

July 13, 2023

Dear DEC,

I read with interest the Alaska Beacon Story in the Ketchikan Daily News today entitled "DEC to Repeal Fuel Tank Rules." With the rationale of "budget constraints" it sounds as if this is yet another relaxation of our diligence to keep a regulatory eye on industry.

I would like to give a small sample of what happens when we agree to the further weakening of the DEC. One of our coastline neighbors had a rotten oil tank and there was an initial spill which we reported. Then there was a second spill after the resident filled his heating oil tank back up (and it all leaked out). We run tourists off our dock and one of the guests complained of feeling ill, so I called again. This time I got a call back from DEC Valdez. The woman told me to call the Coast Guard. So, we are now passing upland issues on to the Coast Guard? If there had been a DEC spill response perhaps the source would have been found the first time.

Another example is: Who is regulating the terms of the permit for the Ward Cove Group? Is the DEC out of that too? Is that "budget constraints?" Or good news for large enterprises? What about the residents of Ward Cove?

So it sounds like what is going to happen in the case of the fuel tanks will throw us back to industry controlling/regulating themselves?

Alaska needs to prioritize clean air and water if we want to continue to encourage tourism, the kind that can be sustained. If we want to go all in for other heavy industry (utilizing the old paradigm of resource extraction. Maybe we should continue to and look the other way in an attempt and make do with "budget constraints." Even in writing this I suspect no one will seriously read or consider this.

I am deeply saddened by the information in this article and what is not going on in State government.

Betsey Burdett

Ketchikan