

DRAFT 2025 Action Initiatives

The current work product is in draft form only, as the regional committees work to develop prioritized list of initiatives that will guide development of the regional economy over the next five years.

Southeast Conference is developing the 2025 Southeast Alaska Economic Plan. Southeast Conference is working with municipal, tribal, and community leaders to ensure these sector plans will be successful and adopted on a regional level and is working with the federal delegation and statewide leaders to ensure these plans will work within the larger framework of our state and nation. The work on this effort is being conducted through Southeast Conference’s extensive committee structure, including the seafood/maritime, tourism, transportation, energy, mining, timber, health care, economic development, and solid waste committees.

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Prioritization

Every committee, with the exception of the Economic Development Committee, has worked to finalize and prioritize their economic development initiatives in preparation for inclusion in the Southeast Alaska 2025 Economic Plan. The #1 priority for each sector is presented below:

- **Transportation:** Sustain and Support the Alaska Marine Highway System.
- **Seafood:** Mariculture Development.
- **Visitor Industry:** Market Southeast Alaska to Attract More Visitor Spending and Opportunities
- **Energy:** Continue to support rural Southeast communities with high-cost electric rates that do not have access to lower cost hydroelectricity.
- **Timber:** Provide an economically viable and dependable supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest to regional timber operators.
- **Mining:** Proactively support mining operations and mineral exploration projects
- **Healthcare:** Plan for a post COVID-19 Southeast Alaska economy and health care system.
- **Solid Waste:** Support Regional Solid Waste Management Solutions
- **Economic Development Committee:** Prioritization pending

Southeast Alaska Energy Initiatives (5)

The Southeast Alaska Energy initiatives were developed by members of the Southeast Conference Energy Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020. They have been prioritized in the order presented below:

1. Continue to support rural Southeast communities with high-cost electric rates that do not have access to lower cost hydroelectricity.

Southeast Alaska's rural remote communities often do not have access to lower cost hydroelectricity. Work to preserve the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Endowment and maintain the PCE program. The PCE is a critical lifeline that provides access to affordable electric power for rural Alaskans and allows rural communities to have affordable electricity for streetlights, water and sewer facilities, and other essential public infrastructure. The PCE Endowment should only be used for its statutory purposes. Work to secure continued access to renewable energy funding for rural communities, while recognizing the risk that costs could be increased by implementation of high-cost energy projects.

2. Work with communities to create energy systems that provide sustainable, affordable, renewable thermal energy.

Space heating costs represent a major portion of residential, commercial, and industrial energy expenditures in Southeast Alaska, often 60% to 75% of monthly bills, even in communities with high electricity costs. Developing and integrating renewable sources of electricity remains difficult technologically, geographically and economically because the most viable path forward in Southeast Alaska's islanded electric grids and rural communities often requires investment in electric infrastructure by the utility that corresponds with investment in load-side technologies by individual residences and businesses. In contrast, numerous opportunities exist across the region to provide thermal energy to individual buildings, or to groups of buildings in the case of a district heating system, with small-scale and affordable systems powered by renewable fuels, including the following:

- **Biomass:** Expand biomass heating systems in communities with easy access to urban wood waste and post-logging areas. Existing biomass heat systems in Southeast displace more than 200,000 thousand of gallons of heating oil annually. Low-value residual and waste wood resources are an abundant, sustainable renewable resource for advanced thermal energy systems.
- **Solar:** Develop off-grid photovoltaic and non-photovoltaic solar hydronic thermal systems for heating individual buildings and water.
- **Geothermal, Wind and Tidal:** Southeast has significant geothermal, wind and tidal energy potential that are free and inexhaustible. Geographic, technological and regulatory obstacles make these energy resources uneconomic in the near future. Support long-term advances in generation technology, transmission and distribution systems.

- **Hydropower:** Hydroelectric facilities provide the majority of the power requirement in Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell, Skagway, Haines, Metlakatla, Craig and Klawock.
 - **Liquified Natural Gas:** LNG may someday be a local commodity available to meet the region's thermal and electrical generation needs or may be a useful bridging fuel source that is cleaner and more efficient than diesel. Support exploration of economic sources of natural gas near Ketchikan.
3. **Promote beneficial electrification.** Beneficial electrification is the replacement of appliances and equipment that burn petroleum directly with electrically-powered alternatives that allow for more efficient integration of renewable sources of electricity onto the electric grid, or that allow for better utilization of existing electric infrastructure. For example, replacing a gas-powered automobile with an electric vehicle (EV) is an example of electrification which may enable integration of renewable energy if the EV provides grid storage when not in use, or an EV may enable increased utilization of existing grid infrastructure by charging when loads on the grid are low. Work with utilities to support utilizing a wider range of renewable resources in the region and to develop innovative rates and programs that encourage beneficial electrification by consumers. Work with communities to support consumer adoption of technologies that can be added to the electric system in a manner that increases the value of the grid. The primary opportunities for beneficial electrification in Southeast Alaska include:
- **Heat Pumps:** Support the continued installation of heat pumps in areas with high heating costs and low electric costs. Advances in air-source and ground source heat pump technologies make these methods increasingly practical for providing clean thermal energy while taking advantage of excess electrical capacity in the region.
 - **Electric Vehicles (EV):** EVs and their charging infrastructure have the ability to bring new industries to the region, helping to promote our economy and save money. Support efforts to minimize barriers that inhibit EV adoption in Alaska.
 - **Research Emerging Technologies:** Southeast Alaska's microgrids offer excellent testing grounds for innovative technologies that may enable beneficial electrification in our communities. The development of these technologies may also have broad value outside of our region and state. Identify opportunities to fund research and testing of technologies that will enable greater integration of renewable energy and better utilization of grid infrastructure.
 - **Dock Electrification:** While not all communities can support port initiatives for electrification due to significant costs, support those that can.
4. **Implement regional energy plan with a focus on "committed units" and deployment of renewables**
- Partner with state and federal agencies to advocate for renewable energy development and advance energy technologies in order to promote economic development and jobs to contribute to a resilient tax base. Update the *Southeast Alaska Integrated Resource*

Plan (SEIRP) and list of "committed resources," such as generation projects and transmission hydroelectrical interties, that have regional support. The potential exemption from the Roadless Rule in the Tongass National Forest may have a specific impact on the costs associated with transmission interties since the last update to the SEIRP. Continue to pursue opportunities for energy efficiency in generation, transmission and demand-side management. Facilitate technical expertise and educate consumers regarding energy use. Educate and communicate the value and importance of regional energy projects, especially small, community-based projects. There are a number of projects that help meet renewable energy goals of the state and federal agencies.

