

HOUSE CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 64(RLS)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE

Offered: 5/7/18

Referred: Today's Calendar

Sponsor(s): SENATOR MICCICHE

REPRESENTATIVE Kito

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act adopting the Uniform Environmental Covenants Act; relating to environmental**
2 **real property covenants and notices of activity and use limitation at contaminated sites**
3 **to ensure the protection of human health, safety, and welfare, and the environment; and**
4 **providing for an effective date."**

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

6 * **Section 1.** AS 46.04 is amended by adding new sections to read:

7 **Article 2A. Uniform Environmental Covenants Act.**

8 **Sec. 46.04.300. Environmental covenant.** (a) An environmental covenant is
9 required if the department makes a remedial decision as part of an environmental
10 response project and that environmental response project results in

11 (1) residual contamination remaining in the environment in
12 concentrations that are safe for some, but not all, uses; or

13 (2) an engineered feature or structure that requires monitoring,
14 maintenance, or operation, or that will not function as intended if disturbed.

15 (b) An environmental covenant may be held by one or more holders. A holder

1 may own an interest in the real property subject to an environmental covenant. The
2 interest of a holder is an interest in real property.

3 (c) A right of the department under AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 or under an
4 environmental covenant, other than a right as a holder, is not an interest in real
5 property.

6 (d) The department is bound by any obligation it specifically assumes in an
7 environmental covenant, but the department does not assume obligations merely by
8 signing an environmental covenant. A person other than the department that signs an
9 environmental covenant is bound by the obligations the person assumes in the
10 environmental covenant, but signing the environmental covenant does not change
11 obligations, rights, or protections granted or imposed under law other than under
12 AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 unless otherwise provided in the environmental covenant.

13 (e) The following apply to interests in real property in existence at the time an
14 environmental covenant is created or amended:

15 (1) an interest that has priority under other law is not affected by an
16 environmental covenant unless the person that owns the interest subordinates that
17 interest to the environmental covenant;

18 (2) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not require a person that owns a prior
19 interest to subordinate that interest to an environmental covenant or to agree to be
20 bound by the environmental covenant;

21 (3) an environmental covenant may contain a subordination agreement,
22 or a subordination agreement may be contained in a separate record;

23 (4) the department may decide not to sign an environmental covenant
24 unless each person holding an interest in the land or any part of the land, including
25 each mortgagee, lessee, lienor, and encumbrancer, irrevocably subordinates the
26 interest to the environmental covenant; the department may waive the requirement in
27 this paragraph;

28 (5) an agreement by a person to subordinate a prior interest to an
29 environmental covenant affects the priority of that person's interest but does not by
30 itself impose any affirmative obligation on the person with respect to the
31 environmental covenant;

(6) if the environmental covenant covers commonly owned property in a common interest community, the record may be signed by any person authorized by the governing board of the owners' association.

Sec. 46.04.305. Contents of environmental covenant. (a) An environmental covenant must

(1) state that the interest is an environmental covenant executed under AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390;

(2) contain a legally sufficient description of the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

(3) describe the activity and use limitations on the real property;

(4) identify every holder;

(5) be signed by the commissioner of the department, every holder, and, unless waived by the department, every owner of the fee simple of the real property subject to the environmental covenant except that for an environmental covenant affecting a land or mineral interest of the Department of Natural Resources, the signature of the commissioner of natural resources may not be waived; and

(6) identify the name and location of any administrative record for the environmental response project reflected in the environmental covenant.

(b) In addition to the information required under (a) of this section, an environmental covenant may contain other information, restrictions, and requirements agreed to by the persons who signed it or required by the department, including

(1) requirements for notice following transfer of a specified interest in, or concerning proposed changes in use of, applications for building permits for, or proposals for any site work affecting the contamination on, the property subject to the environmental covenant;

(2) requirements for periodic reporting describing compliance with the environmental covenant;

(3) rights of access to the property granted in connection with implementation or enforcement of the environmental covenant;

(4) a brief narrative description of the contamination and remedy, including the contaminants of concern, the pathways of exposure, limits on exposure,

1 and the location and extent of the contamination;

2 (5) a limitation on the amendment or termination of the environmental
3 covenant that is in addition to the limitations contained in AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390;
4 and

5 (6) rights of the holder in addition to the right of the holder to enforce
6 the environmental covenant under AS 46.04.335.

