

August 14,2020

Dear folks,

As mayor of the City of Tenakee Springs I speak for a community that depends greatly on the Alaska Marine Highway for personal transportation, Access to food, medical services, delivery of groceries and supplies, and as a backup to seaplane mail delivery when weather shuts that option down, sometimes for weeks on end. Many people here receive medication by mail as well and cannot be cut off.

The proposed ferry service for winter 2020-21 is completely unacceptable for Tenakee Springs and for many other coastal communities in Alaska.

While we pride ourselves in being independent and self sufficient, Tenakee and other communities cannot readily adapt to long and potentially unexpected gaps in our primary means of connection to the rest of the world-particularly in the winter.

For Tenakee the proposed 2month gap is inexplicable since the AMHS has previously always found a way to minimize lack of service by alternating maintenance on the LeConte and Aurora thereby preserving nearly continuous service that way. This year AMHS has pulled the Aurora from the schedule and laid her up from January 1 through February 15. Then both the LeConte and Aurora are in overhaul until mid April. Why not overhaul the Aurora in January and have just a few weeks without ferry service for the northern panhandle communities?

If overhauling the Tazlina is the reason that there is not space for working on the Aurora earlier then do the Tazlina work in April-June since you have our new and refurbished ship scheduled only for layup during that period.

To cut service because revenue is down in a pandemic makes no sense. Perhaps a reduction in numbers of visits could be accommodated. Tenakee Springs has suggested that we could live with bi-weekly service ( Thursday-Saturday) instead of weekly service during the winter months. Complete breaks in service are unacceptable, as is shutting down the fleet so drastically that no replacement vessels are available when maintenance issues arise unexpectedly. Predictable service is very important for folks when medical appointments and travel are based around a predictable ferry, especially in winter when the float plane alternative is not only expensive but very unreliable due to weather.

The new vessels, Tazlina and Hubbard were built to alleviate some of these problems but are scheduled for layup through the winter.

We encourage DOT to take funds that are being proposed to build controversial, expensive, and mostly unwanted new roads and use the money to continue running and maintaining a key and long valued component of our highway system, the Alaska Marine Highway.

Thanks

Dan Kennedy

Mayor City of Tenakee Springs