5. **Energy Workforce Development:** Build the workers and workforce involved in regional energy work. The Southeast Alaska energy sector is agile and innovative. Southeast Alaska's energy sector is a small community that requires people to wear many hats. This diversity of experience drives innovation that can be shared across the region. Utilities should work together to prepare for, test, and invent emerging technologies that allow us to accomplish more with our abundant renewable resources. The region also has specific needs for training related to installation and maintenance of heat pumps, hydroelectricity, maintenance of electric vehicles, and operation and maintenance of building energy systems and controls.

Southeast Alaska Transportation Initiatives (7)

The Southeast Alaska Transportation initiatives were developed by 46 members of the Southeast Conference Transportation Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020. They have been prioritized in the order presented below:

1. **Sustain and Support the Alaska Marine Highway System:** The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) is facing the dual predicament of a State fiscal crisis and a global pandemic that especially impacts all modes of travel. In a coordinated effort to strengthen connectivity in the region, the AMHS must provide reliable, basic service to coastal Alaska communities, create an economy of scale and provide cost effective transportation services as part of the statewide intermodal transportation system.
 - **Change of governance for AMHS.** Since its first port of call, the Alaska Marine Highway has provided access to rural communities and generated substantial economic growth and improved quality of life for Alaskans. It has become a vital socio-economic engine even more now than when it was conceived half a century ago. For nearly 40 years, marine experts and consultants have recommended changes in how AMHS is managed. From Nickum and Spaulding Associates in 1982 to Southeast Conference’s AMHS Reform initiative to the Northern Economics Reshaping Report, it was recognized that an empowered management structure with members having significant experience in business operations, transportation, finance, labor and economic development was needed.
 - **Implement Reshaping Recommendations:** Work with the State of Alaska to implement the Alaska Marine Highway Reshaping Work Group’s 2020 recommendations concerning governance, future finances and service levels of the AMHS. These recommendations fall into the following categories:
 - a. Strengthen AMHS Governance Support
 - b. Improve System Reliability
 - c. Stabilize Budget Planning
 - d. Reduce System Costs
 - e. Renegotiate Marine Union Labor Agreements
 - f. Increase System Revenue
 - g. Leverage Road Infrastructure

2. **Develop long-term, strategic, multi-modal transportation plan:** Work with the State of Alaska to develop a comprehensive approach to transportation planning through the regional Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP) process. Develop an action plan that will ensure the region’s multi-modal transportation systems meet the needs of the region’s people and economy. Regional transportation modes compete for limited funding and are not properly calibrated to the flow of people and goods. Southeast Alaska has been without a current regional transportation plan for the region’s ferries, roads, airports, ports and harbors since the 2004 SATP was published, since the 2014 SATP only made it into draft form.

3. **Ensure the stability of regional transportation services.** Water and air transportation are vital to the lives of most residents and to commerce between communities in and beyond the region. Alaska and Delta Airlines provide jet service to the region, while many smaller airlines provide connectivity and passenger service between the communities. The Inter-Island Ferry Authority is a public ferry system that provides daily service between Prince of Wales Island and Ketchikan. These transportation networks are an economic engine for the region, generating jobs, commerce, and tourism - while also increasing community wellbeing. Facilitate discussions for solutions to transportation gaps of service. Modifications to state-owned infrastructure may increase the versatility of community use and private sector participation in service delivery. Support a consistent program of providing federal passthrough dollars for continued maintenance and operations for the Inter-Island Ferry Authority (IFA). This should lead to a more certain and predictable level of service for the long-term.
4. **Move freight to and from markets more efficiently.** Freight operations are a critical component of the Southeast transportation system and regional economy. All Southeast residents depend on the movement of goods, and barge operators carry the bulk of freight. Find ways to stabilize the cost of transporting goods into, out of, and within the region. Work with the transportation industry to find creative ways to reduce the costs for the transportation of goods, especially for less-than-container loads. Explore freight forwarding at the international border. Design system around large fisheries summer markets and lower ferry capacity in the winter. Determine the best ways to move perishables to and from markets in Southeast. Ensure that the infrastructure improvements needed to support barge operations move forward. Support more frequent barge services for communities with limited freight services, especially in the winter.
5. **Ports and Harbors Infrastructure Improvements.** Advocate for port and harbor infrastructure improvements to address current user needs while exploring opportunities to develop these facilities beyond traditional uses and local networks, including private sector investment opportunities; with the objective of improving the reliability and effectiveness of serving the entire port and harbor network. Include infrastructure for float planes, including floats and fueling stations.
6. **Passenger transportation recovery post COVID-19:** All passenger transportation modes have been significantly disrupted due to the COVID-19 crisis, from air to ferry to cruise. As of September 2020, air passenger traffic to the region is down by 58% over 2019 levels, cruise passengers are down by 99.9%, and ferry traffic has been severely reduced. Work with all transportation providers bring passengers back safely to 2019 levels after the COVID-19 pandemic has curtailed. Set strategic direction across transportation providers to operate safely and within shared mitigation measures as the world recovers.

7. **Road Development.** While only three communities (Haines, Skagway and Hyder) are directly connected to highways outside of the region, roads are the primary way to get around within communities. Reconfigure and extend roads to address high traffic volume corridors that can be most economically served by road improvements. Several roads in the region are not being used in an intermodal fashion, and other roads are underutilized. Expand use of the existing road network. Improve utilization of existing road systems while maximizing use of ferries. Develop new roads and expanded road access. This includes “roads to resources” that will provide access to resources that are important for economic development. Continue and complete design of the access corridor.

