

In the Matter Of:

IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR

Public Meeting-ANILCA Section 10 Subsistence Hearing - Sand Point, Alaska

December 06, 2024

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**CERTIFIED
TRANSCRIPT**

IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR
DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC MEETING
AND
ANILCA SECTION 810 SUBSISTENCE HEARING
SAND POINT, ALASKA
DECEMBER 6, 2024

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S
2 ALEUTIANS EAST BOROUGH BUILDING
3 SAND POINT, ALASKA

4 4:00 P.M.

5 -oOo-

6 BILL CRAIG: Hello. My name is Bill Craig.
7 And welcome to the Draft Supplemental Environmental
8 Impact Statement public meeting and the ANILCA
9 Section 810 subsistence hearing.

10 My name is Bill Craig. I'm the project
11 manager for AECOM, and we're the contractor helping
12 Fish and Wildlife Service prepare the Supplemental
13 EIS and the 810 subsistence analysis.

14 Also here tonight from my company, AECOM,
15 are Jon Isaacs, senior planner. Some of you know
16 Jon. And Arika Mercer. She's a planner. And
17 Deirdre is the court reporter tonight.

18 I want to thank you all for hosting the
19 meeting here, and this facility is great. It's nice.
20 The emergency exits are marked, one there and one
21 over here. And the restrooms are down the hall, but
22 you guys all know that better than I do. Thank you
23 all for the hospitality that we've experienced since
24 we've been here.

25 There will be two separate meetings

1 tonight. We will start with the public meeting on
2 the Draft Supplemental EIS, which will consist of a
3 short presentation by Fish and Wildlife Service
4 followed by public comments. And then we will close
5 that meeting and begin the ANILCA 810 subsistence
6 hearing. Again, Fish and Wildlife Service will give
7 a short presentation followed by public comments on
8 the draft subsistence findings, and ideally you would
9 provide your comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS
10 in the first meeting and kind of hold your
11 subsistence comments until the second meeting, but if
12 you make subsistence comments on the first meeting,
13 we will make sure that they get coded and addressed
14 where they belong.

15 So I think that's it. I want to turn it
16 over to Bobbie Jo Skibo to take it from here.

17 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank you. I'm Bobbie Jo
18 Skibo. I really appreciate having you host us today.
19 I'm the lead planner for this project. I've been
20 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for three
21 years. Before that a bunch of other things,
22 Forest Service for 17. I've worked all over the
23 state. 30 years I've dedicated a career to natural
24 resource management and planning issues.

25 Most recently I've been leading the

1 Supplemental Environment Impact Statement for oil and
2 gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
3 So that's my project. And then I just took this on
4 in August to help get us through this process for the
5 Izembek proposed land exchange and road.

6 So I come from Palmer right now, reside
7 there, but I have lived all over. I have three
8 beautiful wild boys. I'm looking forward to
9 Christmas and spending some time with them. I've
10 been on the road with these guys. We've been in
11 Cold Bay, King Cove, here today. And thank you so
12 much for ordering up this amazing weather. It's
13 beautiful here. We've really enjoyed it.

14 So with that, I'd love to introduce two of
15 my other colleagues and then we'll go through a few
16 slides, give you the perspective of where we're at
17 this go-around. This project has had a bit of
18 history. And we'll get you up to speed and then hope
19 some of you will speak on the public record.

20 So with that, Karlin.

21 KARLIN ITCHOAK: Thank you, Bobbie Jo. And
22 thank you all for hosting us.

23 My name is Karlin Itchoak. Sorry I have a
24 little scratchy voice, but I'll try to project. I'm
25 the Assistant Regional Director for refuges for U.S.

1 Fish and Wildlife for Region 7 out of Anchorage.

2 And first I'd like to start by
3 acknowledging that we're on your traditional Aleut
4 homelands and just want to thank you for hosting us
5 and for having us, and we recognize you as the
6 original stewards of this land, and we appreciate you
7 inviting us to be here tonight.

8 As the chief of refuges, we have about
9 570 refuges across the United States, totaling about
10 95 million acres of land. And in Alaska we have
11 16 national wildlife refuges, and Izembek is one of
12 them. And we have 76.8 million of that land here in
13 Alaska. So over 90 percent of all the national
14 wildlife refuges' land is here in Alaska, and
15 100 percent of that is ancestral indigenous homelands
16 as well.

17 So I was born and raised in Nome. My
18 family on my dad's side are from Utqiagvik, the
19 Itchuagaqs, and on my mother's side, they're from
20 Upstate New York, the Irvins, and I currently live in
21 Anchorage where I work with our staff of -- we have
22 16 refuge managers overseeing the refuges here in
23 Alaska. So I'm going to turn the mic over now to our
24 manager for Izembek.

25 MARIA FOSADO: Hi. Good evening. Thank

1 you for having us. Really appreciate the
2 hospitality. And I'm Maria Fosado. I'm the Izembek
3 Refuge manager, as Karlin already mentioned. I grew
4 up in Minnesota and I've been working for Fish and
5 Wildlife Service for about 15 years. I started my
6 career in Minnesota and worked at various stations.
7 And in 2020 I accepted this position and I've been
8 living and working out of Cold Bay since that time.

9 So I've really appreciated getting to see
10 different areas outside of Minnesota, but
11 specifically getting to know parts of the Aleutians.
12 So thanks for having us. And I think we'll go ahead
13 and get started. My job here today is to give you a
14 little bit of background on the refuge and then we'll
15 give it over to Bobbie Jo Skibo for the rest of the
16 presentation.

17 So Izembek National Wildlife -- excuse me.
18 Izembek National Wildlife -- my goodness. Let me
19 start over. Now that we got that out of the way.

20 What we now recognize as Izembek National
21 Wildlife Refuge was established in 1960 as the
22 Izembek National Wildlife Range. And then in 1972,
23 Izembek Lagoon and the surrounding watersheds were
24 protected by the Alaska legislature through the
25 establishment of the Izembek State Game Refuge.

1 Then with the passage of ANILCA, the Alaska
2 National Interest Lands Conservation Act, in 1980,
3 the Izembek National Wildlife Range was then
4 redesignated as the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.
5 The refuge encompasses approximately 310,000 acres,
6 of which approximately 300,000 was designated
7 wilderness by Congress at that time.

8 So the Congressionally designated Izembek
9 wilderness areas which comprise the majority of the
10 refuge became part of the National Wilderness
11 Preservation System. These areas are managed and
12 administered for the use and enjoyment of the
13 American people in such a manner as to leave them
14 unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as
15 wilderness, to provide for the protection of those
16 areas, and for the preservation of their wilderness
17 character. These wilderness areas provide scenic,
18 wildlife, and scientific values, along with
19 opportunities for solitude and primitive and
20 unconfined types of recreation.

21 Each refuge unit within the National
22 Wildlife Refuge System is established to serve a
23 statutory purpose that targets the conservation of
24 native species that depend on its lands and waters.
25 To administer those lands in accordance with those

1 statutory purposes, we review all activities for
2 appropriateness and compatibility.

3 So with the passage of ANILCA and the
4 establishment of Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, we
5 also receive ANILCA refuge purposes, and those
6 include to conserve fish and wildlife populations and
7 habitats in their natural diversity, including but
8 not limited to waterfowl, shorebirds, other migratory
9 birds, brown bears, and salmonids; to fulfill the
10 international treaty obligations for the United
11 States with respect to fish and wildlife and their
12 habitats; to provide opportunity for continued
13 subsistence uses for local residents; and to ensure
14 water quality and the necessary water quantity.

15 So Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was the
16 first site in the United States to be designated as a
17 wetland of international importance by the Ramsar
18 Convention in 1986, and subsequently was recognized
19 as an important bird area with global significance by
20 BirdLife International and the National Audubon
21 Society. Izembek received these recognitions
22 because of its diverse habitats, the dynamic
23 landscapes, and its unique geographic location, with
24 the location of it being located between the
25 Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska.

1 So from brown bears to Pacific salmon, more
2 than 200 species call this refuge home. The heart of
3 the refuge is Izembek Lagoon, a coastal ecosystem
4 that's home to one of the world's largest eelgrass
5 beds. Kinzarof Lagoon is separated from Izembek
6 Lagoon by a narrow isthmus, and it is considered one
7 of the most significant eelgrass beds on the Pacific
8 Coast of the Alaska Peninsula.

9 The location of Izembek Refuge along avian
10 migration routes, in combination with the abundant
11 food source provided by those eelgrass beds make
12 Izembek Lagoon one of the most important migratory
13 bird staging and wintering habitats in the world.
14 The site is especially critical for many species of
15 waterfowl, particularly geese, and shorebirds that
16 undertake transoceanic flights.

17 Virtually the entire population of the
18 Pacific black brant, more than half of the world's
19 population of emperor geese, and significant
20 percentages of the world population of Steller's
21 eiders and Taverner's Canada goose also depend on
22 Izembek Lagoon.

23 The highest density of brown bears on
24 Izembek Refuge occurs within the Joshua Green
25 watershed on the northeast side of Cold Bay.

1 However, we can observe bears all throughout the
2 refuge. They use a variety of habitats, including
3 shoreline, low-lying meadows and tundra, streams, and
4 alpine areas.

