



"Serving Alaska as Alaska's Capital City"

January 4, 2005

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Mayor Bruce Botelho
Members of the Assembly
City and Borough of Juneau
155 South Seward Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Mayor Botelho and Members of the Assembly,

The Alaska Committee is a non-profit organization with an all volunteer board whose mission is to improve and enhance Juneau as Alaska's capital city. Some of the most significant criticisms and challenges we continually face are the issues of *access* and the presence and quality of visitor amenities at our airport. To a lesser degree, concern over airport safety has also been raised over the years. The Alaska Committee is concerned that one of the alternatives being discussed as part of the recent Draft Environmental Impact Study for the Juneau International Airport could have a negative effect on our capital city's airport.

Clearly, safety is paramount when considering how best to respond to the new FAA requirements regarding Runway Safety Area (RSA) improvements. Therefore, we do not endorse any alternative that would not meet FAA requirements. However, one of the alternatives being discussed is the use of EMAS (Engineered Material Arresting System). This is a relatively new product that has not been tested thoroughly at our airport or in our climate and has, in fact, only been installed in nine airports across the country. The effect of adopting this alternative could hamstring our airport with unnecessary operational costs and even negatively impact safety.

EMAS installation cost estimates are very high. Initial construction estimates for our project indicate a cost about two or more times more than just extending the runway - possibly \$15-20 million. In addition, there are the operating and maintenance costs, estimated conservatively at \$50,000-\$100,000 annually. This is to comply with the manufacturer's recommendations for preventative maintenance, repairs to damaged blocks and snow and ice removal. The EMAS blocks will need to be kept dry or they will deteriorate. This is accomplished by sealing the seams and then painting and coating the blocks. The seams and block coating then need to be resealed and/or repainted every two to three years to ensure they are impervious to water. Despite this maintenance, there is a possibility that the blocks will still degrade and need to be replaced at some future date - possibly as early as ten years. (State of Alaska planners are using a five year estimated life for their planning estimates.)

EMAS is designed to stop an aircraft that has run off or "over-shot" the end of the runway. Unfortunately, it can cause increased damage and injury to an aircraft that lands short or "under-shoots" the runway. Historically, our airport has never had an aircraft over-shoot the runway but three accidents have occurred with aircraft that have landed short. In addition, we only have one runway and any damage to the EMAS installation at either end could shut our airport down. All the installations at airports to date have been at airports with multiple runways.

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The primary reason for suggesting EMAS, since it is a much more expensive option than the alternative of extending the runway, is to prevent any impingement on the Mendenhall Wetlands Refuge. Yet, the enabling legislation for this refuge specifically provided for preferential use of lands by the airport for expansion and other uses. (See attached statute). The proposed runway extension would only utilize approximately 18 acres of the entire 4,000-acre refuge and would, of course, be subject to a full environmental review as well as wetlands mitigation.

The Alaska Committee formally requests that the Assembly place this issue on its agenda at the next available meeting. Discussion and favorable action on the pending request from the Airport Board for CBJ to ask the State to transfer 18 acres of the refuge for the needed safety improvements should be a top priority and should not be delayed any longer. A request by CBJ for this transfer will still be followed by environmental review and additional hearings and members of the public will be included in the process.

The primary purpose of the Alaska Committee is to improve and enhance Juneau to allow it to become a better capital city. Safe, comfortable, and convenient access for the rest of the State is a key component of our community's responsibilities as the Capital City. With important airport improvements looming on the horizon and limited funding available, we should not saddle our airport with burdensome operational costs that will subtract from other more important services. Nor should we accept an expensive option that is less safe than the alternative just to preserve 18 acres of wetlands. Wetlands can be mitigated but safety cannot. Juneau cannot afford to suffer any degradation of airport safety or services at a time when Alaskans expect our capital city to offer the best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Win Gruening". The signature is stylized with a large, bold "W" and a cursive "Gruening".

Win Gruening, Chair
The Alaska Committee

Cc: City Manager, Rod Swope
Airport Manager, Allan Heese

ATCH: AS 16.20.034. Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge

Alaska Statutes.

Title 16. Fish and Game

Chapter 20. Conservation and Protection of Alaskan Wildlife

Section 34. Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge.

previous: Section 33. Yakataga State Game Refuge.

next: Section 36. Susitna Flats State Game Refuge.

AS 16.20.034. MENDENHALL WETLANDS STATE GAME REFUGE.

