



ENGINEERING & PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Utilities Division

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February 13, 2025
The Honorable Lisa A. Murkowski
U.S. Senator
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

*RE: In Support of Federal Funding for Mendenhall Wastewater Treatment Plant Compliance:
Fats, Oil, and Grease & Grit Removal*

Dear Honorable Senator Murkowski,

As you are likely well aware, every Utility provides public health services essential to their community and faces daily challenges in doing so. Here in Juneau, a current concern is the Utility's ability to meet regulatory obligations in the face of the high loadings from the community. The Utilities Advisory Board (UAB) strongly supports a project that we feel would greatly improve the Mendenhall Wastewater Treatment Plant's capacity and compliance: the Fat, Oil, Grease (FOG) & Grit Removal project. Funding for this project is made crucial by the competing costs of our aging infrastructure and the increase in demand from commercial and residential users – be it cruise ships or year-round restaurants, breweries, businesses and residents.

The UAB was created in 2004 with the purpose of making recommendations concerning the operation and management of the municipally-owned utilities here in Juneau. As providing such a crucial and complex service to an isolated, yet sizeable, community offers challenges that demand a vast array of expertise, the UAB has been leveraged to discuss and support multiple projects, rate changes, and community-wide efforts. As Vice Chair of the UAB, I am affirming the UAB's support this critical project to increase the efficiency and longevity of the City of Juneau's wastewater infrastructure.

Staff has kept the UAB apprised of the fact that Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) are an issue for the Mendenhall Wastewater Treatment Plant – the largest of our three treatment plants here in Juneau. As the UAB is comprised of engineers, large commercial users, and residential users, we are inherently aware that FOG can come from both commercial and residential sources, making it difficult to regulate or monitor. FOG is pollution that requires special treatment; further, its presence in the treatment process promotes micro-organisms that settle poorly and subsequently cause effluent permit violations. These permit violations are now the basis of a binding compliance action that requires new measures to resolve, such as this proposed project.

As costs increase across the state and the country, it is essential that Municipalities find ways to increase efficiency and mitigate expenses to their users wherever possible. It is this spirit – of care for our community, drive for sustainability, and commitment to productivity – that I write in support of this project.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our office at 907.321.2265

Sincerely,

Geoff Larson
Vice Chair, Utilities Advisory Board
Co-Founder, Alaskan Brewing Company

CC: The Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan, The Honorable Representative Nick Begich