5 Caribou have a high profile as a
6 refuge-purpose species and are a high value for
7 subsistence users. The Southern Alaska Peninsula
8 caribou herd spans from -- the range spans from Port
9 Moller down to the southern end of the Alaska
10 Peninsula, and their primary calving grounds are just
11 north of Izembek Refuge. Wintering areas have
12 historically extended southward into Izembek Refuge
13 around the lagoon and the Cold Bay area. And the
14 narrow isthmus between Izembek Lagoon and Kinzarof is
15 an important migratory corridor for that herd.

16 Lastly, Pacific salmon, we also recognize
17 them as a high-profile purpose species and as a high
18 value to subsistence users. The refuge does support
19 all five species of Pacific salmon.

20 With that, hopefully that gave a little bit
21 of an overview, and I will turn it over to Bobbie Jo.

22 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: First off, again, thanks
23 for having us. Some of you may or may not know, but
24 our regional director, Sara Boario, she spent four
25 years of her childhood here between fourth and eighth

1 grade, and she wanted to send her regards. She is in
2 Washington, D.C. right now working through the
3 transition from administrations, and all day she's
4 been texting us in tears wanting to be here on this
5 beautiful day. It's one of her most special places.
6 So thanks for letting me share that.

7 So a little bit of background just how we
8 got here. So this even predates 2009, but we've got
9 to start somewhere. So in 2009, the Omnibus Public
10 Land Management Act -- we shorten it to say the 2009
11 Act -- directed the Secretary of the Interior to
12 analyze a land exchange, and that was through the
13 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the wilderness
14 and then directed the Service -- that's us, U.S. Fish
15 and Wildlife Service -- to prepare an environmental
16 impact statement.

17 So then in 2013, the environmental impact
18 statement was completed and the no-action alternative
19 was selected at that time. Then in 2019, Secretary
20 Bernhardt, he signed a land exchange agreement with
21 King Cove Corporation that probably some of you are
22 aware of, and then in 2023, Secretary Haaland -- she
23 was the sitting secretary at that time -- she
24 withdrew from the 2019 agreement, citing procedural
25 flaws, and so that's kind of how we got here.

1 So because of the withdrawal, Secretary
2 Haaland asked us to go back to the drawing board and
3 prepare what we call a supplemental EIS. That was at
4 her request. So what we're doing is taking the 2013
5 document, environmental document, and updating it
6 with new information. So this still includes land
7 exchange with King Cove with the Izembek Refuge
8 through Congressionally designated wilderness.

9 It does include the no-action alternative,
10 which is customary for all environmental impact
11 documents. Then we looked at the four preexisting
12 alternatives that were in the 2013 EIS, and then we
13 added a new Alternative 6 that we'll talk about
14 tonight that was based on an offer from the King Cove
15 Corporation.

16 So the proposed action here is to enter
17 that land exchange, like I've said, and to add land
18 back into the National Wildlife Refuge System that
19 does have conservation, subsistence, and habitat
20 value. That's in exchange for a transfer of
21 King Cove Corporation lands, the real property
22 interests, the surface and the subsurface for the
23 corridor of land through refuge. Now, if this were
24 to happen, this assumes that all the regulatory and
25 other environmental compliance takes place, so there

1 would be additional processes after this is
2 completed.

3 So the purpose and need of this is to
4 provide a safe, reliable, year-round transportation
5 system for health and safety purposes with particular
6 emphasis on emergency medical evacuations between
7 those two communities. It's to increase the overall
8 conservation of the lands that are preserved in the
9 National Wildlife Refuge System and then to maintain
10 or increase the opportunity for subsistence uses by
11 rural Alaskans.

12 The need for this project is a pretty
13 lengthy statement, and so you can find that in the
14 document. I will let you know, we do have thumb
15 drives. It's kind of hard to download sometimes
16 large documents, especially with limited bandwidth,
17 so we do have thumb drives that we can give out to
18 anybody for the community that you can plug right
19 into a computer and see all the chapters of the
20 document.

21 So to orient us to the project area, I
22 think everybody probably knows this better than I.
23 We have been told everybody is related to everybody.
24 So I'm sure you know this better than me. But here
25 we are in King Cove, and you've probably been to

1 Cold Bay. But back in 2013 there were a few
2 different alternatives to consider. There was a
3 ferry that would go between Cold Bay and
4 Lenard Harbor, and there was the hovercraft option to
5 come across. And now this line up here is the new
6 proposal for Alternative 6 based on the King Cove
7 Corporation's offer. So we'll go into depth on what
8 some of these are.

9 So the range of alternatives, as we've
10 already alluded to, does include a reasonable range.
11 We have the no-action like we need to have.
12 Alternatives 2 and 3 that were in the 2013 document,
13 but those included state lands and they were
14 associated also to the 2009 Act, and because the
15 State is no longer a party to this land exchange,
16 those are not viable, but were considered in the
17 document for comparative purposes only. Then we
18 still have the hovercraft operations, the Lenard
19 Harbor ferry, and those are considered as viable
20 options. And then the Alternative 6.

21 Let's go dig into some of the -- the ones
22 that are still viable.

23 So Alternative 4 would be the hovercraft
24 taking up straight across that Cold Bay and it would
25 be for six days of service per week from the

1 Northeast Terminal over to Cross Wind Cove. It has
2 been still retained as a viability alternative.

3 Alternative 5, which is the Lenard Harbor-
4 Cold Bay ferry alternative, that would be 14 miles
5 between the terminal of Lenard Harbor. It would
6 include a substantially modified Cold Bay dock. We
7 did learn last night that they're in the beginning
8 stages, they said the baby stages, but they are
9 looking at a replacement dock and working through
10 that process with the Alaska Department of
11 Transportation. This would not include a land
12 exchange, but they are still looking -- we still are
13 looking at this as a viable alternative.

14 So this is where the new information really
15 begins. So Alternative 6, the land exchange and --
16 proposed land exchange and road alignment, would
17 start at the terminus here at Number 1, right over
18 here. That is the access road near the Northeast
19 Terminal. It would then cruise up through the refuge
20 and the wilderness on the isthmus -- that's
21 Number 2 -- and it would come down -- this is also --
22 the green is the wilderness boundary. It would come
23 back through to the intersection of Outer Marker Road
24 and the Blinn Lake Loop, if you know where that's at.

25 One thing to note, these little dots on

1 that road corridor -- this is a good map to see --
2 those are material sites. And we'll explain, but
3 those are the little dots or the places where
4 material would be gained to help with the
5 construction.

6 This is a little bit wordy, but we wanted
7 to make sure -- and I want to make sure that I have
8 this. So this Alternative 6 has been identified by
9 the Department of Interior as the preferred
10 alternative. That doesn't necessarily mean it
11 constitutes a decision that it will be the ultimate
12 decision. That will be made in the final step of the
13 process, which is the record of decision. But this
14 land exchange based on the King Cove Corporation
15 offer would -- okay. So let's work through. I'll
16 try to point. Maybe it's more annoying. I don't
17 know.

18 31,198 acres would come from King Cove
19 Corporation to the federal government. 29,000 with
20 some change would be the surface. Those acres would
21 actually go into the Alaska Peninsula National
22 Wildlife Refuge. 1,739 of that total would go to the
23 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, and that would
24 include the surface and subsurface of those lands,
25 and that would become Congressionally designated

1 wilderness.

2 Then the federal government would be
3 trading or transferring in this land exchange
4 490 acres. That is 484 are surface and subsurface
5 and six are just subsurface where one of our material
6 sites would be located.

7 Now, 336 of those acres of the 490 are
8 currently in Congressionally designated wilderness.
9 The road that you saw, that red line, would be an
10 18.9-mile single-lane gravel road. And out of those
11 15 material sites that you saw, 13 would be on, like,
12 the actual road right-of-way corridor, with two with
13 a little bit of spurs a little bit further off.

14 So a key component of this is that it would
15 be restricted to noncommercial uses and it would be
16 further restricted to those that are using the road
17 necessary for health and safety purposes, and access
18 to the refuge by federally qualified subsistence
19 users actively engaged in subsistence uses.

20 So this is a pretty complicated slide, but
21 we put it in just so you could see it. Right back in
22 the corner, it's over there. After the meeting, we
23 can definitely take a look at it and talk. We don't
24 usually do Q and A during these because we might be
25 flustered and maybe give you a wrong answer. We want

1 to make sure that we have the time to provide a good
2 answer for you and accurate.

3 But if you can see, Alternatives 2, right
4 here, and 3, again, were road alignments, but they're
5 no longer viable because the State is no longer party
6 to this. But we wanted to compare it, especially if
7 any of you knew about this project dating back to the
8 2013 years. You can see a difference from -- it was
9 19.4 miles, now we're at 18.9 for the road corridor.

10 The road width -- that's the next one --
11 this varies now to 100- to 200-foot right-of-way, and
12 there are additional widths there for the material
13 sites. The 2 and 3 alternatives had about 100-foot
14 right-of-way that they were considering. And that
15 was actually based on a study that Alaska Department
16 of Public Transportation did to look at the road
17 alignment, to deal with topography, to be able to go
18 around some of the water features, etcetera.

