

Sponsor Statement

HB 498

“An Act requiring the sale or trade of state land.”

The State of Alaska often acquires, or is asked to acquire for public purposes, special parcels of private lands that have exceptional beauty, recreational access, development and conservation potential. Acquired lands can be critical to maintaining or expanding the economy for local communities. Acquiring special lands for public purposes is difficult in part to the potentiality of lost tax revenues garnered from private lands. Acquiring special lands also removes land from an already limited pool of private disposable lands. [House Bill 498](#) attempts to remove opposition to private land acquired for public purposes.

HB 498 expedites the acquisition of special land for public purposes by requiring the commissioner of the Dept. of Natural Resources to review the State’s land holdings, and expedite for sale or trade state land. The land that will be sold or traded may be of equal value, size and proximity; the state land to be sold or traded can only be selected from settlement, agriculture, or reclassified land from other development land categories. Under the bill, other developmental classifications may be reviewed and reclassified as settlement lands in order to expedite the sale or trade of state lands during an acquisition of special lands.

In the Kenai Peninsula, spruce bark beetles have ravaged most of the lands designated for forestry purposes. With little timber left for harvest, the state’s categorization of forestry lands maybe outdated. Under HB 498, acquisition of special lands could be made easier, if land could be reclassified and sold or traded during the special land’s acquisition process.

If the commissioner is unable to locate proximate land, or if the commissioner is unable to reclassify land and make it available for sale or trade, then special land acquisitions would be allowable. HB 498 promotes responsible land management in our State by providing for the acquisition of special private land parcels to meet the changing needs of Alaskan residents and local communities.