Southeast Alaska Timber Initiatives (8)

The Southeast Alaska Timber initiatives were developed by 15 members of the Southeast Conference Timber Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020. They have been prioritized in the order presented below:

- 1. Provide an economically viable and dependable supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest to regional timber operators.** Support management, research, and legal efforts to assure access to adequate, consistent, and economic timber supply on federal and state forest lands. To be economically successful local mills must be provided an opportunity to accumulate a supply of purchased but unharvested economic timber (i.e. volume under contract) equal to approximately three years of timber consumption. This allows the industry ample time to plan an orderly and systematic harvest schedule that meets all timing restrictions and permit requirements. Second, it allows the industry to better manage its financial resources and to secure financing on the basis of longer-term timber supply (banks don't want to provide loans without multi-year plans in place). Third, it allows time for the necessary infrastructure to be maintained. Finally, an ample timber supply gives the industry more opportunity to sustain itself through market cycles which have proven highly erratic in Alaska in recent years.
- 2. Revise the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan:** The assumptions and work of the US Forest Service's (USFS) 2016 Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (TLMP) are no longer valid. The last full revision of the TLMP was in 1997. Subsequent Plan amendments (2008 & 2016) transitioned the forest from predominantly old growth to predominantly young growth (YG) harvest. The following should be undertaken:
 - Support the development of an updated management plan for the Tongass which assists with developing a stable, economically viable timber sale program that produces sufficient, predictable timber volume to meet market demand three years in advance.
 - Update standards and guides to reflect modern use of the forest.
 - Revisit Land Use Designations (LUDS), and updated fall down calculations.
 - Develop a reasonable schedule to conduct young growth harvests that are economically viable.
 - Address market development and market fluctuations, including identifying markets for YG.
 - Develop a 10-year USFS plan reflecting the needs of the current industry.
 - Develop a 10-year State, AK Mental Health Trust, University of AK, and other landowners plan reflecting the needs of the current industry.
- 3. Support an integrated timber industry that includes harvest of young growth and old growth:** Address the USFS transition plan that expects harvest to be predominantly YG

by 2040 to 2070. Work to integrate and diversify the timber industry rather than developing an industry extinguishment and replacement strategy. Develop new and boutique markets for AK forest products, including consideration of the demand for old growth products. Ensure timber sales are economically viable. Provide a cushion of purchased but unharvested timber equal to a three-year timber supply. Allow economic old growth timber to be harvested in a volume sufficient to meet market demand for an integrated timber industry.

4. **Community-Based Timber Workforce Development.** As the industry has contracted, it has become more difficult to attract skilled labor and individuals with technical training in forestry. There is also a lack of contractors available for harvesting. Support local workforce development for timber focused occupations. Consider a multi-organization workforce development initiative with local, non-profit, state and landowner participation. Work to attract and retain forest product professionals. Ensure there are sufficient contractors in the region to support the timber industry, including tasks such as preparing and laying out sales.
5. **Work with USFS to direct federal contracts and timber sale opportunities toward eligible locally owned businesses.** The USFS spends millions each year on contracts in support of construction, maintenance and land management and advertises projects through federal procurement vehicles. Local Alaskan companies are often at a disadvantage for being selected. There are several changes that can be made to help direct these contracts to local firms including:
 - Advocate for the USFS to right-size larger projects into several smaller or linked phases and revise federal financial bonding requirements on contracts. Provide a variety of large and small contract opportunities. This allows for revised bonding thresholds that are more attainable to small, local businesses who are currently unable to meet the minimum requirements.
 - Advocate for the full range of federal contracting mechanisms be utilized including small business set asides, HUB zone preferences, 8(a) preferences and advertisement for competitive bid through the government's sam.gov platform. Likewise, small mill owners would benefit from an increase in right-sized timber sales, extending harvest schedules, allowing harvest of dead/down trees on road corridors, and reduction in bonding requirements.
6. **Communication and Advocacy.** Factual errors, and misguided information regarding both industry and the Tongass National forest continues to be shared regionally, statewide, and nationally. A focused public relations effort led by industry and supported by regional partners could change the discussion and perception of industry. Tell the story of the Southeast Alaska timber industry as it exists today. Work to combat misinformation promulgated on the regional, state, and national levels. Link the timber industry to associated secondary and tertiary industries that benefit directly from timber harvest and associated projects, contracts, and personnel.

7. **Promote Free Trade.** Resolve the trade war and continue to advocate for tariff exclusions and exemptions. Promoting free trade is critical for the Southeast economy. The escalating trade war between the U.S. and China has negatively impacted the Southeast Alaska timber sector. The current tariff on spruce logs exported to China is 25 percent, which has substantially increased costs and reduced harvest levels. Steep tariffs have halted much of the region's YG harvest. The reduction in harvesting is threatening the economic viability of contractors in the Southeast region as well.

8. **Contract and Agreement Reform.** Collaboration between landowner groups, agencies and industry has proven beneficial for many reasons. Revisit and update agreements with the industry and the USFS, including the following: contracts: Shared stewardship agreement with USDA; Cost Share Agreements with USFS. Ensure active participation in Landowners Group Meetings currently chaired by the State of AK, DNR, DOF.

Southeast Alaska Mining and Exploration Initiatives (8)

The Southeast Alaska Mining initiatives were developed by 20 members of the Southeast Conference Mining Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020.

1. Proactively support mining operations and mineral exploration projects

Support and promote responsible resource development and management as part of an economically and environmentally sustainable Southeast. Increase awareness of the high bar for environmental operations regional mining operations adhere to in order to counter impression that mining has an environmental cost. Promote a better understanding of environmental plans that are being followed - for both operating and future mines. Tell the story of the Southeast Alaska mining industry as it exists today. Work to combat misinformation promulgated on the regional, state, and national levels. Promote an understanding of the community benefits of mining in the region, and the uses of regional minerals. Mining is a key economic driver in the region, and the abundance of minerals is a natural asset. It is an industry with a high multiplier because of the high wages, high property taxes, high local spending.

