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Trust  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Ketchikan and Petersburg Residents Invited to Meet with Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office on Status of Land Exchange and Potential Timber Sales**

#### ***Community Meetings to be Held October 27 and November 1***

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (October 10, 2016) – The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Trust Land Office will host community meetings to engage with the residents of Petersburg, Saxman and Ketchikan.

At the meetings, community members will have the opportunity to hear from and speak with representatives from both offices and ask questions. Information will be shared on the:

- Status of the land exchange legislation
- Potential sale and selective harvest near communities
- Decision-making process and timeline of potential selective helicopter harvest
- Trust Land Office, its role, how it is funded
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, its purpose, how it is funded
- How to be involved

“When we announced the land sale deadline, our intention was to call attention to the urgency of the land exchange legislation, which is the best option for all,” said John Morrison, executive director of the Trust Land Office. “We appreciate the questions and concerns raised by some residents of Ketchikan and Petersburg following the announcement. We look forward to sharing information at our upcoming meetings to help clarify our past and future actions so that the public can be informed as they engage in the process.”

#### **Meeting Details**

##### **October 27:**

Petersburg Community Meeting

Time: 7–9 p.m.

Venue: Sons of Norway

23 Sing Lee Alley

**November 1:**

Saxman Community Meeting

Time: 3–5 p.m.

Venue: Saxman Community Hall  
2706 S Tongass Hwy

**November 1:**

Ketchikan Community Meeting

Time: 7–9 p.m.

Venue: Ted Ferry Civic Center  
888 Venetia Avenue

**Potential Timber Sales and Status of Land Exchange**

The trustees voted in August to concur with the sale of two parcels near Ketchikan and Petersburg for selective timber harvest by helicopter, should the land exchange legislation not pass. This concurrence is now up for reconsideration with the board of trustees. If the legislation fails, and the administrative decision process to conduct these sales moves forward, the public will be involved. The public process will be discussed at the upcoming meetings.

“We are committed to finalizing this exchange if it remains in the economic interest of the Trust. That is why we’ve been working for the last decade to do a land exchange,” said Russ Webb, chair of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. On September 22, 2016, testimony on the legislation was heard before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. “We remain optimistic the legislation will pass,” Webb said.

**About**

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority has been funding programs that serve Alaska’s most vulnerable populations for the past two decades. This includes programs for mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, traumatic brain injuries and substance abuse disorders. In order to support vital mental health services for Alaskans, the Trust needs to continue to generate revenue from its land and resources. This effort is managed by the Trust Land Office.

**Impact**

The Trust grants approximately \$20 million annually to projects, activities, state agencies and nonprofits that improve the lives of their beneficiaries in the areas of:

- Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment
- Housing and Long-term Services & Supports
- Disability Justice
- Employment & Engagement

**The Land Exchange**

For nearly a decade, the TLO has been working to exchange lands with the United States Forest Service. Numerous meetings have been conducted with individuals, agencies, communities, environmental organizations and the USFS to identify and select the parcels that were included in the Agreement to Initiate that was signed June 30, 2015.

Senator Lisa Murkowski introduced legislation this session to direct the Department of Agriculture to move forward with the exchange. On September 22, 2016, testimony on the legislation was heard before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

### **Details**

- 17,341 acres of Trust lands adjacent to the communities of Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka and Juneau would be transferred to the USFS
- 20,580 acres of remote land on Prince of Wales Island and Shelter Cove would be transferred to the Trust for development and timber harvest

### **Why Support the Exchange?**

The land exchange is the most responsible way to fulfill the mission of the Trust, while avoiding the potential adverse impacts on tourism, recreation, wildlife management and watershed protection. Protecting what remains of the timber industry in Southeast Alaska by providing more timber lands that could be managed on a sustainable yield basis is another benefit of the exchange.

### **The Exchange:**

- Protects popular trails, viewsheds and iconic recreational sites along the Inside Passage
- Ensures watersheds are protected so that Southeast residents receive clean water
- Preserves certain old growth timber stands in the forest
- Ensures jobs stay in the Southeast communities by protecting the timber and tourism industries
- Protects mental health services by providing revenue to support the Trust's mission

### **How to Help**

Please join us in supporting the land exchange and the larger mission of the Trust. Email the Alaska congressional delegation to thank them and express your support of the legislation.

Senator Lisa Murkowski: <https://www.murkowski.senate.gov/contact/email>

Senator Dan Sullivan: <https://www.sullivan.senate.gov/contact/email>

Representative Don Young: <http://donyoung.house.gov/contact/>

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