19 We've already talked about these other
20 ones. So these are the ones I just said. That's the
21 total number from King Cove and the 490 from the
22 federal government. But like I said, if we want to
23 talk more about the figures and the numbers, we can
24 do that after.

25 So that is essentially Alternative 6. I've

1 given you the high points of that. And it is
2 similar -- Alternative 6 is similar to the
3 Alternative 2 road alignment from 2013, but we have
4 updated it, like I said, with some improvements from
5 that study from Department of Public Transportation.

6 So now, because these documents can be
7 pretty overwhelming -- it's 1,400 pages -- so what we
8 did to help the reader is took -- so if you see on
9 this page right here, if you open it up and you see
10 in the beginning of sections, there will be a box, it
11 will be bright yellow, it will say, this is the
12 summary of changes, and then anywhere in the acreages
13 or any tables there will be an asterisk so it helps
14 the reader not have to go through all the old stuff
15 but just to see what's updated, if you're interested
16 in that.

17 So now we're here today. We can take your
18 public testimony and public input on the record
19 through Deirdre, but if you want, you can go to
20 regulations.gov and be able to submit your comments
21 electronically. We also have comment forms here. I
22 think Arika has that available. If you want to write
23 a comment just while you're thinking about something.
24 You can do all three: talk today, write a comment,
25 however you want.

1 We have currently a 45-day comment period
2 that goes until December 30th at 11:59 Eastern
3 Standard Time. We have had a few requests from
4 different entities to extend that due to the
5 holidays. We haven't heard back from the Department
6 yet, but if that is the case, that will be announced
7 and there will be more information to tell you when
8 the last day is.

9 Then after we leave here off of the public
10 comment process, we'll take all of the information
11 that we gain and start analyzing that and
12 incorporating where appropriate. And most of us know
13 that we have a new president coming on board here on
14 January 20th, so it could be a little bit of time
15 before the new Department of Interior Secretary takes
16 their position and starts to look at all the
17 different projects and provide us further direction
18 on where they would like us to go with this project.

19 But we anticipate that the Final
20 Supplemental EIS and a record of decision will be out
21 sometime in 2025, but we're uncertain based on the
22 transition.

23 With that, we have a few ground rules,
24 really easy stuff, but I want to pass it over to Jon
25 just to go over those quickly, and then we would love

1 to hear from you. And then after that, I have a few
2 slides that explain what the subsistence part of this
3 is all about, and then we'll hope to hear from you on
4 that as well. So thanks so much.

5 JON ISAACS: Thanks, Bobbie Jo. Again, I'm
6 really pleased to be back. I think this is probably
7 my sixth trip to Sand Point, and I probably started
8 working with folks in the '80s. I know I've worked
9 with Alvin, I've worked with Stanley, I've worked
10 with Paul. I have to say, none of us has aged one
11 bit. We all look the very same as years ago. But it
12 really is a pleasure to be back.

13 So as Bobbie Jo has said, we have two
14 hearings tonight. One is on the Supplemental EIS,
15 and then one is going to be on the ANILCA 810
16 finding, because findings made under ANILCA 810, we
17 have to sort of keep those two things separate.

18 In some of our larger meetings we've been
19 giving people time limits, but in a small meeting
20 like this, we're really not going to enforce that, as
21 that's not something to worry about. What we have
22 done is we've asked folks to sign in if you wanted to
23 testify both on the Supplemental EIS and on the
24 ANILCA 810.

25 So what I'll start with is I'll start with

1 those who have signed in to testify on the
2 Supplemental EIS, and I'll call your name, ask you to
3 state your name for the record for the court reporter
4 and have you give your testimony, and then I'll let
5 people know who is up next. Then when we're done
6 with that, I know that people may not be ready to
7 testify. You may have heard things tonight that you
8 want to now testify on, and so I'll go back to the
9 audience and see if there are others here who didn't
10 sign up who would like to make public comments
11 tonight.

12 As Bobbie Jo has said, this is not your
13 only opportunity to comment. You're going to learn
14 some things tonight and you may go back and look at
15 the document and want to make some more comments.
16 You do have the opportunity to comment both online
17 and we will have a comment form here that you can
18 take and you can fill in. So you're not limited to
19 your public testimony tonight. You can make
20 additional comments. So I want to emphasize that.

21 I know folks in this community have been
22 involved in this project for a long time and you
23 probably have strong convictions and opinions on it.
24 We ask people to be constructive in their comments
25 tonight. We're looking for details in what could

1 help make this a better analysis. So I will ask you
2 to sort of think about that.

3 So I think maybe with that, we will go
4 ahead and start with the list. First signed up is
5 Peggy Osterback. And because, again, this is a small
6 room, I would say, if you could just stand, state
7 your name for the record, if you're more comfortable
8 sitting, whatever is more comfortable for you, but no
9 reason to have you come all the way up and make a
10 comment. So we'll start with Peggy, if we could.

11 PEGGY OSTERBACK: Thank you. My name is
12 Peggy Osterback. And I am in support of King Cove's
13 offer to Fish and Wildlife Service. I support that
14 community wholeheartedly. I've been in King Cove and
15 know the people in King Cove. And we had the
16 experience of having to medevac one of our sons out
17 of King Cove, and we had to wait until morning so
18 that the plane that we chartered could come in and
19 pick us up and take us into Anchorage. And I've also
20 had friends who have lost their loved ones trying to
21 medevac others out of King Cove.

22 So I'm very much in support of their offer
23 to Fish and Wildlife Service. And that's all I have.

24 JON ISAACS: Thank you very much. And I
25 don't want to rush anybody, so I'm not going to

1 assume you've stopped speaking.

2 So next up is Alvin Osterback.

3 PEGGY OSTERBACK: Which one?

4 JON ISAACS: Is this a trick question?

5 MAYOR ALVIN OSTERBACK: I'm Alvin
6 Osterback, mayor of Aleutians East Borough, and I'm
7 going to sit back down.

8 So I've been part of the Aleutians East
9 Borough basically since the inception of it. So I've
10 been through this for quite a few years. And sitting
11 next to me is Stanley Mack. He was the borough mayor
12 for five terms, so 15 years. So he was the one that
13 brought the hovercraft in basically under the
14 guidance of Ted Stevens. So he'll probably talk a
15 little bit about that, I think.

16 So anyway, Peggy is my wife. We lived in
17 Cold Bay for three years back in the '70s. I worked
18 for FAA at the time, taking care of runway nav aids.
19 Back and forth between there and King Cove. I've
20 seen people getting lifted off of vessels that were
21 injured. You're talking about a dock -- we're in the
22 middle of it with the State, basically. The State
23 got the \$43 million to replace the dock. That's
24 probably going to happen right now about 2030,
25 probably, looks like by the time that gets redone.

1 And actually, I was -- when we lived in Cold Bay is
2 the last time they replaced the dock.

3 So I don't -- I don't really see using a
4 ferry as a real workable alternative. We're looking
5 right now at -- because of the runway that's on Akun,
6 which is part of the Aleutians East Borough, so it
7 serves as Akun and Atka, so we're looking at building
8 a breakwater out there and a small boat harbor so
9 they can have a ferry that goes between those two
10 islands. And right now I don't really feel that it's
11 something that's feasible. That's a seven-mile
12 crossing there.

13 But with the cost of doing business today,
14 we think it will cost about 2.5 million a year to
15 operate it once it's purchased, and that's for a
16 small vessel. I mean, that would be like probably
17 something around 50 feet. So I don't imagine the
18 cost would be less if you put one between Cold Bay
19 and King Cove. So that kind of puts it out of
20 everybody's reach, basically.

21 The fisheries out here have changed so much
22 in the last few years, and rapidly. You know, right
23 now you're looking at King Cove doesn't have an
24 operating processor at this time, so their tax base
25 is down. And so is the Aleutians East Borough tax

1 base because they have their own raw fish tax, as the
2 borough does. The borough taxes all the fisheries
3 inside the borough and collects their two percent.
4 Each city does their two percent or one and a half,
5 whichever they have.

6 And we're also looking at probably, to my
7 knowledge, my best guess right now, is Trident moving
8 out of Akutan in 2028, is the newest dates that I
9 have, and that's a big pot of money leaving there by
10 moving the processing outside the borough boundaries.

11 So when you start looking at what's
12 feasible, whether you're using a hovercraft or a
13 ferry, the hovercraft cost -- when the -- Stanley
14 will have to tell you whatever it cost between
15 King Cove and Cold Bay, but when it was out in
16 Akutan, the annual cost of operating the hovercraft
17 was around three million a year. The borough has a
18 20-year agreement that expires in 2030 -- I believe
19 it is somewhere right in there -- that if they build
20 the airport on Akun, the borough signed an agreement
21 to operate the transportation between the two
22 islands.

23 So we have been able to reduce it from
24 three million a year to just over a million a year by
25 using a helicopter and having Essential Air Service

1 involved in it. They're picking up half of it. But
2 to expect the people in the Aleutians East Borough to
3 be able to pay for a hovercraft operation or a ferry
4 operation is not realistic. There's not that type of
5 money out there currently. And as fisheries go up
6 and down, those things change.

