



2011 Legislative Report



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A Message from Our Leaders

Dear Conservation Voter,

Thank you for taking the time to look over the 2011 Alaska Conservation Voters Legislative Report. Every year we review conservation policy moving in the Capitol building in Juneau. It affords each of us an opportunity to reflect on conservation policy at the state level, thank our supportive elected officials, and hold legislators accountable. We believe this is a critical part of moving Alaska toward the future we envision.

This year we are releasing a Report rather than a Scorecard. Only 40 bills passed the legislature this session. Far fewer conservation bills passed, leaving us a tiny pool of legislation to **objectively “score” our elected officials. We look forward to scoring all legislators in future years.**

The 2011 Legislative Session will be remembered as one of the more contentious in recent years. But after looking past the high-profile fights about the budget and oil taxes, a number of conservation issues were given much attention. A \$450 million energy infrastructure **package was passed to further Alaska’s newly enacted energy policy. Legislation on toxics** moved forward. Many harmful bills stalled. Unfortunately progress on some conservation issues moved backwards. The biggest disappointment is that the legislature chose not to extend the coastal management program that helps coastal communities move forward with responsible development.

Building from our past successes Alaska Conservation Voters looks forward to cultivating **and supporting conservation legislators who promote policy to make Alaska’s environment** and economy prosperous. We hope you find the report relevant and informative. Thank you again for reading the 2011 Legislative Report.

Sincerely,

Kate Consenstein,
Board Chair





We believe
that good policy is driven
by good leadership.

Alaska Conservation Voters helps to identify, recruit, train and support pro-conservation candidates for office and continues to work with these decision makers on environmental issues.

We advocate for sound environmental policies that ensure *a healthy environment* and *prosperous economy*.

Alaska Conservation Voters is:

- The only Alaska-based organization that helps elect pro-conservation candidates to public office.
- **The 'go-to' resource** for pro-conservation, Alaskan voters.
- The only Alaska-based organization that maintains a full-time advocacy presence in **Alaska's capitol**.

VOTERS' Priority Issues



Alaska Conservation Voters' legislative priorities achieved mixed success during the 2011 Legislative Session.

The priorities included:

- *improving the Alaska Coastal Management Program*
- *securing funding for business and non-profit energy efficiency*
- *phasing out the sale of a toxic class of chemicals known as PBDEs*

Legislators devoted significant time to all three issues. In the final days of the regular session \$2.5 million was placed in the budget for business and non-profit energy efficiency. Toxic phase out legislation to end the sale of products containing toxic PBDEs received multiple hearings in both House and Senate committees. Unfortunately for coastal communities the legislature failed to extend the coastal management program during the second Special Session.

Voters began the session on solid ground working on energy efficiency. Last year a historic energy policy was created with efficiency being a central piece of the state's strategy. One part of the policy was incomplete. It did not provide state support for businesses and non-profits to complete energy efficiency projects. This year's budget solves that problem. We successfully worked with businesses and other partners to urge legislators to fund an energy efficiency loan fund for businesses and non-profits. The \$2.5 million placed in the budget will soon be available to businesses and non-profits to move forward with these cost-effective projects.

Toxic phase out legislation also moved successfully this session although it has not yet passed the legislature. Identical bills in the Senate and House both received extensive hearings. SB 27 sponsored by Sen. Wielechowski moved from the Senate Health and Social Services committee and received a hearing in Senate Finance, a committee in which many bills are never

heard. The House companion, HB 63, sponsored by Rep. Holmes, received serious attention in House Labor and Commerce and is positioned to move from committee early next session. **Voters** worked closely with sponsors to make sure concerned Alaskans told legislators to keep toxic chemicals out of our homes and away from our families. We will work hard to keep these bills moving next session.



Failed leadership led to the premature death of the Alaska Coastal Management Program. The coastal management program provided local communities a say in development decisions and gave the state authority to move quickly on permitting decisions for decades. Alaskans lost that control over development on July 1st. Gov. Parnell and legislators sparred amongst themselves over changes to the program throughout the session and in the end failed to even pass legislation to simply extend the sunset provision claiming they had waited too long to extend the program because employees were leaving and the office was closing. Losing the management program will harm responsible development and coastal communities for years to come.