2. Support effort to increase access to minerals and energy sources for mining on state and federal lands

Ensure that federal lands in Southeast Alaska are developable and accessible. Continuing support for access for the mining industry, and interties and hydroelectricity in the Tongass. Energy and access are two of the major obstacles to mining development. Increase access and infrastructure development. While "reasonable" access is allowed for mining in IRAs, mining companies often need **road access** to get heavy equipment from tidewater to a Project site or to otherwise proceed with economically exploring and developing a mine or a hydro facility. Road access for mining exploration and development and for renewable energy projects has been particularly difficult to obtain in IRAs. A road to access mineral operations authorized by the United States mining laws (30 U.S.C. § 22 et seq.) will now be permitted throughout the Tongass if it meets the criteria of 36 C.F.R. Part 228.

3. Mining and Exploration Workforce Development

Mining provides diverse, high paying, year-round jobs at Southeast's three active underground mines. Additional employment is available through support services and the exploration industry. Ongoing workforce development is needed to maintain and grow regional employment in these skilled and professional positions. Continue to work with the University of Alaska Southeast to provide high caliber training to help high school students and other workers explore the workforce diversity available and find employment in the mining industry.

4. Preserve access to reliable, year-round transportation for miners living in rural Southeast Alaska

The mines of Southeast Alaska have recruited a significant level of regional talent. However, if miners living in Southeast communities outside of key mining locations such as Juneau and Prince of Wales Island, do not always have reliable transportation connectivity to travel to and from their home community between shifts, regional jobs will be threatened. Maintain ferry service to provide transportation for mining workers to their jobs. For example, it is at times easier to commute to down south than to Haines. (broaden make more regional)

5. Attract mining capital

Work to attract investment into regional mineral exploration and mine development. Understanding that Southeast Alaska must compete with other mining jurisdictions around the world, work to improve the investment climate. This includes efforts to maintain and control cost of living (including housing costs), reduce operating costs, such as freight and electricity, and maintain marine and land access. It also includes opposition to new mining taxes.

6. Create a more stable regulatory environment

Support the permitting process that has been developed. Ensure there is understanding regarding how new regulatory proposals might impact current and future mining operations and educate decision-makers on the importance of regulatory stability for the economy, environment, and communities. This includes understanding and monitoring of new regulatory rulemaking regarding NEPA and WOTUS and Supreme Court's decisions. It also includes understanding the implications of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requirements for general permits, nationwide permits, and Alaska Regional Conditions. It includes consideration of State primacy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 regulations. Finally, it includes support for a resolution of Tier 3 legislation in the State Legislature.

7. Review and promote an understanding of decades of land use planning

Evaluate the status and potential need for change of existing land use plans, including the Southeast Area Transportation Plan, now that the State has prevailed in the 4407 Litigation and the 2001 Roadless Rule is no longer in effect on the Tongass.

8. Support research and promotion of regional mineral prospects and deposits

Partner with the University of Alaska, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Mental Health Trust, and Sealaska to increase mineral and geology research. Develop a better understanding of Southeast Alaska's mineral deposits. Advertise the regional mineral endowment, along with land status and ownership associated with deposits.

Southeast Alaska Health Care Initiatives (7)

The Southeast Alaska Health Care initiatives were developed by 20 members of the Southeast Conference Health Care Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020.

1. **Plan for a post COVID-19 Southeast Alaska economy and health care system:** Ensure that our populace is healthy, has access to health care, access to health care insurance, and has the community support they need to make healthy choices. There are vulnerabilities within the health care system that are likely to be exacerbated following the COVID-19 crisis, including Medicaid cuts, reduced access to health care insurance. Advocate for the development of a state fiscal plan so that we have a plan to fund state services. Identify funding capabilities of the state going forward so that the region can continue strong health care operations moving forward.
2. **Retain Alaska Trained Health Care Students**
 - **Achieve high graduation rates.** Work to retain students in health care related programs and support them through graduation.
 - **Hire students right out of school.** Once students are trained, they will they get hired and are likely to settle in the community that provides that first opportunity. How can we remove the barriers to have those first jobs be in some of our more rural communities where they will be most valuable in the long term? Rural Immersion Pilot Program: Six sites were targeted in SE AK. The program made money and those dollars were reinvested in the program. Can we build out this health care provider recruitment concept?
 - **Coordinate with potential employers early on.** Providers need an opportunity to help students stay in SE. Some potential benefits of early recruitment access could include the following: Employers could help pay for instructors from the lower-48; Perks provided to university or students.
3. **Meet the health care needs of an aging population.** Ensure there are sufficient resources for those who wish to “age in place” in Southeast Alaska can do so. Since 2010, the most pronounced demographic shift in SE has been aging of the population. During that period, the 60-plus population grew by 5,000 people, a 42% increase over 2010 due to aging in place. Nearly a quarter of people in the region are now age 60 or older. Ensure we can meet the following needs: Home health care aides, Assisted living facilities, Health care needs met locally.
4. **Increase health care training within the region/state.** Build UAS and UAA programming to be responsive to the critical health care workforce needs identified by the Southeast Alaska Health Care Workforce Analysis. As health care needs in the region grow, so does the need for a larger highly capable, trained workforce. Our analysis shows that being from Alaska is one of the most critical factors determining whether or not an

employee will stay in the job over the long term. There is a clear demand for “growing our own” workforce. Expanding the programming available within our university to build this workforce is imperative.

5. **Reduce barriers to hiring outside workers.** Work with State of Alaska to reduce the time it takes for physicians and nurses moving to the region from out of state to get Alaska licenses. The process takes too long, resulting in the loss of high-quality professionals to more timely opportunities in other states.

