

Sealaska criticizes newspaper's logging articles

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To the *Anchorage Daily News*:

The *Anchorage Daily News* recently published a series of feature articles and an editorial which conclude that logging practices on Native land are significantly damaging fish and wildlife habitat, insinuate inadequate enforcement of logging is occurring and state more stringent laws are required to protect public resources.

The current strong fish and wildlife populations in Southeast Alaska do not support the conclusion that logging is causing significant habitat loss. During the last seven years Southeast Alaska has experienced record salmon harvests and increasing sport bag limits for deer. This is the same period in which Native corporations have actively logged their land.

The articles' few examples of potential impacts from Sealaska logging operations represent isolated events, in which several state agencies could not document measurable impacts to fish resources. The information presented in the articles does not

justify the *Daily News*' call for new regulation of the logging industry.

It is not in the interests of Native corporations to carelessly log their land. Sealaska shareholders participate in commercial and subsistence fishing and Sealaska has major investments in the seafood industry, including plants in Southeast Alaska. Over 75 percent of Sealaska's total sales is derived from its seafood business. Consequently, it is in Sealaska's interest to ensure that fisheries habitat protection occurs to maintain a strong seafood industry.

The *Daily News* allegations that the current laws governing timber harvest on Native lands are inadequate to protect public resources are unsupported. Three state agencies have environmental laws that regulate the logging industry. These agencies have the authority to stop logging operations, in certain cases before they begin, and to force immediate compliance if violations occur. If Sealaska or its contractors fail to abide by state laws, the state has immediately initiated enforcement action.

Sealaska is sensitive to the potential impact of its logging operations on public resources. To protect these resources, Sealaska requires that its logging operations comply with applicable laws. Failure by its contractors to comply is grounds for Sealaska to initiate contract compliance action against its contractors.

The Aug. 23 *Daily News*, in a related article, reported that Sealaska is logging in the Hydaburg, Kake and Hoonah watersheds and while doing so is being uncooperative and ignoring the communities' concerns. Your contentions are absolutely false.

In each case, the respective city and Sealaska have been cooperating to allow logging in the watershed while still protecting the municipal water supply. Through this effort the cities realize the economic benefit associated with the timber harvest in the form of jobs and tax derived income to the city. Routine water quality testing in both Kake and Hydaburg has shown that harvest can occur and still protect water quality.

The *Daily News* has taken enormous

liberties in its reporting that logging is causing significant impact to habitat and from this concluding that more regulation of the logging industry is required.

These pronouncements are a disservice to the state agencies, local governments and the Native corporations, who are working together to ensure that the public resources are protected while concurrently realizing the economic benefits derived from logging.

Sealaska Corp. advocates the formation of good public policy based on credible research and supports close cooperation between the industry and state regulatory agencies to provide for habitat protection.

The *Daily News* articles represent personal opinions, not substantiated by facts which create an erroneous perception of the logging industry and efforts being made by the industry to develop good public policy.

Sincerely,
Byron I. Mallott
Chief Executive Officer
Sealaska Corp., Juneau