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State Certifies Alaska Sea Party Initiative ***Group Launches Statewide Effort To Restore Coastal Management***

(Juneau) Today, Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell certified the grassroots Alaska Sea Party's application to begin collecting signatures for a statewide ballot initiative to restore Alaska's coastal management program. The group seeks to ensure Alaskans have a meaningful voice in coastal development decisions. The Alaska Sea Party intends to gather 26,000 signatures by the start of the legislative session on January 17, 2012 in order to place the initiative on the 2012 election ballot.

"Alaskans now have the opportunity to make their voices heard to bring back an important program that gives the state and local communities a meaningful say in decisions that affect coastal development and resources," Bruce Botelho, a lead sponsor of the initiative, said. "Our goal is to gather the necessary signatures before the start of next year's legislative session to encourage legislators to pass a substantially similar law." If the legislature fails to act, the initiative would appear on next year's statewide election ballot.

The initiative establishes a 13-member Alaska Coastal Policy Board to oversee development of the new program. The program's aims include balancing competing demands on coastal resources and uses, providing Alaskans with a strong voice in state and federal coastal activities, and establishing a coordinated permit review process.

"A well-crafted coastal program promotes sound and responsible economic development," Mako Haggerty, a Kenai assemblyman and an initiative sponsor, said. "By streamlining project authorizations, resolving disputes up front, and reducing litigation, Alaska can have diverse and responsible development in our coastal areas."

After working for over 30 years, Alaska's previous coastal program expired in the summer of 2011 when the legislature failed to agree to extend the program.

"We lost an important management tool with the sunset of the program," Representative Beth Kerttula, a long-time program supporter, said. "The program recognized both the uniqueness of

the coastal area and that the state and local communities are best suited to provide guidance in balancing sound economic development with other coastal resource values.”

Soon, the Alaska Sea Party will distribute petition booklets to volunteer and paid signature gatherers from Barrow to Ketchikan. “We urge everyone who cares about Alaska’s coast to sign a petition and make their voice heard,” Haggerty said.

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