6. **Improve Recruitment Strategies**

- **Look for creative solutions in finding different ways to recruit new talent.**
- **Create a coordinated employment pool.** Rather than going through a recruitment agency, develop our own for the recruitment resources for the region. Create a catalogue of jobs we are recruiting for, and share. This will help us better understand what other are doing, and if recruiting for same jobs.
- **Continue recruitment partnerships**
 - ◆ **University system.** UA, UAS, UAA, etc.
 - ◆ **Job center network.** Provides training to youth, adults, etc.
 - ◆ **Alaska Department of Labor.** Better understanding funding opportunities
 - ◆ **Alaska Workforce Investment Board**
- **Work to eliminate barriers to recruitment/retention presented in the Health Care Workforce Analysis.**
 - ◆ Provide more information for out of state recruits about the region
 - ◆ Expand local university programs to meet region needs
 - ◆ Increase reimbursement rates and reduce unfunded mandates
 - ◆ Develop a better variety of rental units and homes to buy
 - ◆ Assist in brainstorming ideas to increase reliable childcare

7. **Regional health care enhanced partnerships**

As resources become scarcer, it is more important than ever to collaborate across the region within the health care industry and coordinate more effectively.

- **Continue advisory group to promote regional health care solutions.** The 14-member steering committee for the process exists and can continue to work together to be proactive regarding the needs of the industry.
- **Collaborate on Grants/Funding.** Explore grant funding for a regional collaborate to optimize care delivery. Work more closely with the statewide university for funding help. Are there grants to get health care worker training funded? Equipment grants? If we work in dental field, would need that equipment. UA, UAA. Partnership to access additional resources. Blend funding resources for workforce development. Industry support. Stretch dollars across more programs over time. Private industry and state. Philanthropic groups.
- **Eliminate Duplication in Regional Efforts.** Work with regional training centers to insure that we are not duplicating programs etc.

- **Shared Technology Best Practices.** A regional partnership should provide better access to care. Focus on technology to promote those services. Reduce redundancies
- **Shared Procurement.** In order to have more negotiating power in terms of supply chain and shipping, regional providers could collaborate to reduce costs.
- **Coordinate Training of Existing Staff. Management Training:** Health care management training is occurring across the region. Work together so that we can bring resources and training to the region. **Health Care Training:** Develop locally based training programs for staff, so that they don't have to leave Alaska for continued education.

Southeast Alaska Seafood Initiatives (13)

The Southeast Alaska Seafood initiatives were developed by 24 members of the Southeast Conference Seafood and Maritime Industry Committee in a series of meetings in 2020.

- 1. Mariculture Development.** Support development of the mariculture industry, including enhancement, restoration and aquatic farming of shellfish and seaweeds. Work with the Governor's Office to promote regional mariculture objectives. Support the Governor's Alaska Mariculture Task Force and successor organization, the Alaska Mariculture Alliance. Increase shellfish and seaweed production and farming efficiencies, including the number of species from aquatic farms. Increase the number of mariculture operations, providing financial and technical support for interested mariculture entrepreneurs. Support the marketing of mariculture products, mariculture eco-tourism and shellfish enhancement. Support increased hatchery development and capacity, including financially stabilizing OceansAlaska to increase seed production, quality and species. Support increased capacity of an Alaska Shellfish Authority, including capacity and funding for shellfish safety testing in the region. Leverage existing seafood processing capital, including bringing additional seaweed processing capacity to the region (drying/blanching/sorting). Increase shellfish sorting and packaging capacity in the region. Work with mariculture farmers to develop a shellfish frozen stable product with a viable market. Support development of non-food ocean products. Support research, outreach and education for mariculture in the region.
- 2. Work to Further Promote a Year-round Seafood Economy in the Region.** Find ways to expand existing economic activity before and after the summer salmon season to better insulate local economies by further developing a longer, expanded seafood season. Provide incentives to seafood processors to develop value-added or emerging Southeast Alaska seafood products that will be produced outside the traditional salmon harvest and processing season (from June through August). Develop and process products throughout the year to help establish a more year-round processing workforce and create more economic activity in-between fishing seasons.
- 3. Further Develop Seafood Markets.** Support ASMI's work to expand existing and develop new domestic and international markets for Alaska seafood. Support the industry's efforts to develop new products. Support ASMI and the Alaska seafood supply chain to restore markets impacted by COVID by taking advantage of funding, new opportunities, and efficiencies. Partner with ASMI and other resources to provide more opportunities to source local seafood for Alaska businesses to build markets locally. Work across the region to create more direct marketing opportunities.

4. **Maintain a Stable Regulatory Regime to Support the Seafood Sector.** Protect commercial fisheries by advocating for stable regulatory and management regimes. Use the best science available at state and federal levels. Educate policy makers to employ responsible and sustainable harvest decisions for Alaska seafood while promoting access to the resources. Advocate for an adequate ADF&G management to ensure data is available to manage fisheries to the maximum extent possible.

5. **Increase employment and training opportunities for Southeast Alaska residents in the Marine Industrial Support Sector**
Support development of school and University programs and curricula focused on industrial knowledge, skills and experience transferable to Marine Industrial Support employment opportunities, i.e. UAS Ketchikan Maritime and Multi-Skilled Worker Program. Create a model for youth 18-24 and adult internships in regional Marine Industrial Support businesses and municipal maritime enterprises. Identify Marine Industrial Support subject matter experts to participate in school programs and public lectures disseminating Marine Industrial Support career opportunities. Identify public education programs, apprenticeships, private training entities, and Marine Industrial Support business supporting internships for Southeast residents desiring employment in the Marine Industrial Support sector. Identify private and public fund programs to support implementation of this objective.

6. **Research the effects of changing ocean conditions on the marine environment:**
Research ocean acidification and ocean warming in Alaska and look to reduce impacts on the fisheries. Educate and advocate regarding mitigation pathways. Work with the University of Alaska College of Fisheries and Ocean Science on their research into temperature impacts on North Pacific marine ecosystems, range shifts, recruitment failure in salmon, cod, rockfish, pollock, and crab. Support this work, and continued funding by NSF, NPRB, Alaska Sea Grant, etc. Support researchers in developing advice to management agencies regarding sustainable management of fisheries in face of climate driven changes.