7 (c) In addition to other conditions for the department's approval of an
8 environmental covenant, the department may require a specified person who has an
9 interest in the real property that is the subject of the environmental covenant to sign
10 the environmental covenant.

11 **Sec. 46.04.310. Validity of environmental covenant; effect on other**
12 **instruments.** (a) An environmental covenant entered into in accordance with
13 AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 runs with the land.

14 (b) An environmental covenant is valid and enforceable even if
15 (1) it is not appurtenant to an interest in real property;
16 (2) it can be or has been assigned to a person other than the original
17 holder;
18 (3) it is not of a character that has been traditionally recognized at
19 common law;
20 (4) it imposes a negative burden;
21 (5) it imposes an affirmative obligation on a person having an interest
22 in the real property or on the holder;
23 (6) the benefit or burden does not touch or concern real property;
24 (7) there is no privity of estate or contract;
25 (8) the holder dies, ceases to exist, resigns, or is replaced; or
26 (9) the owner of an interest subject to the environmental covenant and
27 the holder are the same person.

28 (c) An instrument that creates restrictions or obligations with respect to real
29 property that would qualify as activity and use limitations except for the fact that the
30 instrument was recorded before the effective date of AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 is not
31 invalid or unenforceable because of any of the limitations on enforcement of interests

described in (b) of this section or because it was identified as an easement, servitude, deed restriction, or other interest. Except as provided in this section, AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not apply to an instrument described in this subsection.

(d) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not invalidate or render unenforceable any interest, whether designated as an environmental covenant or other interest, that is otherwise enforceable under the law of this state.

Sec. 46.04.315. Notice of environmental covenant. (a) A copy of the environmental covenant shall be provided by the persons and in the manner required by the department to

(1) each person that signed the environmental covenant;

(2) each person holding a recorded interest in the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

(3) each person in possession of the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

(4) each municipality or other unit of local government in which real property subject to the environmental covenant is located; and

(5) any other person the department requires.

(b) The validity of an environmental covenant is not affected by failure to provide a copy of the environmental covenant as required under this section.

Sec. 46.04.320. Recording of environmental covenant. (a) An environmental covenant and an amendment or termination of the environmental covenant must be recorded in every recording district in which any portion of the real property subject to the environmental covenant is located. For purposes of indexing, a holder shall be treated as a grantee.

(b) An owner of land may not record an environmental covenant unless the owner simultaneously records any subordination documentation required under AS 46.04.300(e).

(c) Except as otherwise provided in AS 46.04.325(f), an environmental covenant is subject to state law governing recording and priority of interests in real property.

(d) A holder shall provide a copy of the final recorded environmental

1 covenant, an amendment made to the environmental covenant, termination
 2 documentation, and documentation of other matters related to the environmental
 3 covenant to the department.

4 **Sec. 46.04.325. Duration; modification or termination of environmental**
 5 **covenant by administrative or court action.** (a) An environmental covenant is
 6 perpetual unless it is

7 (1) by its terms, limited to a specific duration or terminated by the
 8 occurrence of a specific event;

9 (2) terminated by consent under AS 46.04.330;

10 (3) terminated under (b), (e), or (g) of this section;

11 (4) terminated by foreclosure of an interest that has priority over the
 12 environmental covenant; or

13 (5) terminated or modified in an eminent domain proceeding, but only
 14 if

15 (A) the department is a party to the proceeding;

16 (B) every person whose consent is required under
 17 AS 46.04.330(a) is given notice of the pendency of the proceeding; and

18 (C) the court determines, after hearing, that the activity and use
 19 limitations subject to termination or modification are no longer required to
 20 protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

