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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

### **Introduction**

Southeast Conference was incorporated in 1958 to advocate for a regional transportation system that eventually became the Alaska Marine Highway System. After that success, the members stayed together to continue to advocate for issues that are key to the southeast region as a whole. Our goal and mission is to help develop strong economies, healthy communities, and a quality environment in Southeast Alaska. We look for consensus and areas that we can work together for the betterment of the region. Southeast Conference has a dynamic staff of the Executive Director, Economic Planner, Biomass Coordinator and CFO. We are the federally designated Economic Development District for the region, as well as the state designated Alaska Regional Development Organization.

### **Membership**

We have more than 200 members comprised of nearly every community, chamber of commerce, and economic development organization in the region. Our membership represents most municipalities, federally-recognized tribes, businesses, government agencies, organizations, and many individuals located or doing business in Southeast Alaska.

### **Committees**

We have eight committees at Southeast Conference—including Transportation, Energy, Marine Industry/Seafood, Visitor Industry, Timber, Mining, Economic Development, and Solid Waste ([www.seconference.org/committees](http://www.seconference.org/committees))—along with over 160 committee members. The committee structure allows Southeast Conference to operate as a “grass roots” organization. Our committee members suggest advocacy, letters of support, resolutions, events, and issues we should be tracking. These recommendations are passed along to the Board of Directors, who consider these suggestions and take action.

### **Mid-Session Summit**

During the Legislative Session, a membership meeting is convened in Juneau to assess progress on work plans and to evaluate specific legislative issues. This is a “working” event for our committees who also have opportunity to meet face-to-face with legislators at the Capitol as well as the Governor, Lt. Governor and/or members of the Administration.

The following pages recap the most recent work of the committees and can be used as talking points when engaging legislators and staff. More in depth information is found online and in our publications. Feel free to leave a copy of this at the legislator’s office so they can become more familiar with the work of the region.





## **Seafood/Maritime Committee:**

**Seafood Goal Statement:** Create jobs and wealth by advocating for a well-managed, sustainable and resilient seafood sector, and develop higher-value ocean products that reach more markets.

**Marine Industry Goal Statement:** Support the industry-led efforts to enhance the capacity of Alaska's maritime economy; create a comprehensive, robust maritime support services sector that will meet current and growing demands of the businesses within the Alaska maritime economy; and continue to promote the understanding of the values of the maritime sector within Alaska.

Recent committee actions include the following:

- **Mariculture Initiative** – Resolution was passed to support the development of the mariculture industry, including production enhancement, aquatic farming and restoration of invertebrates and aquatic plants.
- **Action: Letter of support for all pending aquatic farm permits in the Southeast region.**
- **Action: Letter written supporting Stand for Alaska's efforts.**
- **Action: Resolution of support for Shellfish Preservation Alliance (SPA).**
- **Action: Resolution of support for Young Fishermen's Development Act:**
- **Action: Resolution of support for AFDF's grant proposal**
- **Priority objective in the 2020 Plan: 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. Collaboration with private, state, federal and university researchers needs to be encouraged to identify and accelerate opportunities for commercialization of improved or new products. Support the development of new specialty products that utilize 100% of harvested seafood resources in order to create value-added products with the same resource, reduce discharge into waterways, and provide additional economic benefits to local economies.
- **Increase Access to Capital for the Regional Maritime Industrial Support Sector.** Financing can be difficult, especially for fishermen with older vessels. Work with banks to put finance packages in place to allow fishermen to be successful. Allow fishermen to service their debt and get older boats serviced/financed so that we can take care of our aging fleet.
- **Support Capital Investments in New/Expanded Marine Industry Support Infrastructure Throughout the Region.** Existing infrastructure varies from non-existent to outdated. Investment in expanded infrastructure will make sector more efficient and better able to work on modern vessels.