7. **Support Regional Processors Becoming Economically Competitive.** Support continued and increased seafood processing and manufacturing within the region. Support processors to increase the overall capacity, as well as expand the variety and availability of seafood products. Support the broadening of marketing efforts. Increase the number of firms producing high-value products. Support development of necessary infrastructure for seafood processing activities. Update processing plants and update/improve transportation routes to get products to market. Support processors getting seafood to market cheaper, faster, and fresher.

8. **Communicate the Importance of Salmon Hatcheries.** Support a more robust outreach program to clearly communicate the value of the hatcheries and the science under which the hatcheries are managed. Hatcheries are critical to the larger Southeast Alaska

economy. Southeast Alaska's salmon hatchery program is an example of sustainable economic development that directly benefits subsistence fishermen, personal use fishermen, sport fishermen, charter fishermen, commercial fishermen, seafood processors, as well as state and local governments, which receive raw fish tax dollars. Alaska's hatcheries are operated by non-profit associations who rely on the best scientific methodology, precautionary principles and sustainable fisheries policies to protect wild salmon populations. They have proven to be significant and vital to Alaska's seafood and sportfish industries and the state of Alaska by creating employment and economic opportunities throughout the region, the state, and especially in rural coastal communities.

9. **Seafood Sector Workforce Development.** Work with the seafood industry and state to promote increased seasonal workforce attraction and development. Engage in workforce development efforts to attract young Southeast Alaskans to participate in the seafood economy. The absence of young Southeast Alaskan fishermen is compounded by the rise in nonresident permit ownership in local fisheries. Work with UAS to build a program that parallels seafood/mariculture programming. Secure funding for a workforce apprenticeship program for young Alaskans for mariculture. Work with processors to support workforce development and advancements.
10. **Increase Energy Efficiency and Reduce Energy Costs.** Support programs that aim to increase energy efficiency of vessels and processing plants. Reduce reliance on diesel for both boats and processing plants. Move the commercial fishing fleet away from diesel dependency using concepts such as diesel/electric hybrid vessels, hydrogen, or other energy alternatives. Find alternatives to reduce use of diesel for processing plants and cold storage facilities that could include increased energy efficiency or hydropower.
11. **Full Resource Utilization & Ocean Product Development.** Increase total revenue from existing commercial fisheries in the region by developing new, higher value products and markets from parts of the fish that are currently either thrown away or that go to lower relative value markets. Work with seafood processors to develop new products and identify businesses or entrepreneurs not currently in the seafood industry who can contribute to this effort. Collaborate with private, state, federal and university researchers needs to be encouraged to identify and accelerate opportunities for commercialization of improved or new products. Support development of new specialty products that utilize 100% of harvested seafood resources in order to create value-added products with the same resource and provide additional economic benefits to local economies.
12. **Expand Regional Marine Industrial Support Capacity.** The Marine Industrial Support (MIS) Sector includes marine vessel repair and construction, marine civil construction, and ports and harbors development. Create a digital Marine Industrial Support catalogue of SE Alaska public and private marine industrial businesses and facilities

providing information on capabilities and capacities. Create a digital campaign contacting and distributing the contents of MIS Catalogue to inform marine vessel owners and operators of regional MIS capabilities and capacities. Recipients include Port Authorities, Port and Harbor Masters, Maritime NGOs, and marine vessels operates, pilotage agencies, training providers and other coastal municipalities with ports or harbors in Alaska and the West Coast region. Estimate cost of this program and seek private and public funding to manage this program. Include a statewide perspective.

13. **Increased Sea Otter Utilization.** In the late 1960s, sea otters were re-introduced to Southeast Alaska and have grown to 25,584 (at last estimate in 2019) representing approximately one-fifth of the global population. Sea otter population growth, and predation on important shellfish species fully utilized by commercial, sport, personal use and subsistence, are of increasing concern to harvesters in Southeast. The associated economic loss has been in the tens of millions. Expand the scope of allowable uses for sea otters taken for subsistence purposes and increase access to sea otters. Support development of new products and markets for otter products. Support development of sea otter sewing businesses and strategies for increasing value of these products. Support the development of management plans to target and protect important shellfish areas, expand and enhance sea otter-related small business and economic opportunities for Southeast residents. Support the sea otter stakeholder group in their efforts regarding sea otter management and utilization.

Southeast Alaska Tourism Initiatives (5)

1. **Market Southeast Alaska to Attract More Visitor Spending and Opportunities**

Create regional collaborative partnerships to market Southeast Alaska as a tourism destination. Enhance existing marketing activities throughout the region and create new ones. Rethink marketing post-COVID. Focus on marketing to draw a diverse array of tourists to the region. Support communities and small businesses in the development of new and expanded shoreside excursions. Harness the beauty of Southeast Alaska to create visuals for marketing.

2. **Grow Cultural and Arts Tourism Opportunities**

Support efforts to grow Indigenous and Cultural Heritage Tourism. In 2020 one of the top tourism opportunities for the region was identified as cultural tourism. Southeast Alaska has a rich and vibrant Alaska Native culture that traces its roots back 10,000 years with art forms that evolved with each region developing distinct features. Incorporate Alaska Native culture, indigenous art, and history into tourism products. Continue to leverage cultural tourism as a strength. Support the efforts of communities, tribes, and Alaska Native organizations to create new cultural tourism products. Connect the many entities working in this area and support cross-regional collaboration. Innovate and create world class cultural tourism models. Continue to integrate Alaska Native signage, language, arts, history, and name places into communities. Support integration of Alaska Native guides into tourism experience and consult with Tribes and Indigenous and Cultural Heritage Tourism leadership on appropriate cultural and cross-cultural messaging.

3. **Increase Access to Public Lands and Expand Southeast Alaska Trail Network**

Work to change how federal land access and permitting works in Southeast Alaska. Provide more access to recreational opportunities and expand access to recreation by supporting and growing the region's non-motorized trail systems. Increase guided access to public lands by increasing the number of permits available, providing more outfitter guide days, and developing new wildlife viewing options on federal lands. Increase flexibility of permits (permits can be hard to obtain and are non-transferrable, making it difficult to provide the certainty needed to develop business plans). Encourage private/ public partnership to help construct and maintain trails, seawalks, cabins and other recreation opportunities. Develop or improve infrastructure to support multi-day outings for individual travelers by supporting cabins or campsites in conjunction with trails, canoe, and kayak routes.

