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## **Southeast Conference Presents the 2022 Southeast Alaska Community of the Year Award**

Ketchikan, ALASKA –

Southeast Conference is pleased to announce the 2022 winner for the Southeast Alaska community of the year. This award was presented in Ketchikan during Southeast Conference’s annual meeting.

### **Southeast Alaska Community of the Year 2022 Winner: Hoonah**

The community of Hoonah won this year’s award for its hard won success transforming the community’s economy.

Alec Mesdag, Southeast Conference presented the award at the annual banquet with the following remarks:

“Hoonah was an economic leader during COVID recovery. In 2021, Hoonah added 18% more jobs to the community compared to 2020, while the region added 5% of jobs back. In 2022, Hoonah’s economy is experiencing prosperity unprecedented since the peak of the timber industry. Population is nearing a historic high. The unemployment rate for July of 4.5% was the lowest for any month of any year on record. Sales and head tax revenue will be the highest ever collected for the City of Hoonah. However, Hoonah business leaders say things are only going to improve. Hoonah has the brightest business outlook of any community in the region, according to



the annual Southeast Conference regional business climate survey. Half of Hoonah business leaders expect their business to do much better in the next year, compared to last year, with 86% expressing a positive outlook.

As the city grows its visitor economy, it has increased its local infrastructure capacity, which is not always glamorous. Current and recent city projects include

- Wastewater Treatment Plant capacity expansion.
- Sewer Lagoon Rehabilitation work
- FEMA Storm Damage repair to damaged roads and culverts
- Seawalk Project, constructing a new mile long sidewalk
- Cargo Handling facility – working to allow for full tide access for ocean going freight barges

But Hoonah is receiving this award not just for this year, but for its sustained economic planning over the past two decades, coupled with a more than two decade private-tribal-public partnership that should act as a model for all of Alaska.”

Mickey Richardson of Huna Totem accepted the award on behalf of the community. “Wooch.een. It’s really amazing what we can do when we all work together, both the private partnerships and the City of Hoonah.”

City of Hoonah Administrator, Dennis Gray Jr. said of the award, “the City of Hoonah is proud to receive the Community of the Year award from Southeast Conference. It shows the hard work our Council and administration is being recognized in the region. Our continued cooperation with Huna Totem corporation and Hoonah Indian association is allowing us to keep moving forward!”

(Appearing in Hoonah photo from left to right: Robert Venables, Southeast Conference Executive Director; Mickey Richardson, Huna Totem; Alec Mesdag Southeast Conference President)