21 (b) The department may terminate or reduce the burden on the real property of
 22 an environmental covenant if the department finds that some or all of the activity and
 23 use limitations under the environmental covenant are no longer required to protect
 24 human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment, or modify the environmental
 25 covenant if the department determines that modification is required adequately to
 26 protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

27 (c) The department shall provide notice of any proposed action under (b) of
 28 this section to each person with a current recorded interest in the real property subject
 29 to the environmental covenant, each holder, all other persons who originally signed
 30 the environmental covenant, or their successors or assigns, and any other person with
 31 rights or obligations under the environmental covenant. The department shall provide

1 60 days for comment on the proposed action by parties entitled to notice. A
2 determination by the department under this subsection is a final agency decision. Any
3 person entitled to notice under this subsection may request an adjudicatory hearing
4 under the procedures established by the department under AS 46.04.890.

5 (d) A person entitled to notice under (c) of this section may apply in writing to
6 the department for a determination under (b) of this section that an existing
7 environmental covenant be terminated, that the burden of an environmental covenant
8 be reduced, or that an environmental covenant be modified. The application must
9 specify the determination sought by the applicant, the reasons why the department
10 should make the determination, and the information that would support it. If the
11 department fails to begin a proceeding under (b) of this section within 90 days after
12 receiving the application, the applicant may bring a civil action in superior court for
13 termination, reduction of burden, or modification of the environmental covenant under
14 (e) of this section.

15 (e) The superior court for a recording district in which the real property
16 subject to an environmental covenant is located may, in a de novo action, under the
17 doctrine of changed circumstances, terminate an environmental covenant, reduce an
18 environmental covenant's burden on the real property, or modify the terms of an
19 environmental covenant if the department fails to begin a proceeding within 90 days as
20 provided under (d) of this section. The applicant under (d) of this section, a holder of
21 the environmental covenant, or another person identified in (c) of this section may
22 begin an action under this subsection. The person beginning the action shall serve
23 notice of the action on the department and any person entitled to notice under (c) of
24 this section. The person bringing the action shall make the department a party to the
25 action. The court shall terminate, reduce the burden of, or modify an environmental
26 covenant if the court determines that the person bringing the action shows that some or
27 all of the activity and use limitations under the environmental covenant do not or are
28 no longer required to protect human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment.

29 (f) An environmental covenant may not be extinguished, limited, or impaired
30 through issuance of a tax deed, foreclosure of a tax lien, or application of the doctrine
31 of adverse possession, prescription, abandonment, waiver, lack of enforcement,

1 acquiescence, or a similar doctrine.

2 (g) The department shall terminate an environmental covenant if the
3 environmental covenant was required under AS 46.04.300 solely because of the level
4 or concentration of residual contamination on the property, and the department
5 determines that level or concentration of residual contamination does not endanger
6 human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment. The department shall provide
7 notice of a termination under this subsection to each person with a current recorded
8 interest in the real property subject to the environmental covenant, each holder, all
9 other persons who originally signed the environmental covenant, or their successors or
10 assigns, and any other person with rights or obligations under the environmental
11 covenant.

12 **Sec. 46.04.330. Amendment or termination of environmental covenant by**
13 **consent.** (a) An environmental covenant may be amended or terminated if the
14 amendment or termination is consented to and signed

15 (1) by the department;

16 (2) unless waived by the department, by the current owner of the fee
17 simple of the real property subject to the environmental covenant;

18 (3) by each person that originally signed the environmental covenant,
19 unless the person

20 (A) waived the right to consent to termination or modification
21 in the environmental covenant or in another signed and acknowledged
22 instrument recorded with the recording district;

23 (B) fails to object to the amendment or termination within 60
24 days after a party to the covenant mails, by certified mail, return receipt
25 requested, to the person's last known address, a notice requesting the person's
26 consent to amendment or termination and the return receipt is signed by the
27 person; or

28 (C) cannot be found, as determined by a court, because the
29 person no longer exists or cannot be located or identified with the exercise of
30 reasonable diligence; and

31 (4) except as otherwise provided in (d)(2) of this section, by the holder.