4. **Increase Yacht and Small Cruise Ship Visitation**

Support increased growth small cruise ship and yacht visitation in the region. Advocate for funding for visitor and transportation related infrastructure . Support needed infrastructure development to accommodate additional vessels and the services those

vessels need. Develop long term infrastructure plans to grow and support small vessel tourism sector.

5. **Educate the Public on the Role of Tourism in the SE Alaska Economy**

The visitor industry was the top provider of jobs in SE Alaska pre-pandemic times and was on track to be the top provider of wages in the region. Support an outreach program to clearly communicate the value of the visitor industry to Southeast Alaska. Promote the importance and effectiveness of Juneau’s Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program which other destinations and tourism providers across the region have begun adopting in order to ensure our communities are great places to live and to visit. Share the success story which is the Southeast Alaska visitor industry and work to address misinformation regarding the impacts of tourism. Develop a focused public relations effort led by visitor industry businesses.

Econ Development (13)

The Southeast Alaska Seafood initiatives were developed by 30 members of the Southeast Conference Economic Development Committee in a series of meetings in 2021.

Objectives outside the sectors of focus:

1. Housing Objective: Support sustainable development of housing.

Throughout Southeast Alaska there is a lack of affordability and choice in housing. Homes are aging and have mold and rot issues. Lack of housing and high housing costs is a deterrent to economic growth making it difficult to attract or retain employees. Increased access to housing - including to low- and moderate-income citizens (including support for down-payments) - creates more livable, more economically competitive, and more resilient communities. Southeast Conference supports the development of new housing stock, targeted housing for an aging population, and an increase in the diversity of housing choices in the region. This includes fair market housing options for homeownership and private market rental, subsidized rentals through rental assistance or vouchers, public housing, and housing for seniors, veterans, the homeless, and other special needs populations. Work across the region to find ways to reduce the costs associated with land development and new housing construction.

2. Child Care Objective: Increase Child Care Capacity in Southeast Alaska

Studies show conclusively that high quality early childhood education provides a significant return on investment for communities. In Southeast Alaska there is an inadequate supply of affordable, high quality preschool and childcare. Work across the region to expand childcare capacity. Policies to solve the dual problem of low childcare worker pay and issues of access and affordability to high-quality care, should be considered at all levels of government, including the following: Long-term dedicated funding for childcare worker wage subsidies and job-based benefits should be included in all future budgets. Demographics show childcare workers to be paid on average 40% less in median income than other workers. As with any other industry or occupation, paying living wages and providing necessary benefits is essential to attract and retain the best workers. Possible solutions should be at the scale of the problem and include strategies such as income-based subsidies so parents pay no more than 10% of income on childcare costs; or the public provision of high-quality childcare for children ages birth-5 years.

3. Communications Objective: Improved access in Southeast Alaska.

Broadband access fosters business development and expansion, provides options for telecommuting and microbusiness, and offers equal access to education opportunities across Southeast Alaska. Remote work accessibility has become increasingly utilized in

the growing world economy – its importance highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prioritizing developing fiber, satellite, and other technologies as they become available to provide geographically diverse pathways granting remote internet access to become a more viable option for communities in Southeast Alaska. After the natural and unnatural disasters learned in 2020, the importance of communications and reliable multi-point-of-failure pathways are attractive to investors, businesses, and families looking to stay connected to the world, even through a network disrupting event. Equitable access to educational opportunities offers local populations to improve their education while remaining in their own communities in Southeast Alaska, marketing a greater return on investment in workforce education. By supporting expansion of high-speed internet and cellular network coverage, the region can continue to be competitive, develop more robust commerce and e-commerce opportunities, support the economic development of smaller communities looking to expand or emerge into the local and global marketplaces, and support access to education.

4. Education Objective: Partner with University of Alaska Southeast and K-12 school districts to build career pathways and meet employer needs for a skilled workforce.

Quality education and workforce training is critical to the development of a strong economy. Southeast Alaska has an insufficient pool of skilled employees with professional and technical degrees to support the business sector. Workforce development and support of career and technical education are included throughout this plan in the maritime, health care, mining, seafood, and timber sections. In addition to these efforts, support continued development of K-12 and post-secondary education opportunities and pathways in the region. Retain students in state after graduation. Develop short courses to update skills in partnership with UAS. Increase arts, cultural studies, and local language courses. Ensure UAS has certifications to meet local workforce needs. Create mentorships. Develop and retain top talent. Support scholarships and grants from municipalities for UAS.

5. Disaster Relief Objective: Support Disaster Preparation and Relief Efforts

After the devastating landslides in Haines in 2020, disaster preparation efforts should be a cornerstone of planning procedures going forward. Consider common natural disasters in the region and appropriate planning procedures to mitigate these events. Advocate for disaster relief resources and funding for areas affected by natural disasters. Support the development of a disaster relief task force in the wake of events. Protect the economic vitality of areas affected by natural disasters. Ensure the safety of the residents in Southeast communities through robust disaster alert systems.

6. Solid Waste Objective: Support Regional Solid Waste Management Solutions

In the early 2000s incinerators closed and landfills reached capacity across the region. Many communities began to ship municipal solid waste by barge to landfills in Washington. Recently, concerns over fire risks have threatened the viability of shipping

of solid waste to the lower-48. This has led to the development of mitigation strategies: 1) Develop best practices solutions for baling and compacting solid waste for shipping waste. 2) Increase utilization of regional recycling and composting programs and increase use of commercial burn units. 3) Communicate the importance of waste sorting to citizens in communities who ship their waste. 4) Procure equipment to manage increasing amounts of trash tires. 5) Create partnerships to share equipment, such as balers and shredders, across communities in the region.

7. Food Security Objective: Increase supply, demand and equitable access and distribution of local foods and regional food system opportunities.

