RDC, Coalition host congressional staffers

1991 has been a successful year in that regard. The wetlands issue has seen major changes as President George Bush issued a new policy direction to allow flexibility for states with minimal wetlands losses. RDC and the Alaska Wetlands Coalition have been instrumental in that process of "federal enlightenment."

One of the most effective tools public interest groups can use as they educate is bringing decision-makers to Alaska to view our resources, development projects and geography firsthand.

This year, RDC and the Alaska Wetlands Coalition hosted two groups of congressional staffers, taking them to King Salmon, Kotzebue, Juneau, Anchorage and Prudhoe Bay. The tours were effective and informative. RDC has made a strong commitment to such education and information efforts - a direction our members can participate in and be proud of.

Juneau city officials and congressional staff view site of proposed Juneau school, an area classified by the federal government as "forested wetlands." (Photo by Debbie Reinwand)

Juneau's tour included a stop at a homeless shelter that suffered construction delays due to disputed wetlands status. (Photo by Debbie Reinwand)

Mayor responds

Sitka series misdirected and unfair

by Mayor Dan Keck

Sitka by the Sea.
All 8,500 of us in this coastal town live here because of the surrounding natural resources - the fish, the trees, the ocean and natural beauty. Throw in some Russian and Tlingit history, whales and eagles, snow-capped peaks, a volcano, a few fish processing plants, a pulp mill and you have the setting for Sitka.

Because of its beauty, Sitka gets a lot of attention from those near and those far away. We live in a fishbowl that is constantly stirred up by those that seek reasonable solutions. Simply for August 1991, Sitka has been a focus of The Anchorage Times and a continuing series labelled "Sitka - Mill Town Torn." It may be a catchy title for selling newspapers, but it has little to do with the town I have known and lived in for 31 years.

If you have been following us in this series, you would think that Sitka was a horrible place and on the verge of civil war. You would not want to hold a convention here or to visit on vacation. In my opinion, this is local government for over two dozen years and have a pretty good knowledge of that business as well as fisheries and tourism. I know the people live and work throughout the region.

We think a lot of the criticism leveled against us and our timber industry is misdirected and could unfairly hurt us. It could hurt our tourism industry and it might hurt our bond rating for municipal projects. The skewed coverage also might be a bad omen to any Outside company that was seeking to invest in our state.

If you are a Sitkaite who wants to be informed about your town, you need to focus on some of the positive events in the past few years. We are not a mill town or a mill town torn.

There is an old saying that it is wise not to fight with a company that buys its ink by the barrel. It’s probably a good idea. There is also a saying that if you stay quiet, no one will ever hear you.

Aerial view of the Alaska Pulp Corporation mill near Sitka.

(Continued from page 5)

Tongass...}

areas are hand-planting. In 1989, over one million seedlings were planted in Alaska.

There are 5.1 million acres of productive old-growth in the Tongass. Less than one-third of these acres are designated for timber harvesting.

Under the current plan of harvesting, after 50 years, there would be 4.3 million acres of productive old-growth left.

Send comments to: Michael Barton, Regional Forester, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Box 21628, Juneau, AK 99802-1628.
Lots of fish with little value

Tides of change threaten to erode Alaska's market share

A federal report released last month indicates that prices for Bristol Bay red salmon may continue to fall due to the growing foreign development of fish farming and increasing consumer concerns in Japan about quality.

The report, conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office at the request of Congressman Don Young, indicated that even though the amount of salmon imported by Japan has been increasing, the percentage of imports represented by Bristol Bay salmon has decreased. The Japanese are increasing the amount of farmed salmon they import from nations like Chile because consumers there perceive farmed salmon to be of higher quality than Alaska's natural stocks.

In 1988, almost 90 percent of Alaska's sockeye salmon was exported to Japan. With Japan turning to alternative sources for salmon, new markets for Bristol Bay salmon must be found in order to maintain demand.

Alaska's 1991 salmon harvest of about 180 million fish set a new record, but a market glut and low prices denied most fishermen a profitable season.

"We blew the old record of 154.8 million fish out of the water," said Herman Savikko, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's chief statistician. Yet low prices of 12 cents per pound for pink salmon and 80 cents for reds drove revenues down.

Savikko said salmon revenues will be about $300 million this year, compared to $550 million in 1989. Salmon revenues usually fluctuate between $500 million and $1 billion.

Salmon is one of the largest fisheries in the state. In 1990, fish sales were $1.5 billion. Savikko said this year's catch will be closer to $1 billion.

But things are changing in the salmon industry, warned Lennie Gorsuch, Executive Director of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

In using an analogy in a recent speech before the Resource Development Council, Gorsuch said American car makers had a lock on the U.S. in the 1960s, but by the 1970s foreign car makers had tinkered with automobile production methods and products and blitzed the media. The results have been obvious.

"The American auto industry faces a similar challenge from foreign salmon farmers. They are tinkering with product forms, production methods and crafting multi-layered ad campaigns," Gorsuch said. "As Alaskans, we cannot afford to show the same complacency in the 1990s that the U.S. auto industry demonstrated in the 1960s."