7 And, you know, right now when you're
8 looking at the fisheries worldwide, I mean, we are
9 down a lot in volumes and price. And I was in a
10 meeting in August with the Secretary of Commerce in
11 Washington, D.C., and a lot of it has to do with the
12 Russian oligarchs who are pushing, and they came out
13 basically on the record and said that their main goal
14 at any cost was to disrupt, destroy the U.S. fishing
15 industry.

16 So when they're having meetings all over
17 the world on this stuff, they're trying to figure out
18 how to put -- you know, halt this. So whether it's
19 because worldwide prices are down because of this
20 mass amount of fish that's being dumped onto the
21 markets, it reduces our amount of money that we have
22 to operate on.

23 So if you're looking at any of these higher
24 ways of doing business, whether it's a ferry or a
25 hovercraft, they don't work. I mean, we haven't had

1 a ferry. Take that back. But we've had the
2 hovercraft in both communities, and running between
3 Lenard's Harbor and Cold Bay would seem pretty
4 efficient to do, which I'm sure Stanley could tell
5 you more about, but I think it had a lot of days
6 where it didn't operate very well either, high winds
7 and what have you.

8 And then they took it out and tried it in
9 Akutan -- Akun, which is probably three times as bad
10 weather out there with the big tides and high
11 currents out there and the wind. So we know that
12 doesn't -- it's not feasible to do it that way.

13 So I think Alternative 6 -- you know, I sit
14 in on the meetings constantly with all the players
15 here, and I watched King Cove go through their -- how
16 they were going to get there, and they feel that
17 putting a road in is the proper way to do it, and it
18 is. I mean, it's pretty cheap to buy a -- when
19 you're looking at these other alternatives, it's
20 cheap to buy even a four-wheel-drive ambulance or a
21 snowcat or something versus trying to operate ocean
22 vessels. So I'd stand behind them a hundred percent.

23 And you know that they're dedicated to it.
24 As we went through this -- after the Bernhardt
25 decision got dumped and we had the first meetings

1 with the new secretary of interior over at Cold Bay
2 and we went from there to where we are today, so
3 we're up to 30, 31 thousand acres for 490-some acres.
4 So the people in the King Cove are willing to work
5 through this and give up a lot of land.

6 When you take a look at it, it's
7 ridiculous, I mean, to me that you'd give up that
8 much land for this tiny little bit of acreage to get
9 through. But the reason they're doing it is because
10 of the death rate over there when you're trying to
11 move people out. There's people that actually die
12 there waiting trying to get an airplane in or a
13 helicopter, that type of thing.

14 And the one year when they had a medevac,
15 the plane flew into those old World War II Navy town
16 towers over there and killed everybody on the
17 airplane. Just flying over there in the wintertime
18 going through the camelback, they call it, or
19 whatever, it's enough to scare anybody on a flight in
20 this part of the country sometimes.

21 So yeah, I'm in agreement with the folks in
22 King Cove. And they're really the ones that should
23 have the ultimate say in it because it's all our
24 people. But look at here. You fly in here, if
25 somebody got sick here, jets, whatever land down here

1 and take you out of town. And Cold Bay is the same
2 way. Cold Bay is a 24-hour all-weather airport.
3 This one is, too, down here mostly. You can fly in
4 here at nighttime. But King Cove, yeah, that's a
5 hard one.

6 Plus, their runway over there is kind of
7 substandard. I know the State is going to go in and
8 do some work to it, but it's still a daylight runway.
9 And people don't just get sick in the daytime. It's
10 like when Peggy said, our son, he was just one year
11 old and they thought he had spinal meningitis. We
12 almost lost him that night. He was in the clinic,
13 putting cold water on him all night long to keep his
14 temperature down under 104. And if there would have
15 been a road there, we could have ran him over to
16 Cold Bay and flew him out. It wouldn't make any
17 difference what time of the day or night it was.

18 But anyway, I'll stop for now.

19 JON ISAACS: Thanks, Alvin. Since there
20 are two Alvin Osterbacks, would the younger Alvin
21 Osterback like to make a comment at this time or are
22 you okay?

23 ALVIN OSTERBACK, JR.: Yes. My name is
24 Alvin Osterback, Jr.

25 You know, I've listened to this road

1 project for -- wow -- a lot of my life and see it not
2 be fruition on people's lives in King Cove. I'm
3 totally in support of having a road in there. I
4 mean, it's a way to get people out. And as we all
5 know, we all kind of get a little older. And
6 King Cove is the same way. Considering their elders
7 over there and hearing the stories of them having to
8 move to Anchorage instead of their homes because of
9 their age and needing medical services, it's a shame.
10 It really is. I mean, you should be able to live in
11 your home that you built and raised your family in.
12 But these guys are getting displaced into Anchorage
13 because they have to be closer to doctors.

14 I think a road in there would alleviate
15 this problem. I really do. But like my dad said,
16 King Cove has got the ultimate voice in this. This
17 is their thing.

18 And as far as the land transfer, it still
19 floors me how you could trade that many acres for a
20 little bit of acres for that little property, but
21 it's that important to them to get a road in there to
22 get the people out. That's all I've got to pretty
23 much say about that.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My name is not on
25 there, but can I...?

1 JON ISAACS: What I'm going to do is go
2 through the rest of list and then we'll come back to
3 you.

4 So next is Paul Gronholdt.

5 PAUL GRONHOLDT: Hi. My name is Paul
6 Gronholdt. I'm speaking for myself at this meeting.
7 But I've been involved for a few years, like a lot of
8 people have. Three minutes. Looking for the timer.
9 I don't see it.

10 JON ISAACS: Take your time.

11 PAUL GRONHOLDT: Three minutes isn't
12 enough.

13 Start with a story about Leon Panetta, who
14 was chief of staff for Clinton and Senator Stevens,
15 the government budget was closed down and those two
16 gentleman were trying to solve the King Cove road and
17 held it up. And so finally Leon Panetta -- I was at
18 Sun Valley, Idaho, in a fishery meeting, and there
19 was no cell phones in those days, but it's a long
20 story, but I'll make it short.

21 Leon Panetta said, okay, I'll give you the
22 hovercraft or a clinic in King Cove or fix that
23 airport up in King Cove, and Senator Stevens said,
24 I'll take them all, and then the budget wasn't --
25 that was holding up the budget. So that's a short

1 version of one of the aspects of trying to get the
2 road.

3 New Alternative 6, there are some changes.
4 I hope you got them along with some of the staff
5 here. And I strongly support the road. That's the
6 only way to go. However, there's a problem with it.
7 And the problem is wilderness. And it's going to
8 be -- there would be lawsuits -- there would be
9 lawsuits flying on this. And I don't know if they'll
10 be able to get over that hurdle or not.

11 But the road can be built without going
12 through the wilderness, and no one has really
13 addressed that. But some of you -- all of you should
14 know that, or do know that.

15 And my two cents for the King Cove
16 Corporation is wait a month and you're probably going
17 to get a better deal with the new administration, I
18 think, which is fine. Nothing wrong with this
19 administration. But things change from time to time.

20 I think my three minutes is pretty much up.
21 But I strongly support this latest effort, which kind
22 of came out of the blue, I thought. Most everybody
23 else does too. Where'd that come from? And I don't
24 know how long it will take to move to the next step.

25 But I did fly in and out of King Cove with

1 an airplane for 20 years. That's not an option. The
2 King Cove airport is not an option. Boat isn't a
3 very good option. The road is the only real good
4 option. The hovercraft was -- I told people involved
5 with that, that was the first idea ever. And okay.
6 Three minutes is gone. Thank you.

7 JON ISAACS: Thank you, Paul.

8 Next up is Stanley Mack.

9 STANLEY MACK: My name is Stanley Mack. I
10 was born and raised in King Cove. I lived in
11 Cold Bay for 20 years working as the power plant
12 manager. Hunted, fished, did just about everything
13 you could imagine in Cold Bay.

14 Now, this fight has been going on for
15 40 years. Believe it or not, it's gone that long.
16 20 years before I took office as the mayor of the
17 borough, it was going on then. Folks were making
18 trips back and forth to Washington, D.C. proposing
19 that road, Alternative 6. It was already taken out
20 of there.

21 I keep reminding folks, this discussion
22 would not be happening if World War II lasted another
23 year, because they were preparing at that time to
24 build a road to King Cove simply, and we argued our
25 best in Washington, D.C. to get this point across.

1 They were going to build a road to King Cove simply
2 because King Cove is a deep water port and you can't
3 get to the dock in Cold Bay at low tide with a super
4 tanker.

5 I was working for Flying Tiger Airlines
6 over there, and the tanker was coming in to Cold Bay
7 in the '60s every three months, but they had to wait
8 until there was high water to get by the dock.
9 That's only one obstacle that we have. Anyway, so
10 they proposed they were going to build that road, but
11 thankfully the war ended and then it was over.

12 People have testified that this would do
13 irreparable harm to the Pacific black brant. That
14 comes out in every one of the arguments, if that road
15 is built, it would disrupt their flight pattern
16 between Kinzarof Lagoon and Izembek Lagoon. Well,
17 that's a false statement. If you were to believe
18 that statement written right there by Fish and
19 Wildlife Service that the Pacific black brant would
20 go from Kinzarof to Moffet, that's false.