## Visitor Industry Committee:

- **Visitor Industry Goal Statement:** Increase visitor-related opportunities; enhance Southeast Alaska as a destination for visitors; and capitalize on the attributes of the region.

### Priority objectives:

- **Grow Cultural and Arts Tourism Opportunities.** Southeast Alaska has a rich and vibrant Alaska Native culture that traces its roots back 10,000 years. The visitor industry is incorporating some of this culture, art, and history into its products, but in many ways cultural and indigenous arts tourism is underdeveloped.
- **Improve Access to Public Lands.** Provide more recreational opportunities, including developing more trails, increasing the number of permits available on federal lands. Support increasing guided access to public lands by 20%. Protect our current resources and maintain infrastructure.
- **Increase Yacht and Small Cruise Ship Visitations.** Support the re-emergence of small cruise ships and yachts. Maintain port calls for providers like Un-Cruise Alaska Cruises and Alaska Dream Cruises. Provide yacht services in region.
- **Advocate for Funding to Maintain Existing Recreational Infrastructure.** Recreational opportunities were cited in the Business Climate Survey as the #2 benefit to businesses who own and operate their businesses in the region. Work collaboratively to reverse this trend of campground, trail, and public cabin closures in the Tongass

## Transportation Committee:

- **Transportation Goal Statement:** Support a consistent, reliable regional transportation system that enables predictable, financially sustainable, efficient transportation for a prosperous regional economy and access to medical care and cultural events.

**Priority Objective #1:** *Minimize Impacts of Budget Cuts to AMHS, and Develop a Sustainable, Long-term Operational Model for AMHS.* Statewide project information on how to design a new strategic operating plan for AMHS, lower State's general fund subsidy percentage and work toward the empowerment of management to control costs and partner toward revenue streams: [www.AMHSreform.com](http://www.AMHSreform.com)

**Other Transportation Objectives:** *Road development for resource access and connectivity; move freight more efficiently, working with the industry to find creative ways to reduce the costs for transportation by air, land and sea. Ensure the stability of the existing regional transportation services outside of AMHS.*





## Energy Committee:

**Energy Committee Objective:** To create long term energy security, support energy infrastructure development, and promote efficient use of existing energy-related resources within Southeast Alaska.

**Objective:** Promote priorities of the regional energy plan including infrastructure and diesel displacement

**Action:** Wrote letter to Governor Walker to advocate for funding for REF projects (Kake's Gunnuk Creek Hydro) in FY19 budget (it was – needs legislative support).

**Action:** Wrote letter requesting adequate capitalization of loan programs in FY19 budget so projects like Metlakatla's intertie and Angoon's Thayer Creek hydro can have access to potential funding sources. (Is still a need for legislative action).

**Other objectives:** Partnering with other industry groups, come together and show unified positions. Active participant with APA, NHA, REAP and others. Unified positions include protecting and preserving the integrity of the PCE and Renewable Energy Fund programs and support for industry-related legislation such as SB 173.

Opportunities abound for alternative energy heat to displace diesel, especially biomass. Support regional and statewide implementation of biomass space heating systems in private and public facilities and district heating systems where economically feasible.

**Action:** Pre-feasibility projects include Lemon Creek Correctional facility, local hospital and feasibility and design projects of district heating systems in Haines, Hoonah and Kake.

**Action:** Provide biomass boiler operator training in March 2018 in partnership with AEA, USFS, DOF, DOL

Provide diesel displacement through improved incremental delivery of conservation and efficiency measures to businesses and residences to reduce energy costs. Explore opportunities for energy efficiency in generation, transmission and demand-side management. Facilitate technical expertise for utilities and educate consumers regarding energy use.

**Action:** Energy Audits (with USDA and private funding) completed for over 50 businesses in southeast Alaska.

**Action:** Capacity building and training for rural energy efficiency leaders through new H.E.L.P. program led by partners REAP and SSP.

**Action:** Submit funding proposal for USDA REDA program to facilitate technical assistance to businesses seeking to deploy renewable energy resources.



