



612 W. Willoughby Ave., Suite B
P.O. Box 21989, Juneau, AK 99802
Phone (907) 586-4351
www.seconference.org
Email info@seconference.org

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator, Alaska
Washington, D.C.
Via email

Re: 2018 Interior Appropriations Bill

Dear Senator Murkowski;

The Southeast Conference is very pleased by Sections 508 (stay of the timber portion of the 2016 TLMP Amendment pending studies and changes to timber management) and 509 (Repeal of Application of the Roadless Rule to the Alaska National Forests) that you have added to the 2018 Interior Appropriations Bill.

Section 508 only addresses timber. We understand how difficult it is to obtain approval of the bill language in the first place and that it would be hard to change at this point. But, we have been advised that we can seek Report language in the bill that would provide direction from Congress on application of the 2016 TLMP Amendment to Renewable Energy, Transportation, and Mining. Accordingly, Southeast Conference requests that the following Report language be added to the Bill:

RENEWABLE ENERGY: The Forest Service Should Remove Barriers to Renewable Energy Development by Clarifying the Criteria Set Out in Chapter 5 of the ROD.

The new Renewable Energy Direction for areas outside IRAs leaves all decision-making power in the Forest Service without criteria for deciding. The Forest Service should adopt the attached Renewable Energy Overlay LUD that would take precedence over any underlying LUD (subject to applicable laws). As such, it would represent a “window” through the underlying LUD through which renewable resources could be accessed and developed.

TRANSPORTATION: The Transportation and Utility System Overlay LUD Should Not Be Eliminated.

There are some project types that are allowable under ANILCA, and that were allowable under the existing 2008 Amended Plan TUS Overlay LUD, that are not be addressed by the 2016 TLMP Amendment ROD’s Renewable Energy Standards and Guidelines or the Transportation Systems Corridors Direction for example, pipelines, communication systems, and other linear facilities. These projects will be made impossible by the 2016 TLMP Amendment. The existing TUS Overlay LUD should be preserved as it provided a mechanism for the development of linear facilities through the Tongass National Forest. Further, and the attached Renewable Energy Overlay LUD should be added. Finally, the TUS LUD provided the management structure for development of roads and utilities using the SAFETEA-LU Section 4407 easements. Developing public infrastructure to connect the communities of Southeast Alaska will be much more difficult with the removal of the TUS LUD under the 2016 TLMP Amendment.

MINING: The Requirement of the 1872 Mining Act That the Forest Service Must Allow Reasonable Access to Locatable Minerals Should be Liberally Construed by the Forest Plan to Accommodate the Particular Access Problems on the Tongass.

Rock is heavy and voluminous. Helicopters are expensive and often unable to transport the heavy equipment required for mining exploration and development. Surface roads are required to safely move and store rock at a standard mining operation. Economical movement of supplies, personnel, and materials is dependent on road access and haulage. Special Use Permits authorizing road access should be streamlined and simplified to provide access for mining to all areas of the Tongass. The Forest Service should strive to complete the Special Use permitting process within 90 days of receiving a completed application.

The cutting of trees associated with mining exploration and development should be allowed. The 2016 TLMP Amendment should allow rural communities and villages on Prince of Wales Island, such as Craig and Klawock, to access mines on Prince of Wales Island with a road. We appreciate your consideration of adding the forgoing concepts to the Interior Appropriations Bill Report language.

Thank you for all you do for our region and the entire State of Alaska.

On behalf of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Venables". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Venables
Executive Director
Southeast Conference