21 A handful of black brant -- there's a
22 little patch of eelgrass, and that's what the black
23 brant is feeding on. They feed in the Izembek Lagoon
24 until they're fat enough to leave to Mexico.

25 Now, you all know -- if you don't know,

1 I'll tell you again -- that it takes 52 hours from
2 the time they lift off in Moffet and reach Mexico.
3 52 hours nonstop. That's why they feed on that
4 eelgrass in there. Now, this road -- and, of course,
5 the black brant, I'll tell you about that if you
6 don't do some research. They're a migratory bird
7 that uses the coastline. I watch them every year
8 coming down from up north, the Yukon Delta, and
9 that's right there at the -- like Hooper Bay and
10 places.

11 They have nesting grounds in there and
12 they'll come down not inland along the Bering Sea,
13 but they will come down the coast and get as far as
14 about 15 miles from Port Moller and they'll go
15 straight shot to Moffet. Every year. You can set
16 your time on it. You watch the emperors come down
17 and then you can watch the black brant come next.
18 But they never go over land. They don't have to.
19 The only overland I've seen a large amount of them go
20 over was going between Moffet, Glasnap [phonetic] and
21 Morzhovoi Bay, and that's where the next large
22 eelgrass pit is in the middle of the lagoon. I
23 hunted there as a child.

24 The history of the hovercraft was, take it
25 or leave it, and we took it. And whoever did the

1 preaching on the boardwalk down there in Washington
2 had a loud voice, because they didn't take into any
3 consideration of the weather conditions out there.
4 The ice pack in the wintertime -- just think in the
5 summertime. Well, summertime is beautiful. When
6 they brought the hovercraft there, there was one
7 incident where they had to go across from
8 Lenard Harbor and it was blowing northwest and
9 freezing. They almost lost the hovercraft and
10 everybody aboard. They pulled out on the other side,
11 not in Cold Bay but on the other side of the point
12 because they couldn't get in there. There were icing
13 conditions.

14 So that was the frosting on the cake. Get
15 rid of the thing. But it didn't work. Weather
16 conditions, it's like a little airplane on the water.
17 It blows all over the place. Cold Bay is, I think,
18 the birth place of all the storms.

19 So we went back and had the privilege of
20 testifying again, but let me back up a bit.

21 You all know the history of how this came
22 about, the Izembek Refuge? The department had a
23 meeting -- Interior Department had a meeting in the
24 '60s in Cold Bay, and no one ever told the folks in
25 King Cove, we're having a meeting, or did they even

1 go over to King Cove. And guess who attended that
2 meeting? One local resident who was on his death bed
3 and had no reason to testify against the Interior
4 Department. Yeah, go ahead. They don't need it.

5 And the other guy was the head of the Fish
6 and Wildlife Service, Cold Bay, Bob Jones, the
7 infamous Sea Otter Jones. Two of them with the
8 Interior Department. They said, yeah, go ahead.
9 They never did invite anybody from King Cove to come.
10 And that's how that one came about.

11 Shortly thereafter, it became a refuge and
12 a wilderness status. They burnt down every cabin
13 that was along that route. The lagoon over there,
14 Kinzarof, gets its name from a family of Kinzarof
15 that lived in Belkofski who trapped and fished in
16 Kinzarof Lagoon. They burnt down all the cabins that
17 were there because they were not allowed on refuge
18 land.

19 Now I'm going to fast forward to the '60s
20 and let you know a little history about the Air Force
21 when they were there in Cold Bay at the same time Al
22 and Peggy were out there. They had a camp out there.
23 I think there was like 1,500 troops out there in the
24 DEW Line, huge installation, one of the biggest in
25 Alaska, I believe.

1 They would have a hunt every fall, the
2 generals and the commanders flying in on Bob Reeves,
3 Reeve Aleutian Airways, because he was like this with
4 the military, and they would build cabins out there
5 on the refuge for the hunters. So there's exceptions
6 to the rule, and we're saying, gee, give us a road.
7 Well, who would take care of it? Well, that road
8 that goes to the end of the road -- I don't know if
9 you folks have been out there or not or had a chance
10 to get out there -- it's kept up by the city of
11 King Cove with the help of the borough.

12 So folks in King Cove are very energetic
13 and innovative. They were the first to
14 incorporate -- I guess you already heard that story
15 and don't have to go into that -- but it was because
16 they said, if you want to make a change, you have to
17 get involved. And we've been trying for 40 years to
18 get involved in this. The only possible way to
19 satisfy the life and living in King Cove is to get
20 this Alternative 6 through.

21 And now the road -- did you folks get a
22 chance to get out in Cold Bay at all and drive on the
23 roads to the end of this -- way out there, the last
24 road that went out, all the way out, or did you just
25 go to Grant Point where the gazebo is?

1 MARIA FOSADO: We did get Bobbie Jo Skibo,
2 Bill, and Karlin out to Pintail Loop --

3 STANLEY MACK: Yeah, we were talking
4 about -- when I took over, we were talking about the
5 road from the end of the road where it is now and
6 then just up to connect with the other roads that go
7 all the way back -- we call it Outpost Road. There's
8 roads back there all over the place.

9 The story is -- and we've gotten a lot of
10 pushback, and I just read an article in the Anchorage
11 News that a guy from Hooper Bay put in there about
12 the black brant and the cause of this road would
13 disrupt the feeding patterns of the black brant and
14 they would -- it's our subsistence. We eat the black
15 brant also. But this young man from Hooper Bay and
16 the guy that took his story down had a bunch of other
17 corporations and tribes all the way down to
18 Glennallen testifying against the road, said they
19 were all against the road.

20 Tribal groups, they passed that with AFN
21 because we as the Aleuts didn't have a chance. We're
22 such small potatoes there. Majority rules. And they
23 allowed that to happen, which should never have
24 happened.

25 But anyway, the road connection was just

1 seven miles from where it is now to the existing
2 roads that are already in the refuge. No one seems
3 to talk about that. We always talk about putting
4 that 18-mile road through there. But there's a
5 connection, as you said -- you drove out to that
6 road, went out to the other road. That road could be
7 maintained, and it is maintained, by the Fish and
8 Wildlife Service for hunters.

9 The biggest impact to the birds is the
10 feeding, the eating on the eelgrass. But the
11 Department allows boats in eelgrass beds, skiffs,
12 sports hunters, and they say this road would disrupt
13 their feeding pattern. We are -- that road is three
14 to four miles away from the eelgrass beds in Moffet
15 or in Izembek Lagoon. So we tried to get that
16 across. Just walk a mile in our shoes and you'll see
17 the impact.

18 The boats -- Cold Bay dock is so full of
19 fresh water around there that they cannot build a
20 boat harbor anywhere in that bay because it would
21 freeze up. And I've seen it frozen in. I was on a
22 hundred foot crab boat and we barely got away from
23 the dock. Overnight freezing.

24 But they say oh, that hovercraft will work,
25 a ferry would work. Can't get by the dock because it

1 freezes from Delta Point all the way to Kinzarof
2 Lagoon, and sometimes it freezes almost over to
3 Lenard Harbor, depending on how cold it gets. So
4 that's the problem. You can't do that. So we fought
5 against that.

6 But we were happy to take the hovercraft,
7 because they said, take it or leave it. We needed
8 something. And we proved it couldn't work. Moved it
9 to Akutan. Impossible. We were just thanking the
10 Lord that we were able to sell the thing, get it out
11 of our hair. We did.

12 It's got to happen. And the laws state --
13 Fish and Wildlife knows this, I'm sure -- that you
14 cannot, a certain time of the year, fly any small
15 aircraft over the lagoon. Is that right? Yes, it
16 is. You have to use that isthmus. When you fly out
17 of Cold Bay, you have to fly, on the small aircrafts,
18 over the isthmus. You cannot fly less than 1,500 to
19 2,008 over that. Yet, the larger aircrafts come in
20 from the outside, the ones who land in Cold Bay on.
21 And they're at, like, 4,000 feet until they hit just
22 on the inside of Moffet or Izembek and then you drop
23 down.

24 For years we had seven CL-44s and DC-8s on
25 the tarmac in Cold Bay during the Vietnam War. I was

1 a fueler there. And they flew in all hours of the
2 day and night and never once disrupted a feeding
3 pattern of the birds. Each year they come back. And
4 I sat on the Migratory Bird Commission. There's
5 still not a good count on how many of those black
6 brants return to the Yukon from Mexico. When I left
7 there, they had no idea. We're having a struggle
8 with that.

9 Now, I was able to argue enough to stop the
10 seining, net gathering of these birds, black brant,
11 emperor geese, and all the birds, pintail, mallard,
12 teal, every duck you can find nesting in the Yukon
13 Delta. The indigenous people -- I don't want to say
14 Native, because we had a struggle with that. The
15 Native people that folks north want only Native
16 hunters up there. I said, you've got to change that.
17 If you're born in Alaska, you're a Native of Alaska.

18 So I said, I use the "indigenous people" up
19 there. Had a hard time accepting and saying it. And
20 I wasn't too popular when I said, stop that. Do it
21 like we have to do it. We subsistence. But they
22 allow -- the Department allows sports hunters and
23 lodges to drive their skiffs all over Moffet during
24 that hunting season.