## **Timber Committee:**

**Priority Timber objective in the 2020 Plan:** Provide an adequate, economic and dependable supply of timber from the Tongass National Forest to regional timber operators.

Recent action of the committee includes the following:

- **Action:** Passed resolution entitled: Southeast Conference Resolution Requesting Congressional Relief from The Tongass Transition Plan and 2001 Roadless Rule.
- **Action:** Wrote letter to Senator Murkowski regarding the **Interior Appropriations Bill** Sections 508 (suspending the Transition Rule) and 509 (terminating application of the Roadless Rule to the Tongass and Chugach National Forests), asking her to put in report language in the Interior Appropriations Bill to include renewable energy and transportation.

### **Additional objectives:**

- **Stabilize the regional timber industry.**
- **Work with USFS to direct federal contracts toward locally-owned businesses.**
- **Support small scale manufacturing of wood products in Southeast Alaska.**
- **Community-Based Workforce Development.**
- **Update young growth inventory.**
- **Continue old growth harvests until young growth supply is adequate.**

## **Mining Committee:**

### **Mining Objective:**

Promote mineral and other resource development activities that increase regional wealth, are responsibly managed, and account for the greatest long-term benefit to the region. Support mining workforce development.

### **Action:**

Develop resolutions for Mid-Session Summit supporting Stand for Alaska's efforts and a resolution regarding Tier 3 Waters.

### **Action:**

Contribute to UAS scholarship program and support UAS workforce development programs.





## Economic Development Committee:

Objectives in this area include:

- **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.
- **Housing Objective:** Support development of housing. Lack of housing and the prohibitive cost is a deterrent to economic growth in several communities - most notably Skagway, Sitka, Juneau, and Yakutat - which have difficulty finding housing to attract or retain employees. Access to housing touches almost every aspect of a community's well-being and affects all its members including those needing subsidized rentals through rental assistance or vouchers, public housing, and housing for seniors, veterans, the homeless, and other special needs populations.
- **Food Security Objective:** Increase supply, accessibility, and demand of local foods. Create infrastructure to support local food producers and processors. Build local capacity to harvest wild foods. Identify regional agricultural land and steps to make it available for use. Provide regional and local opportunities for networking, education, and skill development related to local food production, processing, and entrepreneurship.
- **Cultural Wellness Objective:** Support development of activities and infrastructure that promote cultural wellness. "Cultural opportunities" was recognized as a top benefit for regional business operators in the business climate survey - 54% of business leader respondents said that Southeast's cultural opportunities are beneficial to their business.
- **Healthcare Objective:** Meet the medical needs of the region. Southeast Alaska's healthcare industry is one of our largest sectors. Yet the regional healthcare industry is shrinking in spite of the fact that the health care needs in our region have been growing as our population ages. Work with medical providers to maintain and expand regional health care workforce and services.
- **Marketing Objective:** Market Southeast Alaska as a region for product development. Developing marketing material to market Southeast Alaska as a whole. The goals will be to attract residents to the region as an incredible place to live and work; promote our regionally-manufactured local products (art, seafood, beer, wood, ships, etc.); promote our region as a visitor destination; and promote our culture and history.
- **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.
- **Arts Objective:** Increase the recognition of Southeast Alaska's thriving arts economy. The arts have played a meaningful role in the economy of our region for thousands of years. The totems, canoes, masks, regalia, and architecture of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian are as much a reflection of our area's culture, ancestry, and collective histories as they are works of art. It is this rich art heritage that sets Southeast Alaska art and artists apart from other art communities. Altogether artist, arts organization, and audience spending in Southeast Alaska total approximately \$60 million annually. In the Southeast Alaska Business Climate Survey, 49% of all business leaders said that arts in the region acts as a benefit or significant benefits to their businesses. Support efforts by community arts organizations to make Southeast Alaska the Northwest Coast Native Arts Capitol of the world.