1 (b) If an interest in real property is subject to an environmental covenant, the
 2 interest is not affected by an amendment of the environmental covenant unless the
 3 current owner of the interest consents to the amendment or has waived in a signed
 4 record the right to consent to amendments.

5 (c) Except for an assignment undertaken under a governmental reorganization,
 6 assignment of an environmental covenant to a new holder is an amendment.

7 (d) Except as otherwise provided in an environmental covenant,
 8 (1) a holder may not assign its interest without consent of the other
 9 parties specified in (a) of this section;

10 (2) a holder may be removed and replaced by agreement of the other
 11 parties specified in (a) of this section; and

12 (3) a court of competent jurisdiction may fill a vacant holder position.

13 **Sec. 46.04.335. Enforcement of environmental covenant.** (a) The department
 14 is the administrating agency for AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 and is empowered to
 15 administer and enforce AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 using the civil or administrative
 16 authority granted to it in AS 46.03. However, the department may, but is not required
 17 to, assume any administration or enforcement functions other than those directly
 18 related to the environmental covenant.

19 (b) A civil action for injunctive or other equitable relief for violation of an
 20 environmental covenant may be maintained by

- 21 (1) a party to the environmental covenant;
- 22 (2) the department;
- 23 (3) a person that the environmental covenant expressly grants the
 24 power to enforce the environmental covenant;
- 25 (4) a person whose interest in the real property or whose collateral or
 26 liability may be affected by the alleged violation of the environmental covenant; or
- 27 (5) a municipality or other unit of government that governs the real
 28 property subject to the environmental covenant.

29 (c) AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not limit the regulatory authority of the
 30 department in an environmental response project.

31 (d) A person is not responsible for or subject to liability for environmental

1 remediation solely because the person has the right to enforce an environmental
2 covenant.

3 **Sec. 46.04.340. Notice of activity and use limitation.** (a) If a legal
4 impediment prevents an environmental covenant from being entered into, an owner of
5 real property shall, after receiving authorization from the department, record a notice
6 of an activity and use limitation into the appropriate public land records. Failure to
7 record a notice of an activity and use limitation may result in disapproval of the
8 environmental response project.

9 (b) Once the owner or other person assumes an obligation under a notice of
10 activity and use limitation, that owner or person shall comply with those obligations in
11 accordance with AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390.

12 (c) The enactment, modification, or termination of a notice of activity and use
13 limitation is not valid until it is approved by the department.

14 (d) A notice of activity and use limitation must remain in place for current and
15 subsequent landowners unless it is terminated under (e) or (m) of this section.

16 (e) A person who proposes to create, modify, or terminate a notice of activity
17 and use limitation shall provide written notice of the person's intention to the
18 department, to all persons holding an interest of record in the real property that will be
19 subject to the notice of activity and use limitation, to all persons known to the person
20 to have an unrecorded interest in the property, and to all affected persons in possession
21 of the property before the creation, modification, or termination, and shall provide the
22 department with

23 (1) a copy of the notice provided;

24 (2) a list of the persons to whom notice was given and the address or
25 other location to which the notice was directed; and

26 (3) title information required by the department.

27 (f) Before unilaterally issuing a notice of activity and use limitation, the
28 department shall provide a copy of the proposed notice of activity and use limitation to
29 all persons holding an interest of record in the real property subject to the notice of
30 activity and use limitation, all persons known to the department to have an unrecorded
31 interest in the property, and all affected persons in possession of the property, and

1 shall offer the persons a minimum of 30 days to comment on the proposed notice of
2 activity and use limitation, unless notice has already been provided under (e) of this
3 section. In determining whether to issue the notice of activity and use limitation
4 unilaterally, the department shall consider any comments received. For a notice of
5 activity and use limitation affecting a land or mineral interest of the Department of
6 Natural Resources, concurrence from the Department of Natural Resources is
7 required.

8 (g) The department shall review and make a determination regarding all
9 requests to create, modify, or terminate a notice of activity and use limitation within
10 90 days after receiving a request that includes all the information described in (a) of
11 this section.