25 So Alternative 6 will save lives, and if

1 you heard the folks in King Cove say, we'll give up
2 the land. There was 64,000 acres on the table when
3 it first started for 700 acres. That was all the way
4 through. Now they're only looking for a short, like,
5 200-some acres.

6 So I think the land exchange is fantastic,
7 and they're ready to give it all up, whatever it
8 takes to get that road through. Thank you.

9 JON ISAACS: Thank you, Stanley.

10 Arika, has anybody else signed up to
11 testify? Okay. So if you could state your name.

12 LORNA OSTERBACK: My name is Lorna
13 Osterback.

14 And on my -- my first daughter, I went into
15 premature labor with her and I had to hop on a
16 charter plane to go all the way to Cold Bay, and we
17 had to fly really low because it was really, really
18 bad weather, and we had to go to Cold Bay so I could
19 get on a big plane so I could go to Anchorage,
20 because there was no medevac available.

21 And one of the things you have to look at
22 is this whole road thing, this -- everybody in all
23 these communities are related. My grandfather came
24 from Korovin. My grandmother came from Unga. And
25 everybody is intermarried in all these communities.

1 That's why it's Aleutians East Borough, because it's
2 one big pie. We're all part of it. We're at
3 different places, but we're all vested in it,
4 commercial fishermen, everybody.

5 If you come up here and you have to get
6 medevacked and you're out there, you're going to want
7 to get to the closest airline. People from Chignik
8 hop on different boats and everything to get to a
9 plane. And they're going to these key places,
10 whether it's Sand Point or Cold Bay, to get out for
11 their medical.

12 We have to go to Anchorage for our medical,
13 regardless of how remote we are, and if the weather
14 is bad, it's either by a boat to Cold Bay, by a boat
15 to Sand Point if you can't fly. If you can get a
16 charter in, they have to go low, do what you can.
17 And one of the things you don't realize, this is
18 about indigenous people that have lived here for
19 years.

20 And Cold Bay -- my grandfather was a
21 Torgrimson, and he told me, that was fish camp, and
22 when the military came in, they kicked all the
23 Natives off and they took it over. And to not even
24 vest the people that actually were vested in the
25 land, that doesn't make sense. This is about all the

1 people and their access. And it's not just about the
2 people here. It's commercial fishermen that come up
3 here, about their getting access. Now we have cruise
4 ships and other people.

5 So the State should actually say, hey,
6 we've had this problem in many different other areas,
7 I mean, and when you look at this, how did they solve
8 it? Did they put in a bridge? What did they do? I
9 mean, it's if not the land, what about the State
10 putting funds in to assist with this for a bridge or
11 something that would go across, whether it goes under
12 water or whatever, to make it so it's not the
13 wildlife and the tribe doesn't have to give up all
14 these things.

15 But I think the State should actually
16 consider that they should put in part of this,
17 because it's a big vestment of people, and they care
18 so much. I have family over there in Cold Bay. I
19 have family in King Cove. We're all related. And so
20 when somebody can't get out for access because of
21 medical emergency, it -- we're all like, oh, no, did
22 you know? And so it hurts all of us, all the way
23 across.

24 And if you have a person down in Michigan
25 or somewhere else and they were up here commercially

1 fishing and they couldn't get the access because they
2 couldn't get to -- from King Cove to go to Cold Bay
3 to get on that plane and they got hurt, you're going
4 to be pissed. You're going to be, how can they be
5 that far in the dark ages? That is not right.

6 And that's the same with everybody that has
7 family members that come up and commercial fish, or
8 anywhere else. So the State should say, we should be
9 vested in this process because we have other people
10 from other states that are migratory, and they go up
11 there and they have to access those services, and if
12 it's not available, it hurts their family.

13 And the access to care should be viable for
14 everyone. And so we really need to consider --
15 they've had it, you know, in Washington, Oregon,
16 everywhere from all the different things where they
17 had to build things for access.

18 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

19 Is there anybody else who hasn't testified?
20 If you could state your name for the record.

21 JAMES BROWN: Sure. James Brown. Or call
22 me Jim if you like. I was involved -- actually, I
23 worked for Stanley. I was a borough maintenance
24 director. This was my office here for 13 years. So
25 I was in -- his office was right there, so we talked

1 a lot about this. And I used to fly into King Cove,
2 and I tell you, it's the one scariest place I've ever
3 flown in my life, if you can even get in. The flight
4 will be going this way and the wind direction that
5 way on the other end, flying through the camel humps
6 is horrendous.

7 I used to fly in with -- well, Theo, thank
8 God. He's an excellent pilot. I'm sure you knew his
9 name. But he would fly in and the airport would be
10 so soggy, and he'd come in and he'd slow way down,
11 and it was like he was just, set the plane down and
12 go, like, ten feet and that would be it, because it
13 was just -- it was horrendous. It was horrible.

14 We tried to get this thing going -- I
15 love -- I like the new Alternative 6. This is a good
16 thing here. And I wish on this map here it would
17 show all the roads, because there's a hundred miles
18 of roads in Cold Bay, and I'm sure there's roads all
19 through here, but nobody knows that. And after the
20 military got out of there, they put -- the military
21 put all the roads in there.

22 And it's just a horrible place to fly in
23 and out of, and it really needs to get done. And I
24 don't think it's that big of deal. I'm from
25 Ann Arbor, Michigan, and when I was back there a few

1 years ago, there's geese and ducks next to
2 expressways. I mean, they're laying -- I don't think
3 the cars bother them, even with them around a
4 freeway. So one little road isn't going to hurt
5 anybody. It's just totally outrageous, and I think
6 it's just plain wrong, and the people in King Cove
7 are kind of stuck with that.

8 I was just talking to this buddy of mine
9 who actually works for me right now, and he said he
10 flew -- he said the plane flipped over twice. He
11 said it went completely upside down and he's hanging
12 out like this, screaming, and it's just him and the
13 pilot, and the pilot is hanging on like this and he's
14 steering with the left hand. It's crazy flying in --
15 I don't know if you guys ever flew into King Cove
16 before, but it's horrible. It's actually horrible.

17 And they got this road going and we thought
18 the exchange was going to happen, but all of a sudden
19 it's back on the table. So the last good thing Biden
20 ever did, I think, is this. Hey, let's put this on
21 the table again.

22 But yeah, we need to do this road. And I
23 was involved with the hovercraft. In fact, I brought
24 the hovercraft over. It was a nice sunny day from
25 Lenard's Harbor to Sand Point. I took a ride on

1 there. Beautiful day. But it was the middle of the
2 summer and flat, calm. But it was pretty crazy.

3 Guys would come down -- because I got to
4 know the hovercraft mechanics and stuff. They'd fly
5 in and they'd -- I mean, it costs a fortune to have
6 these guys do stuff. And when it was all said and
7 done, it really was just a big money hog, I think is
8 what -- I don't know what you call it.

9 But this road really needs to get done, and
10 so I'm a hundred percent behind the whole project
11 there. So anyway. Thank you.

12 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

13 Anybody else who hasn't testified who would
14 like to say anything?

15 Hearing and seeing none --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: One over here.

17 JON ISAACS: Go ahead. If you could state
18 your name for the record, please.

19 PETER DEVINE, JR.: Hi. I'm Peter Devine,
20 Jr. I am here in support of the King Cove road
21 project. It's been ongoing for quite a few years.

22 And one of the things I'd like to touch on
23 is the public comment period. Most environmental
24 impact statements have a 90-day comment period. This
25 one has half the time.

1 Another thing I'd like to touch on is the
2 land exchange. I represent the Aleutian Pribilof
3 Region on the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management
4 Council. Been sitting in meetings with people from
5 Southeast Alaska, and they're asking me about why is
6 it so much, why do they have to give up so much land
7 to get so little? They feel it should be acres for
8 acres. If you put a dollar amount on it, why should
9 they give up a million dollars' worth of land for
10 \$10,000 worth of land?

11 I had one other thing I was thinking, but I
12 lost it. I should have wrote it down. Oh, okay.

13 This has already been done, the road put
14 through a refuge. You know, how about if we go and
15 tell Anchorage, you know, Potters Marsh is closed. I
16 mean, they're not using that to get out to medical or
17 anything. I mean, it's just to get out of town to
18 the country. So it has been done in the past.

19 So I just fully support this road. Thank
20 you.

21 JON ISAACS: Thank you very much.

22 Anybody else who hasn't testified and would
23 like to?

24 So, I guess, hearing, seeing none,
25 Bobbie Jo, I'll turn it back over to you for the

1 ANILCA 810 presentation.

2 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank you so much, guys,
3 for everything you just shared. I was writing fast
4 trying to keep up with you guys.

5 And Stanley, thank you for that historical
6 account. I definitely kept notes. So thanks.

7 So the Alaska National Interest Lands
8 Conservation Act -- you already know that one --
9 there's a section of it, 810, that looks at
10 subsistence when we have proposed action and we need
11 to evaluate the effects on subsistence uses and needs
12 because of that. So right now there's some legal
13 words when it comes to ANILCA, so I want to make sure
14 I do not mess it up.

15 So we need to do this when we are
16 determining whether to withdraw, reserve, lease, or
17 otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition
18 of public lands on National Wildlife Refuges here in
19 Alaska, because ANILCA is specific to Alaska.

