

*For Immediate Release – September 29, 2008*



## **Sealaska Land Legislation Introduced in the United States Senate by Senator Murkowski**

Juneau, AK— Sealaska Corporation announced today that Senator Lisa Murkowski has introduced a Senate Bill that will authorize the completion of Sealaska's land entitlement under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. "We are pleased that Senator Murkowski has introduced this land legislation. Over the last 10 plus years, Sealaska has been working with stakeholders to finalize its land selections that provides optimum environmental protection, allows Natives to have greater say in the management of historical and cultural sites in the region and to maintain a significant economic presence in southeast. "The passage of this legislation is critical to achieve these objectives" said Sealaska President & CEO, Chris McNeil, Jr.. The legislation does not give Sealaska anything more than what was promised under ANCSA but provides sustainable opportunities to the region."

Senate Bill 3651 differs from the original House bill introduced by Congressman Don Young. The changes are a result of over 100 stakeholders meetings attended by senior Sealaska executives and Board members. The House bill will also be adjusted as a result.

The legislation will ensure that Sealaska continues to play a pivotal role in the Southeast Alaska economy and the creation of jobs. This is critical as the region experiences declining employment and devastating out migration of residents from rural to urban areas. Sealaska is committed to providing stability in the Southeast Alaska timber industry and working with the Alaska Forest Association for long term success.

The Senate bill authorized selections outside original ANCSA withdrawal areas. Under the legislation, land selections will include timber land for economic development; economic development land for non-timber based development and cultural and historic sites. The adjustments to the legislation ensure that Sealaska can reaffirm its commitment to economic development and rural energy needs and cultural preservation. Sealaska Board of Director Byron Mallott said "We desire to be productive citizens in the Tongass National Forest but at the same time upholding and celebrating the first people of the region including Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian."

One provision of the Senate bill will provide public access to and through newly acquired timber lands. "This important element protects public access for subsistence and other recreational uses," said Sealaska Board of Directors Chair Albert Kookesh.

The legislation enables Sealaska to initiate new strategies that were germinated by it's participation in the Tongass Futures Roundtable. The group represents organizations, corporations, state and federal agencies that are committed to creating sustainable economies in southeast. Sealaska sees an opportunity to transition from a timber focused company to creating new sustainable economies, working with other tribal organizations and local communities to create a new form of economic enterprise.

### **About Sealaska Corporation**

Sealaska is the Southeast Alaska Native Corporation formed under federal law in 1971 with diverse businesses worldwide. The Corporation is owned by approximately 20,000 tribal member shareholders of Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian descent and is dedicated to weaving successful businesses with culture for the benefit of shareholders, communities and the environment.

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