



CITY OF THORNE BAY

P.O. BOX 19110
THORNE BAY, ALASKA 99919
(907) 828-3380
FAX (907) 828-3374
www.thornebay-ak.gov

Energy and Natural Resources Committee
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

May 18, 2011

RE: Senate Bill 730 – Southeast Alaska Native Land Entitlement Finalization and Jobs Protection Act

ATTN: Senators,

The City of Thorne Bay, located on the eastern side of Prince of Wales Island, does not support Senate Bill 730. We question the reasoning and intent behind the request of Sealaska but our main concern is the impact that will threaten the economic viability of our community and other communities on Prince of Wales Island and throughout Southeast Alaska. We continually work with the state and federal governments to develop management plans that will help balance the preservation and uses of our natural resources in hopes to achieve sustainability for our communities and their citizens.

We see Senate Bill 730 not as a “Jobs Protection Act” but legislation that has the real ability to eliminate natural resource jobs, the mainstay of employment in Southeast Alaska. From Timber Harvesting, to Lumber Milling, to Recreation Uses, To Tourist Enjoyment, we see a direct impact to our communities. Removing additional lands from the Tongass National Forest and placing them into private hands will lead to loss of jobs and loss of revenues that are vital in sustaining our economies. Local mills in Thorne Bay, and throughout Prince of Wales (POW) Island, will be depleted of long term timber supplies that are necessary to sustain their business. It is these local mills, and their lumber, that provides building material to POW Island and much of Southeast Alaska.

The plan as present has implications of eliminating 20 plus jobs from the Thorne Bay Ranger District alone. This may sound small in the scheme of things but for the City of Thorne Bay the loss of any jobs is devastating. Most likely the Thorne Bay Ranger District will be reduced from a district headquarters to a field office eliminating the need for support staff and a District Ranger. This will have a direct impact on Southeast Island School District as these employees have children in school. Less students, means less teachers, which means less funding, a ripple effect that impacts the School District’s ability to maintain programs and schools. For the remaining students the loss of programs and closure of schools means a decline in education, something that no one wants to see in this day and age. The loss of these employees also has the same ripple effect on our communities. Less jobs, means less dollars being spent, means less goods being purchase, means less taxes being collected for needed services adding, means the loss of secondary jobs.



CITY OF THORNE BAY

P.O. BOX 19110
THORNE BAY, ALASKA 99919
(907) 828-3380
FAX (907) 828-3374
www.thornebay-ak.gov

With a declining timber industry and struggling fishing industry our communities cannot with stand another major impact form loss of jobs being created by this plan. We worked hard and cooperatively to develop programs like the 2008 Tongass Land Management Plan and the USDA Forest Service Master Plans that will build positive foundations to replace the past economies. Senate Bill 730 in our eyes will set these efforts back and in many ways and negate some efforts all together. Again it comes back to the jobs. Our efforts over the past years have been programs and plans that will sustain and build on our labor force. This plan throws away all this effort along with existing jobs.

We respectfully ask that you vote no on Senate Bill 730. If that is not an option please consider only those portions of the legislation that will provide positive economic impacts to our communities today and into the future. We are trying to plan generations out, as we strive to maintain economic viability and sustainability to Southeast Alaska.

Thank you for allowing the City of Thorne Bay the opportunity to present our concerns.

Sincerely,


James A. Gould
Mayor, City of Thorne Bay