20 So ANILCA requires us to hold the public
21 hearings in conjunction with these public meetings in
22 the vicinity of any communities where a positive
23 finding has been made that is a may significantly
24 restrict determination. And Sand Point is one of
25 those communities.

1 So there are three factors that are used
2 when we are looking at if a community gets a positive
3 finding or not, and so -- in regards to that
4 restriction. So there are three. And they are the
5 three A's: abundance, availability, and access.

6 So when the proposed action, the
7 alternative, or even the cumulative effects of what
8 is going on with that action, we look at if we can
9 find out, is there going to be a reduction in the
10 abundance of harvestable resources used for
11 subsistence, will there be a reduction in the
12 availability of those resources when it's caused by
13 an alteration of their distribution; the migration
14 patterns or their location; and then third, is there
15 a legal or physical limitation on access to those
16 subsistence resources and harvestable resources.

17 So again, will be there an impact to
18 availability, abundance, or the access to that? Or
19 it could even be on the other side of it, maybe it
20 promotes better access.

21 So right now the next slide will show you
22 that because Alternative 6 and the cumulative case of
23 Alternative 6 we believe may significantly restrict
24 subsistence uses. So the Service is holding these
25 public hearings. So you did get a positive may

1 significantly restrict determination. So that's why
2 we were in Cold Bay and King Cove. Now we're here in
3 Sand Point. This coming week we'll have a meeting
4 with False Pass and then the following week a virtual
5 meeting with False Pass and Nelson lagoon. We
6 couldn't figure out the travel to get in
7 conveniently. So we will be meeting with those
8 communities as well.

9 The next slide will show you that because
10 we will be also holding a hearing in the Y-K Delta
11 for those communities, but we're going to utilize the
12 hub community of Bethel for that, and it's because we
13 believe a number of the communities in the vicinity
14 of the Y-K Delta could meet the may significantly
15 restrict threshold based on the reduction of the
16 abundance -- that one A there -- the abundance of
17 migratory species that are harvested over there.

18 So when we get to Bethel next week on the
19 12th, we'll have a public meeting and then take any
20 testimony there on ANILCA. But we know there are the
21 broader communities that may not be able to afford to
22 get into Bethel, so we will hold a virtual meeting
23 for them on Friday. All of those meetings are
24 available for anybody to join. Just so you know,
25 they're virtual.

1 And then a final determination will be made
2 per the Section 810(a)(3) based on what we hear, and
3 then that will go into the record when we publish the
4 Final Supplemental EIS. So you'll be able to see the
5 determination at that time.

6 So because we're here and we know some of
7 the stuff that was already brought up is definitely
8 relevant to the ANILCA 810 portion of this meeting,
9 and I think Bill said it earlier, that's fine. You
10 don't -- it won't get lost. We will grab that and
11 then apply it to the ANILCA determination process.

12 But for anybody that wants to specifically
13 speak on, again, any of the subsistence and
14 harvestable resources abundance, availability, or
15 access topics, that really helps us with the next
16 steps of the process.

17 So because we are such a small group, Jon,
18 you might have a list, but we can skip over ground
19 rules because we've already shared them. We are more
20 than welcome to give you as many minutes as you can
21 here because we're a smaller group. And again, we
22 just as that you speak your name for the record for
23 Deirdre to document.

24 Did we have anybody officially sign up that
25 wanted to?

1 JON ISAACS: I don't think anybody did
2 officially sign up.

3 PEGGY OSTERBACK: I thought there was just
4 one.

5 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I will just take a minute
6 to say, some communities will say, we want them
7 separate because we want that topic to really, like,
8 shine through, and other communities, like, no, I
9 just want to talk once and it's fine. So preference
10 of any community, we can go with it.

11 But if there's anything additional that you
12 want to speak on related to the subsistence piece,
13 feel free. So you can -- I think Stanley, you
14 probably -- you shared a bunch, but if you want to
15 share more, this would be a great time, or anybody
16 else in the group.

17 JON ISAACS: No one has checked the box,
18 but, again, we welcome anybody that wants to say
19 something about the potential subsistence impacts in
20 the ANILCA 810.

21 How about Alvin?

22 MAYOR ALVIN OSTERBACK: So this wasn't
23 actually -- because what they call the fish wars or
24 whatever between us and the AYK years ago, trying to
25 prove we had access to the salmon whether they were

1 in AYK or in Bristol Bay, we brought a pair of
2 archeologists out and they went through the whole
3 area, and at one point, 4,000, 5,000 years ago, or
4 whatever, there were a lot of Aleut villages where
5 Morzhovoi is now, there was an inlet that went there
6 into the Bering Sea up where the middle of the lagoon
7 is where now your eel beds are -- eelgrass beds.

8 But anyway, so our people have been hunting
9 the area -- it depends on who you listen to. I guess
10 they say all the way back to 9,000 years or whatever.
11 But that's a known right there, is that they proved
12 they were there 4,000, 5,000 years ago. So they've
13 been hunting the area ever since then.

14 In Cold Bay, just up from Livingston's
15 property, there's a grave up on that hillside, and it
16 crosses in Russia now, and that was my great
17 grandmother, and she died over there on a hunting and
18 gathering trip, because those were the areas that
19 they went to, whether they were harvesting fish,
20 birds, eggs, what have you. So they've been there a
21 long time.

22 I think it's really important to
23 subsistence use and it continues to this day that
24 they use it. But one of the things that always gets
25 me is, when you take a look at what comes out of the

1 AYK, is basically, wait a minute, you're destroying
2 our ability to harvest our subsistence. Well, we
3 basically hunt during the open season that's set by
4 the government. You go up into that area, they take
5 eggs, they take birds when they're molting. We don't
6 do that. So if you're really looking at, is the bird
7 population being disturbed, maybe some of those
8 practices should be looked at.

9 But the other big thing is, the first thing
10 in Alaska that I know of is the last thing that you
11 touch is subsistence use of game, birds, fish. So
12 right now I came out last -- a week ago Saturday I
13 came back from Anchorage, and I was on the Saab 2000.
14 And other than for a few people that came to
15 Sand Point, the plane was full of bird hunters headed
16 for Cold Bay. So they're still hunting over there.

17 I don't see any restrictions placed on
18 sports commercial-type hunting that's going on over
19 there. So I don't think Fish and Wildlife Service or
20 any other government agency right now feels like
21 there's a big impact of the bird population in AYK
22 because there's no cutting back on any of that.
23 That's wide open. So I would think the first thing
24 that a person on the outside would be looking at is
25 some type of restrictions being placed, and that's

1 not happening.

2 So I really don't believe that by us being
3 allowed to travel on that road is going to have the
4 impacts that people are looking at. So that's it.

5 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

6 Stanley Mack.

7 STANLEY MACK: Just to follow up on what
8 Alvin was alluding to. This road would have
9 absolutely no impact whatsoever on the migratory
10 birds in the area. I say that because the fact that
11 the Haul Road that goes to Prudhoe Bay was, don't
12 ever build that pipeline, don't build that Haul Road,
13 it's going to disrupt the migratory animals, the
14 caribou, the moose, the polar bear. Wrong.

15 They said, if we build this road through
16 Cold Bay, it would mess up the subsistence hunting,
17 because people will be taking advantage of it. We
18 don't do that. The Aleut people have been brought
19 up -- and I've been harping on my grandchildren and I
20 have great, great grandchildren now that are going to
21 be hunters, because they love hunting -- and I say,
22 you eat what you kill. Yet, as Alvin says, we don't
23 see any restrictions on the sports hunters.

24 As a matter of fact, I get a care box once
25 in a while from the sports hunters. Reason being, so

1 they can keep on hunting. But I appreciate it. I
2 don't have to go subsistence hunting. But we've used
3 that country out there in Cold Bay for years.

4 The village of Belkofski used that area for
5 subsistence hunting. Now that they've got a road to
6 the other end, they can drive over there and do some
7 subsistence hunting. But they used to walk from that
8 airport in King Cove all the way up to Kinzarof
9 Lagoon, hunt, pack their meat back over to the end of
10 that runway -- there was no runway there at the time,
11 but there was a cabin there -- and take it back.
12 They used Cold Bay for subsistence. That was
13 King Cove. We'd go over there to camp in our boats
14 if we have to. But the subsistence thing has been a
15 real stickler.

16 Let's talk about the fish use for
17 subsistence in the area. If we are caught dumping
18 carcasses over the side of the boat, we'll be
19 arrested. We cannot even run a gurney off the side
20 of the boat or we will be arrested. We cannot pump
21 the blood out of our skiff into the water or we will
22 be arrested. I'm waiting for the same to happen in
23 the Yukon about their subsistence activity when
24 they're up there and they're fishing the Yukon or the
25 tributaries that one day it's going to happen. If

1 I'm going to be restricted for doing something, then
2 they should be, because they're opposing what we need
3 as a life-line.

4 And this, again, goes back to the rules and
5 regulations that are coming down upon us, and we have
6 to abide by them. We have more enforcement here.
7 But Hooper Bay or Chevak, in the area, there's not
8 too much going on up there in regard to enforcement.
9 Or you get up to, let's say, Fort Yukon, that
10 tributary, and all the activity that's going on
11 there. These regulations that they're opposing on
12 this little area down here, it just -- I see it as
13 very unfair.