12 (h) Upon issuance or approval of a notice of activity and use limitation, the
13 department shall record the notice in every recording district in which a portion of the
14 real property that is subject to the activity and use limitation is located. For approved
15 notices, the department may allow the owner of the property to record the notice. A
16 person may not record a notice without the department's written approval.

17 (i) Unless there is a legal impediment that prevents entering into an
18 environmental covenant, the department may authorize that any notice of activity and
19 use limitation created in accordance with this section be replaced by an environmental
20 covenant on the property that is subject to the notice of activity and use limitation. The
21 department may condition its authorization and approval of the termination of the
22 notice of activity and use limitation on the terms of the notice of activity and use
23 limitation, department approval and acceptance, and the effective recording of the
24 environmental covenant.

25 (j) Modification or termination of a notice of activity and use limitation shall
26 be recorded as provided in (h) of this section. A person may not record a modification
27 or termination of a notice of activity and use limitation without the department's
28 written approval.

29 (k) A determination by the department to issue, approve, modify, or terminate
30 a notice of activity and use limitation is subject to appeal under the procedures
31 described in AS 46.04.890.

(l) A notice of activity and use limitation, whether recorded or unrecorded, is not

(1) a servitude arising from an environmental response project; or

(2) an interest in real property.

(m) The department shall terminate a notice of activity and use limitation for real property if the notice of activity and use limitation was required solely because of the level or concentration of residual contamination on the property, and the department determines that level or concentration of residual contamination does not endanger human health, safety, or welfare, or the environment. The department shall provide notice of a termination under this subsection to all persons holding an interest of record in the real property subject to the notice of activity and use limitation, all persons known to the department to have an unrecorded interest in the property, and all affected persons in possession of the property.

Sec. 46.04.345. Relationship to other land-use law. AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 do not authorize a use of real property that is otherwise prohibited under AS 29.40 or AS 38.05.037, by law other than AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390 regulating use of real property, or by a recorded instrument that has priority over the environmental covenant or a notice of activity and use limitation. An environmental covenant or a notice of activity and use limitation may prohibit or restrict uses of real property that are authorized by zoning or by law other than AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390.

Sec. 46.04.350. Registry. The department shall maintain a registry that contains all environmental covenants and notices of activity and use limitation and any amendment or termination of those instruments. The registry may also contain any other information concerning environmental covenants and notices of activity and use limitation and the real property subject to them that the department considers appropriate.

Sec. 46.04.355. Uniformity of application and construction. In applying and construing AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390, consideration must be given to the need to promote uniformity of the law with respect to its subject matter among states that enact similar provisions.

Sec. 46.04.390. Definitions. In AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390,

(1) "common interest community" means a condominium, cooperative, or other real property with respect to which a person, by virtue of the person's ownership of a parcel of real property, is obligated to pay property taxes or insurance premiums, or pay for maintenance, or improvement of other real property described in a recorded environmental covenant that creates the common interest community;

(2) "environmental covenant" means a servitude arising under an environmental response project that imposes activity and use limitations;

(3) "environmental response project" means a plan or work performed or maintenance of work performed under a federal or state program

(A) including this chapter, AS 46.03, AS 46.09, 42 U.S.C. 9601 - 9675 (Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act), as amended, and 42 U.S.C. 6901 - 6992k (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act), as amended, governing environmental remediation and management of contaminated real property; or

(B) governing maintenance, closure, or corrective action of a solid waste disposal facility or hazardous waste management unit;

(4) "holder" means the grantee of an environmental covenant as specified in AS 46.04.300(b);

(5) "notice of activity and use limitation" means a notice of a restriction on or obligation concerning an activity on or use of real property, in accordance with AS 46.04.300 - 46.04.390;

(6) "record" has the meaning given in AS 40.17.900.

* **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

TRANSITION: REGULATIONS. The Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Natural Resources may adopt regulations necessary to implement this Act. The regulations take effect under AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), but not before the effective date of the law implemented by the regulation.

* **Sec. 3.** Section 2 of this Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).