(a) The following state-owned land, including tide and submerged land, and excluding privately owned land, is established as the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge: Beginning at U.S.C.G.S. Triangulation Station "Salmon" located on the northeastern shore of Douglas Island, lying within the City and Borough of Juneau, First Judicial District, State of Alaska; thence northeasterly across Gastineau Channel approximately .5 miles to U.S.C.G.S. Triangulation Station "Creek", said station being on the shore of Gastineau Channel, 200 feet south of Salmon Creek; thence trend northerly to the intersection of Egan Drive and Salmon Creek; thence trend northwesterly immediately adjacent to but not upon or within the designated right-of-way of Egan Drive approximately 2.7 miles to the intersection with the easterly boundary of Sunny Point Park Subdivision, recorded as Plat No. 333; thence southerly along said boundary; thence along said right-of-way line to the intersection with the 22.7 foot extreme high tide line; thence southerly and westerly on said 22.7 foot extreme high tide line, abutting said Sunny Point Park Subdivision, U.S. Survey 2475, Sunny Point Subdivision (Plat No. 307), and Egan Drive approximately one mile to the easterly line of the accreted property to the U.S. Survey No. 1568; thence southerly and westerly, along the boundary of said accreted property approximately .4 miles to Corner No. 14 of Alaska Tidelands Survey No. 716; thence southerly and westerly along the west meander line of U.S. Survey No. 716, approximately 2.6 miles to Corner No. 4 of said Tidelands Survey; thence northerly along the west meander line of U.S. Survey No. 1742, approximately 790 feet to the northwesterly corner of Juneau Airport property (Corner No. AP-4 of survey dated 6-69); thence northwesterly approximately 440 feet to the southerly meander line of U.S. Survey No. 1919; thence southerly and westerly, along the southerly meanders of U.S. Surveys No. 1919 and No. 1042 (as accreted), approximately .5 miles to the intersection with the south line of U.S. Survey No. 2136; thence westerly, along said south line, approximately .6 miles to the intersection with the 22.7 foot extreme high tide line; thence southerly, along said line approximately 1.4 miles to U.S.C.G.S. Triangulation Station "Glacier" on the southerly tip of Mendenhall Peninsula; thence in a southerly direction across Gastineau Channel approximately 1.3 miles to the mouth of Cove Creek; thence in a general easterly direction along the 22.7 foot extreme high tide line of Douglas Island approximately 9 miles to U.S.C.G.S. Triangulation Station "Salmon", the true point of beginning.

(b) The state may not acquire by eminent domain privately owned land within or abutting state-owned land described in (a) of this section for inclusion in the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge but may acquire privately owned land by purchase, exchange or otherwise for inclusion in the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge.

(c) Leases, permits and applications for leases or permits in effect or submitted by January 1, 1976 are not affected by the provisions of this section. Renewals of leases or permits after January 1, 1976 are subject to this section.

(d) Egress and ingress across state land to and from private property within or abutting the land described in (a) of this section shall be allowed through access corridors established through agreement between the department and the private property owners affected.

(e) Except within that portion of the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge commonly known as the Twin Lakes area, the boundaries of which shall be established by the department after consultation with the City and Borough of Juneau, the taking of game is expressly permitted within the land described in (a) of this section if consistent with the management plan adopted by the department and conducted under regulations adopted by the board.

(f) Recreational activity is expressly permitted within the land described in (a) of this section if consistent with the management plan adopted by the department and conducted under regulations adopted by the board.

(g) Management of the surface and subsurface estate is the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources. Any actions by the Department of Natural Resources which affect the habitat shall be in conformity with a plan proposed and adopted by the Department of Fish and Game, after reasonable public hearings, and following consultation with the City and Borough of Juneau. The plan shall be revised annually, if necessary and appropriate, under the same procedures followed for initial adoption.

(h) An activity or use may not occur under this section in a manner that creates a hazard to aircraft. Gravel extraction is not considered an incompatible activity on or abutting state-owned land described in (a) of this section and is subject to provisions of the management plan. Except for those ponds, lakes or other bodies of water adjacent to the airport that are required to be maintained by the City and Borough of Juneau as a seaplane basin under certification for the Juneau Municipal Airport granted by the Federal Aviation Agency, if requested by the City and Borough of Juneau the Departments of Fish and Game and Natural Resources shall assist in filling the ponds, lakes or other bodies of water adjacent to the existing airport runway to eliminate them as sites attractive to waterfowl.

(i) The management plan adopted under (g) of this section must include provisions under which the City and Borough of Juneau may acquire land, by sale, exchange, or otherwise, for purposes of expanding the Juneau Municipal Airport, establishing additional transportation corridors, including water corridors, and establishing publicly owned and operated docking facilities, and these uses are considered preferential under art. VIII of the state constitution but subject to the requirements for plan

specification and approval under AS 16.20.060 . A deed, contract of sale, lease, or other instrument evidencing disposition by the Department of Natural Resources of land under this subsection must include, among other terms, the condition that the land is restricted to use for airport expansion, establishing additional transportation corridors, including water corridors, and establishing publicly owned and operated docking facilities.

(j) Notwithstanding the provisions of (d) - (i) of this section, if the City and Borough of Juneau demonstrates to the Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Game, jointly, that there is a superior public need for or use of the land to its use as a state game refuge, after public hearing and a finding by the departments supporting the determination that such a need or use exists or is required, the use shall be permitted. A final administrative order, ruling or determination by the departments adverse to the petition of the City and Borough of Juneau is subject to judicial review under AS 44.62.560 - 44.62.570.

(k) Nothing in this section prevents the City and Borough of Juneau from exercising its land selection rights to state land within its boundaries under applicable law, providing the selection is by local ordinance.