14 If I go over to Kinzarof Lagoon and I start
15 processing my fish, I can be arrested. I don't know
16 where I take the carcasses or bloody water out the
17 channel. I have to go beyond Cold Bay to dump the
18 carcasses. It's very unfair. It's not restricted on
19 them.

20 So I think we're doing -- we're abiding by
21 the law and we play by the rules. We're being more
22 restricted as days go by. That's unfair.

23 JON ISAACS: Thank you, Stanley.

24 Would anybody else like to testify on

25 ANILCA 810?

1 PEGGY OSTERBACK: Yes. Peggy Osterback.

2 I have to say that, within the Aleutian
3 region, there's probably less than 2,500 Aleut people
4 that live out here now. And we have always worked
5 with management to make sure that all of our
6 resources are viable. We don't take more than we can
7 use, we don't abuse the resources, and we always
8 think about others as well.

9 And like Alvin said, his family hunted
10 here. I used to listen to his grandmother,
11 Mrs. Vanner, tell me stories about her and her dad
12 coming back from across Belkofski and hunting up near
13 Kinzarof and all around Cold Bay, not just for birds
14 but for caribou and the other resources that were
15 there. And she hunted way up into almost her 80s.
16 She tried to borrow a shotgun from my husband and he
17 wouldn't let her have one because of her age.

18 But, you know, the people who live out
19 here, we value our resources. We make sure that the
20 fish, the caribou -- we work with Fish and Wildlife
21 Service on caribou in the past because their numbers
22 that they counted were down and we knew where there
23 were additional population numbers and showed them
24 where they were at.

25 And, you know, it's -- we value our

1 resources out here when it comes to subsistence. And
2 like we have said, we hunt during the hunting seasons
3 that have been established to do a majority of our
4 subsistence during that time period. And I have to
5 say I'm really thankful for the way we've been
6 brought up to work with management to make sure that
7 these resources are there for generations and
8 generations to come.

9 And to have accusations made by people from
10 other areas that affect our small population down
11 here to try and destroy the people who live out here,
12 it's just unfathomable just how cruel people can be,
13 and for malicious purposes. And we've invited them
14 to come down and take a look at how we live and fish
15 on our boats and see what we do out here, because we
16 actually do work hand-in-hand with management to make
17 sure the resources are still available for our
18 generation and other generations. Thank you.

19 JON ISAACS: Thank you, Peggy.

20 Anybody else that would like to say
21 anything about ANILCA 810 --

22 STANLEY MACK: Just to comment that, as a
23 child growing up in the community of King Cove, we
24 were taught that you only take what you -- you kill
25 what you -- if you kill something, you better eat it.

1 You don't just go sports hunting and trophy hunting.

2 And the thing about eggs, we were taught
3 that -- well, the only eggs we actually had here for
4 years as a child growing up in King Cove was pretty
5 well limited to what supplies you get in there.

6 I hate to say this, but I turned 86 the
7 other day, so I've been around awhile. They taught
8 us -- we would pick seagull eggs and kittiwake eggs,
9 if we could get to them. But seagull eggs were quite
10 accessible. But we never touched a nest if there
11 were three eggs in that nest. That's a standing
12 rule. You don't touch that nest. And when you take
13 the eggs out of the nest, you do not touch the nest.
14 And I'd teach my kids that.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We used to put them
16 up in big salmon barrels for the winter. We never
17 had no chickens.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I thought it was
19 illegal to get them eggs.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Seagull eggs for the
21 winter.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We used to put them
23 in the barrels and use quarter glass to preserve
24 them, get like jelly in those wooden barrels. Yeah.
25 Lasted all winter until the spring again and we'd go

1 get a new batch.

2 STANLEY MACK: Subsistence is really a big
3 part of our lives.

4 JON ISAACS: Anybody else like to add
5 anything on subsistence and ANILCA 810?

6 State your name for the record.

7 PETER DEVINE, JR.: Peter Devine, Jr.
8 Subsistence is kind of a touchy issue. I just come
9 from a fall meeting for migratory birds out in
10 Kodiak, and you got 10, 12 regions sitting there all
11 talking to each other, you know, hashing things out,
12 you know, making decisions, but at the same time,
13 them groups are sitting there, you know, we're all
14 friends and everything, and then you find out next
15 day you're getting sued over king salmon issues.

16 One of the things that happened this
17 year -- and I asked my friends from around the state
18 if they had any restrictions placed on them, and one
19 of the things that was put upon our fishermen was the
20 seiners had to throw over king salmon that were over
21 29 inches long. They could keep them if they were
22 under that, but if you throw a fish over, it's
23 usually going to die. And there was no other part in
24 the state where they had that restriction imposed
25 upon them. And these were supposedly to protect the

1 Yukon and all the king salmon up there and whatnot.

2 Well, it's my understanding that part of
3 the Yukon River enters down to Canada. And here we
4 are out here on the Aleutian Chain way the heck far
5 away from that river, but we've got to throw the king
6 salmon overboard to save the fish that are going to
7 that river. You know, it's just -- I don't know. It
8 don't set right with me. Here we are frickin'
9 1,200 miles away from that river and they're saying
10 we're the ones causing decline. Subsistence is kind
11 of touchy.

12 JON ISAACS: Yes, it is. Thank you.

13 Anybody else?

14 PEGGY OSTERBACK: I do have one closing
15 comment that you can add to either my first testimony
16 or this one.

17 But is the National Park Service part of
18 the Department of Interior?

19 JON ISAACS: Yes.

20 PEGGY OSTERBACK: How can they build two
21 roads through the national forest to get a Christmas
22 tree to go to Washington, D.C., there's no permits
23 involved or anything. They go in and they take the
24 tree, harvest it, take it out, and we have such a
25 battle over this one little road to save human lives

1 in an area where, when you put it in, it's not going
2 to disturb anything? I don't understand.

3 And that is my final comment. I think that
4 human life is much more valuable than a Christmas
5 tree.

6 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

7 ALVIN OSTERBACK, JR.: I have a comment on
8 top of that comment.

9 Can we plant a Christmas tree towards
10 King Cove and then cut a road in to get it? Just a
11 thought.

12 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I would only like to
13 offer for clarification, only because I worked for
14 Department of Agriculture for 17 years, and that was
15 the Chugach National Forest. So they are not part of
16 Department of Interior. But I understand your
17 sentiment. But they are very -- you know, Department
18 of Interior doesn't oversee the Christmas tree, the
19 people's tree that just made its way that way.

20 MAYOR ALVIN OSTERBACK: This last one came
21 out of the Tongass, right?

22 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I don't believe so. I
23 think it was also the Chugach. This is the second
24 time that's been done in the last --

25 LORNA OSTERBACK: It's just a heinous

1 amount of money for something that's going to wilt
2 and die. Whereas, people --

3 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I can understand the
4 point you were trying to make, though, but just to
5 clarify.

6 MAYOR ALVIN OSTERBACK: You know, that
7 second tree came out down by Ketchikan. So that's
8 the Tongass. Because actually, Senator Murkowski was
9 down there when they brought the tree down, and she
10 said how great that was because she was born in
11 Ketchikan and the tree came from where she was from.

12 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Maybe you're right.

13 JON ISAACS: We digress.

14 PEGGY OSTERBACK: Just so you know.

15 JON ISAACS: Any more formal comments on
16 ANILCA 810?

17 Seeing none, then let me pass it back to
18 you, Bobbie Jo.

19 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I just have one last
20 slide, and really, it's just to thank you guys.
21 There probably are questions that might come up, or
22 if you need help to navigate getting to the document
23 or trying to figure out the way to make comments, and
24 I am more than welcome to, you know, field any
25 questions. You can drop my e-mail down or give a

1 shout.

2 So we just really appreciate the time that
3 you've taken. I know this is a long-standing
4 project. I know when these things happen it gets
5 exhausting for communities to keep coming out. But
6 your voice is important to this issue. We have
7 listened, we have heard you, we will have all of your
8 information on the public record. And we do look
9 forward to the future conversations.

10 And thank you, Mayor, for your leadership
11 in working with us through the government-to-
12 government consultations that we are having and ANCSA
13 consultations with the corporation. So thanks again.

14 JON ISAACS: We're leaving a couple thumb
15 drives here so people can access the document that
16 way.

17 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Yeah. We can leave that
18 with you, Mayor, and anybody else in the town that
19 might want more information, we can definitely get
20 that to you.

21 So with that, I think we can officially go
22 off the public record. We'll clean up. Again, if
23 you have any other questions about the posters and
24 stuff, we'll be hanging around for a few minutes so
25 we can help you out with that.

1 But thank you so much.

2 (Proceedings concluded at 5:48 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE, Verbatim Shorthand Reporter, and Notary Public in and for the State of Alaska, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place herein set forth; that the testimony and proceedings were reported stenographically by me and later transcribed by computer transcription; that the foregoing is a true record of the testimony and proceedings taken at that time; and that I am not a party to nor have I any interest in the outcome of the action herein contained.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 23rd day of December 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deirdre J.F. Radcliffe", written over a horizontal line.

DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE

My Commission Expires 5/31/26

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