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2015 Annual Report

Neil MacKinnon
President

First things First Alaska Foundation has been active during 2014 in Juneau and Southeast Alaska to encourage economic and resource development.

Rosemary Hagevig
Vice President

Juneau Economic Development

Joseph Kahklen
Secretary

FTFAF spent several meetings discussing economic development with the contractors developing Juneau's Economic Development Plan. We emphasized the importance of mining activities and the need to increase the housing inventory with the hope that would allow more workers to settle in Juneau. In addition the Board has stressed the negative impact of property taxes on mining where the price is set on international markets controlling the revenue of local mines.

Frank Bergstrom
Treasurer

Directors
Corey Baxter
Richard Burns
Gail Dabaluz
Naomi Hobbs
John Sandor
Scott Spickler

FTFAF met with the City and Borough Finance Director to discuss the impact of the borough budget and a proposal to increase property taxes on businesses in Juneau. We provided written comment to the Borough Assembly on the city budget pointing out the need to reduce the spending and the impact of local property taxes on citizens and businesses. In addition we had two My Turns printed in the Juneau Empire on the subject and provided testimony to before the Assembly and the Assembly's Tax Exemption Review Committee.

Denny DeWitt
Executive Director

Juneau Access and Southeast Transportation Plan

FTFAF board submitted comment supporting the Juneau Access Alternative 2B including suggesting the transportation issue was not fully developed particularly in light of the reduction of competition in commercial marine transportation in Southeast Alaska. We worked with Citizens Pro Road (CPR) in developing media campaigns encouraging citizens to contact the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in support of Alternative 2B.

We submitted comment supporting the Southeast Transportation Plan moving towards shuttle ferries with roads. The plan also supports the Juneau Access.

During state budget hearings, FTFAF provided information supporting the need to fund Juneau Access. The state budget included \$35 million funding for Juneau Access.

First Things First Alaska Foundation (FTFAF) is dedicated to preserving the economic viability and future of Alaska through education. There is a clear need to educate the public on the benefits of responsible economic development and natural resource management.

Tongass Forest and Land Management Plan

In commenting on the scope of the Tongass Forest and Land Management Plan, FTFAF emphasized the need to deal with hydropower and economic access to mining claims and timber. When activities are permitted without road access, the permits are hollow.

Petroleum Tax Initiative - Ballot Proposition 1

FTFAF was active in the successful defeat of the Proposition #1 to repeal SB 21 on the August 2014 Primary Election ballot. We published position papers to help educate the public and hosted an information tables at the Southeast Conference March meeting and in conjunction with the information booth we sponsored at Juneau's Gold Rush Days in June 2014.

Greens Creek Tailings Disposal

FTFAF worked with Hecla Mining in support of the Forest Service permitting tailings storage within the Admiralty Island National Monument. FTFAF made the point, in its comments to the Forest Service, that mining, including tailings storage is clearly permitted under federal law.

Big Thorne Project Litigation

FTFAF has joined as interveners in defense of three cases brought by SEACC against the Forest Service. The cases are attempting to prohibit the sale of timber in the Big Thorne Project. The timber sale is critical to the continued viability of the Viking Lumber Company and the conservation activities in the Big Thorne area. The litigation will proceed in 2015.

Roadless Rule Litigation

On November 7, 2014, the federal Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued its decision allowing plaintiffs, including FTFAF, to continue their challenge to the 2001 Roadless Rule. This ruling does not invalidate the Roadless Rule, but it does remand the case back to the district court and allows the plaintiffs to resume the court challenge of the rule.

The district court had previously dismissed the case, ruling that plaintiffs had filed the suit after the six-year statute of limitations had expired. The circuit court reversed this decision, holding that because of the very unique history of the rule, a completely new cause of action arose in 2006 when a federal court in California reinstated the Roadless Rule after it had been repealed by the United States Department of Agriculture (Forest Service). Therefore, the 2011 lawsuit was timely filed.