Conservation Bills

The Good:

SB 63, Promoting Renewable Energy in Alaska

Alaska is leading the nation in renewable energy generation with 24% of our electricity being produced by renewable sources. The state plans to continue an aggressive renewable policy by generating half of all electricity in the state from renewables by 2025. SB 63 would help reach this goal by establishing a 15% tax credit for renewable energy generation. Unfortunately the bill did not gain traction this session. *Referred to Senate Resources.*

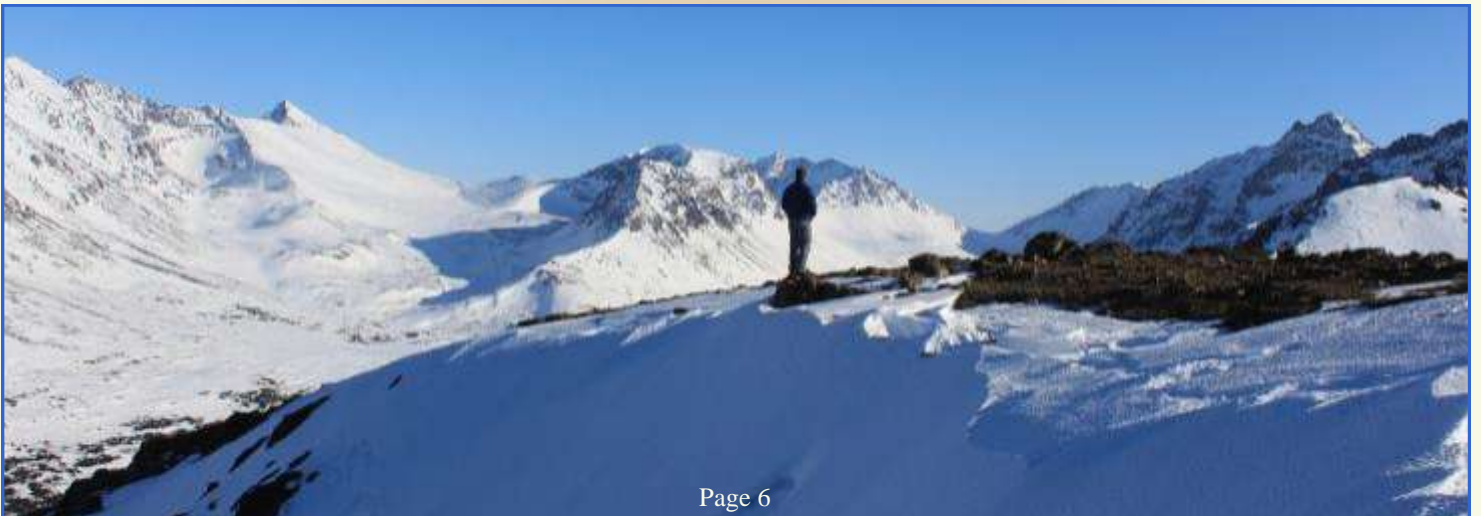
HB 97, Keeping Invasive Species Out

Invasive species are coming to Alaska but have not established a foothold here like in many other states. Alaska currently has an invasive species coordinator who is critical in keeping the state on track to prevent large problems in the future. HB 97 makes sure the coordinator position will not be eliminated and can continue to focus on working with communities and local groups to protect Alaska's native species. *Passed House 36-4; Passed Senate 19-1; Signed by Governor 4/22/2011.*



HB 57, Supporting Community Bicycle Programs

Bicycling is a great alternative to driving for Alaskans looking to avoid high gas prices and stay healthy. HB 57 would help expand riding opportunities across the state, letting more Alaskans benefit from bicycling. The bill would provide grants to communities and non-profits planning unique bicycling projects for their city or town. *Passed House Transportation; Awaiting hearings in House Finance.*



Anti-Conservation Bills



HB 168, Blocking Alaskans from Stopping Bad Projects

Challenging the state's approval of risky development projects in court often gets a bad rap but it is often Alaskans' option of last resort. Permits are often rushed through the process and completed in a sloppy way. Alaskans who don't have the ear of the Governor or state bureaucrats have the right to go to court to challenge bad development decisions. HB 168 would destroy this right and block citizens' access to the courts by requiring Alaskans to post a bond when filing a suit for any payments a developer would make to employees or contractors during liti-

