coordinator was needed to oversee these efforts.

Southeast Conference hired Kaleigh Holm as the Southeast Alaska Marine Industry Coordinator to advance the expansion of the maritime industry throughout the Southeast Alaska region. Among other duties, she will be supporting and facilitating the implementation of some Alaska Maritime Workforce Development Plan action steps. “Workforce development is an important component of the success and the health of the marine economy,” explains Kaleigh. “It is important to pool the resources of the region toward a few common objectives.” She is also working on development of a technology to foster communication and coordination between customer and service professionals and creates efficient collaboration between organizations and industry that are working towards a common goal.

Prior to her work at Southeast Conference, Kaleigh worked as a Page in the Senate Chambers and on a commercial fishing boat. Kaleigh was born and raised in Ketchikan. Kaleigh attended the University of Oregon where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy, Planning, and Management and a minor in Business Administration.

Timber in Southeast Alaska: Lynn Campbell

Southeast Conference has long been focused on restoring a sustainable, integrated Southeast Alaska timber industry in the region. Last year Southeast Conference introduced the Tongass Alternative Management Strategy. To promote and educate regional leaders and organizations regarding the specific elements of this strategy the Conference hired Lynn Campbell in January. “State lands, private lands and federal lands can be managed as one living organism using the triple bottom line approach. We
believe the forest can maintain a good economy for our communities, a healthy environment for the wildlife and the rich cultural and social environment allowing everyone to have their traditional lifestyle,” Lynn explains. Lynn comes to Southeast Conference with a strong background in journalism, having most recently worked at Alaska Broadcasting Communications as their news director.

Shelly Wright, Executive Director of Southeast Conference, noted how delighted she is to have Lia, Kaleigh and Lynn on board. “These new additions to the Southeast Conference team bring energy, enthusiasm, and they represent the future of leadership in Southeast Alaska. I am excited that we have been able to expand our team so that we are better situated to serve Southeast Alaska communities.” All three will be presenting their work at the Southeast Conference Mid Session Summit on March 17th and 18th in Juneau.

- See more at: seconference.org

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**About the Southeast Conference:** Southeast Conference has 180 member organizations with 1,200 people from 32 regional communities. Southeast Conference serves as the collective voice for advancing the region’s economy. The mission of Southeast Conference is to undertake and support activities that promote strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. Southeast Conference began 57 years ago with a group of people supporting the establishment of a regional transportation system in Southeast Alaska. After that success Southeast Conference stayed together through more than a half-century to focus on transportation issues as well as many other concerns unique to the region.