Honorable Merrill Sanford, Mayor
City and Borough of Juneau
155 South Seward Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Report of Findings and Recommendations for Action

Dear Mayor Sanford,

On behalf of the five members of the Task Force I am pleased to transmit our findings to you and the Assembly in the form of the attached report. It took a little longer than we originally thought, but we hope it will be of value as you deliberate on how to move Juneau’s economy forward.

It is well known that federal civilian employment in Juneau has declined sharply in recent years. Much less understood is that literally hundreds of high paying federal science jobs which – jobs that are dedicated entirely to Alaska science missions - remain located in the Lower 48. There are historical reasons – some going back to Statehood - why things developed this way, but it is no longer a tolerable situation in this day and age. Those jobs are sorely needed in Alaska, and ought to be here. Many can and should be in Juneau. But, this is more than just a case of righting historical wrongs, or addressing our immediate economic development concerns. The science is vitally important to Alaska and the nation, and it will be better science if performed in Alaska.

Our report documents the number of positions at stake in two parts of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, and the Marine Operations Center – Pacific. It then outlines an action plan to actually move positions north.

The Task Force recommends that we concentrate efforts initially on the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The AFSC already has a major unit here in Juneau. The Auke Bay Laboratories Division, with 64 positions, is housed at the Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute at Lena Point, and the office of the AFSC’s Science Director is also here. But, there are still 225 AFSC positions in Seattle. Our “straw man” proposal for moving the AFSC to Alaska calls for 172 of those jobs to be located here in Juneau. Others could be in Kodiak and Seward.

To accomplish the proposed move the Task Force suggests that Juneau follow the precedent recently set by Newport, Oregon when it achieved the move of NOAA’s Marine Operations Center – Pacific from Seattle to Newport. Newport built the required facilities with state backed bond funding, and secured the deal with a long-term facilities lease from NOAA / GSA. We can do much the same here using the available resources of the Alaska Industrial Development Authority.
We believe the same concepts can ultimately be used to achieve basing of some of the NOAA research vessels in Alaska, and recommend that the Assembly also pursue that opportunity in close consultation with other affected communities, including Ketchikan and Kodiak.

A third opportunity to explore is the International Pacific Halibut Commission. Like the AFSC, the IPHC would be a very good fit with Juneau’s fisheries research community. The Commission has 34 employees in Seattle and is currently leasing space at Fishermen’s Terminal.

The Task Force looks forward to meeting with you and the rest of the Assembly in Committee of the Whole at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

Greg Fisk, co-chair