Gorsuch noted that in 1980 salmon farmers contributed

Winds of change blowing away from Alaska

Why do I become uneasy when I contemplate Alaska's future? Sure, everyone knows Prudhoe Bay is declining. We've heard many times about the statewide production drop from the current 2.2 million barrels per day to a projected 1.2 million by the year 2000. Perhaps this is old news, nothing to fear, another Alaskan cycle.

So why am I still uneasy? Could something be happening on this earth that is passing Alaska by? We do not seem to be reacting to the winds of change. Either we are not seeing it, or it's not there.

Other nations such as the Soviet Union, Mongolia, Mexico and Chile are opening vast resource areas with new ownership rules and to encourage new entrants, timber, coal and recreation lands await development. We can assume that attractive opportunities for investment in low-cost resources in these countries will impact Alaska in someway and at sometime down the road.

Alaska has potential for economic growth with more oil, opportunities for tourism, fish, minerals, timber and others. Frankly, I do not think we should assume Alaska's oil age is gone, or that ANWR is the only hope.

"All routes have been mapped. We've seen them all before. We've seen the North Slope, Kaktovik, Grizzly Creek, all over ANWR. ANWR is the only hope. But by the 1970s the Alaska economy was moving aggressively to develop new markets overseas and to maintain Alaska's share in Japan. But, according to Gorsuch, Alaska's best alternative market is the U.S. However, the state has spent relatively little marketing Alaska salmon in the Lower 48.

In 1990 the Norwegians spent about $0.05 per pound marketing their salmon in the U.S. Alaska spent about $0.1 per pound advertising all of its diverse seafood products in the Lower 48.

Gorsuch emphasized that Alaska needs to enhance its markets as aggressively as it protects its resource. "We need to realize that what happens to a fish after it leaves the water is as important, economically, as what happens to a fish still in the water."

"To do less is to resign ourselves to the glimpse of the future that the 1991 salmon season gave us — lots of fish with little value."

Alaska's 1991 salmon harvest set a new record, but a market glut and low prices denied many fishermen a profitable season.

Winds of change blowing away from Alaska

Thoughts from the President

by John H. Parnell

October 1991 / RESOURCE REVIEW / Page 3
Outsiders urge closing Tongass to logging, Alaskan comments sought

The U.S. Forest Service is revising the land management plan for the Tongass National Forest. The current plan, known as the Tongass Land Management Plan (TLMP), has been in effect since April 1979. The plan is revised every 10 to 15 years and the public plays a critical role.

Last year, the Forest Service provided months-long public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact State (DEIS) for TLMP. During that comment period, Congress passed the Tongass Timber Reform Act dictating specific changes for management on the Tongass. The Forest Service has now prepared a Supplement to the DEIS that incorporates the direction from Congress and considers the public comments received so far.

The Supplement is available for public review and comment. Public comments are extremely important in determining the outcome of these management plans. Of the 3,500 people who sent in comments last year on the DEIS, over half were from outside Alaska, with a major portion coming from the central and eastern U.S. Most of those comments urged closing of the Tongass to all logging.

Environmental groups won many concessions in the Tongass Timber Reform Act. According to the Alaska Forest Association, they are hard at work to further reduce the land available for resource development through the revision of TLMP. Both the Alaska Forest Association and the Resource Development Council urge members to write to the Forest Service to express concern over the reduction of land available for resource development.

The current plan allows for timber harvesting on 1.7 million acres of the 17 million-acre Tongass over a 100-year period. The Supplement just released has five different alternatives with varying land use designations with an average annual timber supply ranging from 235 million board feet per year in Alternative A to 472 million board feet per year in Alternative D. The annual timber supply proposed by the Forest Service in its "preferred alternative" would provide 418 million board feet annually.

The Tongass Timber Reform Act directs the Forest Service to provide a supply of timber that seeks to meet market demands. The Alaska Forest Association has calculated market demand for timber for the next 20 years at approximately 720,000 board feet per year. "We need your help in promoting a timber supply to provide a healthy timber industry," said Don Finney, Executive Director of the Alaska Forest Association. "We ask that you support Alternative D with changes to increase the average annual timber supply to meet the market demand of more than 500 million board feet per year."

Here are some important facts on the Tongass:
- 472 million acres of the Tongass were set aside as Wilderness. In 1990, the congressional reforms added six new Wilderness areas totaling 301,000 acres and another 720,000 acres were banned from timber harvesting.
- Overall, 94 percent of the 17 million acres forest remains unreclaimed or designated Wilderness.
- Additionally, the Act mandated 100 foot buffers on each side of major salmon streams and made extensive changes to the two long-term timber sale contracts. The Act also repealed the automatic appropriation to the Forest Service for preparation of timber sales.
- In the current land plan, only 10 percent of the Tongass National Forest will ever be harvested. This represents less than one-third of the commercial timber land base.
- While over 95 percent of the Tongass refosters naturally, the remaining

(Continued to page 7)