Acknowledge the inextricable connection between customary and traditional food access, long-term economic prosperity, stewardship of healthy lands and waters, and community health and well-being. Acknowledgments to the original caretakers of these lands that created the balance and harmony of the ecosystems still intact today despite contemporary management systems. Respect the key role of local food harvesting practices for household food security for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of Southeast Alaska. Involve appropriate tribal leadership and community perspectives in conversations and decisions around regional food security and food sovereignty. Implement policies that provide economic incentives for prioritizing and localizing the Southeast food system at the regional and community levels. Conduct comprehensive community food system assessments whose indicators are created by community leadership in order to clearly identify needs, resources, and priorities for bolstering local and regional food systems. The assessments include but are not limited to economic opportunities in local food production, processing, and equitable distribution of cultivated and traditional foods, food waste, recovery, and composting for local soil production. Build educational opportunities in schools and in communities for respectful wild food harvest skills learning based on shared values principles established by long-time Southeast Alaska harvesters. Provide regional and local opportunities for networking, education, and skill development related to local food production, processing, and entrepreneurship. Identify underutilized already-developed municipal lands be converted into urban farms, high tunnels, and greenhouses, and provide incentives for local farmers and composters. Invest in local and regional value-added food production and processing of local foods that also supports agritourism, and Alaska Native sea otter stewardship, management, and food security programs.

8. Arts Objective: Increase the recognition of Southeast Alaska's thriving Northwest Coast arts economy.

The arts have played a meaningful role in the economy of our region for thousands of years. The totems (history poles), canoes, masks, regalia, and architecture of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian are as much a reflection of our area's many cultures, ancestries, collective histories, and identities as they are works of art. It is this rich cultural identities and regional art heritages that sets Southeast Alaska art and artists apart from other art communities. Altogether artists, arts organizations, and audiences spend an estimate

\$60 million annually in Southeast Alaska. In the Southeast Alaska Business Climate Survey, 49% of all business leaders said that arts in the region acts as a benefit or significantly benefits their businesses. Results from the Southeast Alaska 2020 SWOT Analysis found that cultural tourism in collaboration with Alaska Native entities is a top opportunity and strength. Expand opportunities for Alaska Native and Northwest Coast artists to perpetuate the ancient art practices of the Indigenous culture of the area. Cultural and heritage tourism strategies are being adopted by visitor industry sectors with support efforts by community arts organizations to make Southeast Alaska the Northwest Coast Native Arts Capital of the world. The Sealaska Heritage Institute's Art's Campus is expected to be completed in Fall 2021. Continue to build on this effort. Support Buy Alaska Native initiatives, the Alaska Native Arts Programs, Silver Hand Program, and Buy Alaska program.

9. Cultural Wellness Objective: Support the development of activities and infrastructure that promotes cultural wellness and multicultural wellness

Support the creation, expansion and collaboration of cultural programs and developments that elevate indigenous communities as leaders in the Indigenous and Cultural Heritage Tourism Industry of Alaska. Support efforts to construct infrastructures that will highlight and promote Southeast Alaska's many indigenous cultures, which also provides opportunities for education, economic development, social services, and cultural/multi-cultural gatherings. Support the efforts to expand cultural growth and wellness and support the implementation of activities and community involvement that promotes cultural healing, education and understanding, including language programs. Support economic efforts to elevate indigenous communities and encourage all businesses to implement Southeast Traditional Tribal Values as the standard of business excellence of the region, and support Sealaska Heritage Institute, and all other ANCSA established foundations in the region, in carrying out their mission and goals for cultural preservation. Support the acknowledgements and activities that identify all landscapes and waterways in Alaska are first and foremost the homelands and ancestral homelands to the many vibrant and living cultures throughout every area and community, and every visited place in Alaska. Note: Southeast Traditional Tribal Values Our Way of Life includes the following: Discipline and Obedience to the Traditions of our Ancestors; Respect for Self, Elders and Others; Respect for Nature and Property; Patience; Pride in Family, Clan and Tradition is found in Love, Loyalty and Generosity; Be Strong in Mind, Body and Spirit; Humor; Hold Each Other Up; Listen Well and with Respect; Speak with Care; We are Stewards of the Air, Land and Sea; Reverence for Our Creator; Live in Peace and Harmony; and Be Strong and Have Courage.

10. Telework Objective: Promoting the Remote Workforce in Southeast Alaska

Remote work is going to be seen as a much more viable option after the pandemic. In order to capture this market and its economic benefits, Southeast Alaska should not only welcome remote workers, but develop programs, research opportunities, and foster environments where they will thrive.

11. Research Objective: Attract science and research jobs to Southeast Alaska.

Science and innovation create critical commerce that can contribute to the economic health of our region. Southeast Alaska has a robust array of research facilities relative to its population including the federal research labs (NOAA/NMFS, USFS RD) state labs (UAF SFOS, UAS, ADFG) and nonprofit/private labs. Bring more fisheries science and management jobs to the region. Move the NOAA "Alaska Fisheries Science Center" jobs from Seattle to Alaska. Bring the UAF fisheries jobs to Southeast Alaska.

12. Marketing Objective: Market Southeast Alaska as a region for product development.

Developing marketing material to market Southeast Alaska as a whole. Attract residents to the region as an incredible place to live and work; promote our regionally manufactured local products (art, seafood, beer, wood, ships, handicrafts, etc.); promote our region as a visitor destination; and promote our culture and history. Work to maintain Southeast Alaska's competitive edge by working with local, statewide, and Tribal leadership to create coordinated marketing campaigns.

13. Military Objective: Support Coast Guard and military operations and new vessel homeporting opportunities

Develop regional strategies to maintain and grow the Coast Guard presence in the region. Southeast Alaska is a strategic location for military facilities and training. Ketchikan's Back Island currently hosts a Navy sonar testing facility providing an opportunity to attract additional military missions and long-term presence. Work to position Southeast to compete for new and expanded military operations. Work to homeport new Coast Guard and Navy vessels in the region. Utilize the Ketchikan Shipyard for military vessels maintenance needs. Identify public infrastructure needs and recommend opportunities for local, regional, and state partnerships that lead to the retention and expansion of military installations and missions.