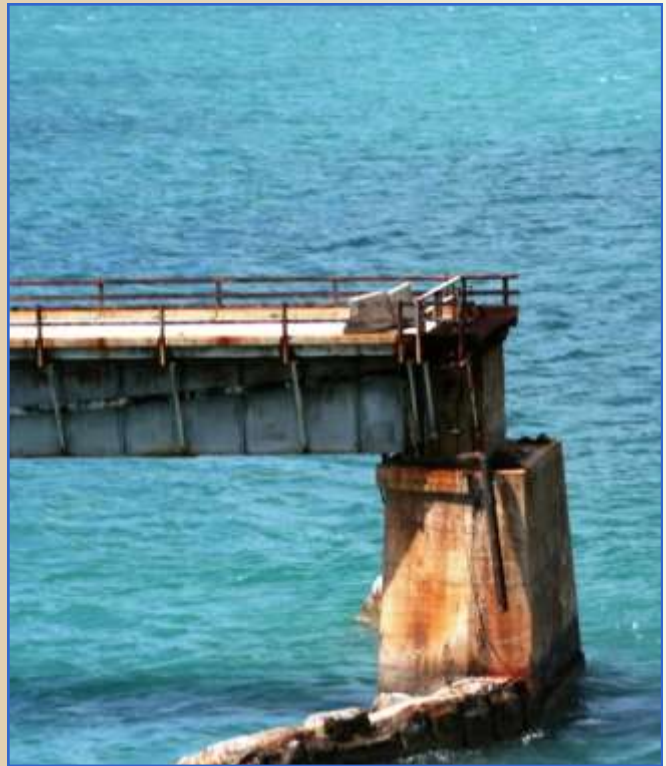
gation. These payments would easily top millions of dollars for many projects, money most Alaskans don't have. *Passed House 33-6; Held in Senate Labor and Commerce.*

HB 105, State Forests Opened to Logging

The legislature approved opening 25,000 acres of Southeast forest to timber harvest. Legislators missed an opportunity to protect areas for public recreation or fish and wildlife conservation at the same time. Two parcels in the newly designated timber lands are all or nearly all old growth. *Passed House 38-2; Passed Senate 20-0; Awaiting the Governor's Signature.*

HB 158 / SB 80, A Bridge Bet with the State on the Hook

For years real estate speculators have wanted to build a bridge across Knik Arm connecting downtown Anchorage to Point MacKenzie. Supporters pitch the project, estimated to cost at least \$700 million, as a way to cut down travel time between Anchorage and the Mat-Su. The reality is most people living in the Mat-Su Valley would not have a shorter drive to Anchorage and population growth projections don't support the need for a bridge either. The poorly justified project is not worth the giant price tag, much of which the state could find itself on the hook for if HB 158 or SB 80 pass. *Passed House and Senate Transportation; Awaiting hearings in House and Senate Finance.*



2011 Legislators of the Year



Representative Paul Seaton (R-Homer)

Representative Paul Seaton championed a number of conservation issues throughout the session and started the public debate on improving the coastal management program. He tackled the major issues of mining tax reform and bringing strong water quality standards to Alaska, while also working on projects to make our daily lives easier by improving bicycling in our communities. Halfway through session with no one taking action on the coastal management program, Rep. Seaton led hearings in House Resources to broker a deal between local communities and developers. The bill that came out of those hearings would have extended and improved the coastal management program.

Senator Bill Wielechowski (D-Anchorage)

Sen. Wielechowski is consistently a strong voice for conservation in the Capitol. He was instrumental in securing \$2.5 million in energy efficiency funding for businesses and non-profits which will get many projects off the ground. He also moved important legislation to phase out the sale of a class of toxic chemicals known as PBDEs. Sen. Wielechowski led efforts in the Senate to save the coastal management program in the final days, publically challenging the Governor and other legislators to save the coastal management program.



Bill Patrons

A number of legislators deserve special recognition for sponsoring important conservation legislation. Without their support **Alaska Conservation Voters'** priority legislation would not have moved forward this session. *Their dedication to conservation issues is crucial to Voters' work.*

Senator Lesil McGuire sponsored SB 32, legislation which would appropriate \$10 million for business and non-profit energy efficiency loans. She was instrumental last session in passing the Alaska Sustainable Energy Act which set an energy policy for the state. Her commitment to a clean energy future for Alaska continues with her work on energy efficiency and renewable energy issues this year.



Senator Wielechowski sponsored two pieces of **Voters'** priority legislation this session; SB 32 to fund business and non-profit energy efficiency loans (co-sponsored with Sen. McGuire) and SB 27 to phase out the sale of toxic, out-dated flame retardants known as PBDEs. He has been an advocate for conservation throughout his legislative career and played a central role in passing the Alaska Sustainable Energy Act last year.

Representative Lindsey Holmes sponsored HB 63 to phase out the sale of an out-dated class of flame retardants called PBDEs. Her work moved this bill through a series of rigorous committee hearings. Rep. Holmes has shown commitment to important environmental health legislation throughout her years as a legislator.



Representative Les Gara introduced HB 228 to fund energy efficiency loans for businesses and non-profits, the House companion bill to SB 32. Rep. Gara has consistently worked on energy efficiency issues as he co-sponsored amendments last session to require that public buildings meet energy efficiency standards. He has also been a strong advocate for ensuring all Alaskans have access to fishing streams throughout the state.



Conservation Leaders

Energy Policy Leaders

Senator Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) and Senator Lyman Hoffman (D-Bethel)



Senator Hoffman

Sen. Bert Stedman and Sen. Lyman Hoffman drafted an aggressive budget to move the state's energy policy forward. Budget negotiations, led by the two Senate Finance co-chairs, led to a **\$450 million package of energy projects** with most of the money going toward renewable energy and energy efficiency. High profile projects include more than \$100 million for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's popular home energy efficiency program, \$10 million for a wind farm in Healy, nearly \$40 million for the expansion of two hydro projects in Southeast, and tens of millions for the Renewable Energy Grant Fund. This funding will help Alaska move away from dirty, expensive fossil fuels and closer toward a clean energy economy.



Senator Stedman

Committed to Responsible Coastal Development

Representative Bob Herron (D-Bethel)

When negotiations over coastal management began to fall apart, Rep. Bob Herron brought developers and local communities back to the table. Negotiations got back on track and real progress was made to reach a compromise position all parties could live with. Rep. Herron's work led to a bill that moved smoothly through the House and the Senate, and he continued to push hard until the end of the Special Session to get a bill passed. He knew that it would be bad for local communities to have no management program and continued to fight for the program until the last day of the Special Session.



Conservation Stragglers

Representative Eric Feige (R-Chickaloon)

Rep. Eric Feige spent his first session trying to roll back a public health law and keep regular Alaskans from being able to stop bad projects. He introduced a bill to water down the Pesticide Right to Know law which lets the public know when toxic chemicals are sprayed in public places. Rep. Feige's bill would allow more unmarked spraying, leaving the public at risk. Also troubling is the unconstitutional bill he introduced, HB 168, to keep Alaskans from stopping bad projects. If the bill passes, a person challenging a bad permit issued by the state in court would need to put up money for the employee and contractor payments before moving forward. Only the richest in the state could stop irresponsible and poorly planned projects.



Senator Linda Menard (R-Wasilla) and Representative Mark Neuman (R-Big Lake)



Sen. Menard and Rep. Neuman worked to keep the ill-conceived Knik Arm Bridge project moving forward this session. The bridge would connect downtown Anchorage to sparsely populated Pt. MacKenzie. The proposed route would not decrease the commute for a vast majority of Mat-Su residents and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and possibly well over a billion. Sen. Menard

and Rep. Neuman both brought bills forward that would give millions more for planning the bridge and leave the state guaranteeing hundreds of millions of dollars. Building the bridge would be a waste of public money. Fortunately, the bills did not pass.



We need your help...

Here are some ways you can get involved:

- **Become a member**
- **Volunteer**
- **Sign up to receive our 'Conservation Watch'**
- **Join our Action Alert Network**

**Go to www.acvoters.org or call us at
907.258.6171**

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