



# **DRAFT SEIS PUBLIC MEETING & ANILCA SECTION 810 SUBSISTENCE HEARING**

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2024 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)  
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Proposed Land Exchange and Road Corridor



# WELCOME & MEETING FORMAT





# OPENING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS



# AGENDA

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Public Comment

## Part 2: ANILCA 810 Hearing

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Summary of Findings

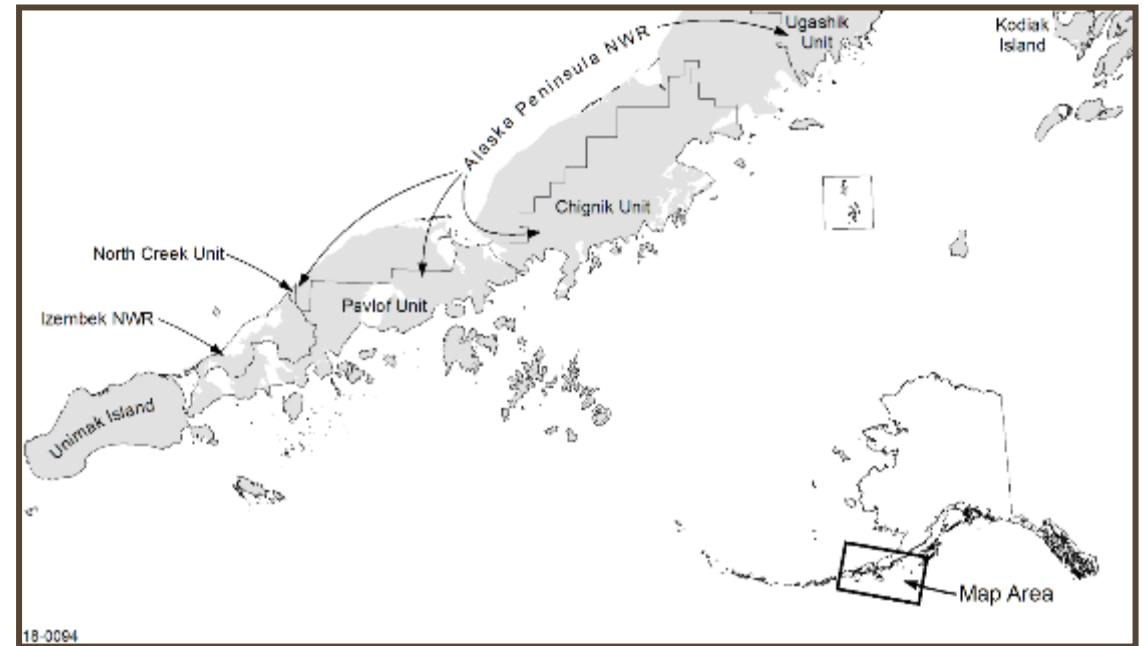
Locations for Hearings

Accept Testimony



# BACKGROUND: REFUGE

- ▶ **1960:** Established as Izembek National Wildlife Range.
- ▶ **1972:** Izembek Lagoon designated as Izembek State Game Refuge.
- ▶ **1980:** Redesignated as Izembek NWR by ANILCA and Wilderness was established.



# WILDERNESS Act 1964

“...and these shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness...”



# REFUGE PURPOSES

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Purposes are:

- ▶ To conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- ▶ To fulfill international treaty obligations.
- ▶ To provide opportunities for subsistence.
- ▶ To ensure water quality & quantity.



# SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

## Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Special Recognitions

- ▶ **1976:** Aleutian Islands Biosphere Reserve
- ▶ **1986:** Wetland of International Importance
- ▶ **2001:** Globally Important Bird Area





# REFUGE RESOURCES

- ▶ Izembek Lagoon and adjacent coastal waters and wetlands form one of the most important migratory bird staging habitats in the world.
- ▶ Izembek Lagoon is a critical staging habitat for more than 98% of the world's population of Pacific brant.
- ▶ One of the highest density of brown bear populations in Alaska is found within Izembek Refuge.
- ▶ Izembek Refuge is important year-round caribou habitat for wintering, calving, and as a migration corridor.
- ▶ Izembek Refuge supports all five species of salmon—red, pink, silver, chum, and king.



# BACKGROUND

- ▶ **2009:** The Omnibus Public Land Management Act (2009 Act).
  - ▶ Directed the Secretary of the Interior to analyze a land exchange through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the Izembek Wilderness and for the Service to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- ▶ **2013:** The EIS was completed in 2013 and the “No Action” alternative was selected.
- ▶ **2019:** Secretary Bernhardt signed land exchange agreement.
- ▶ **2023:** Secretary Haaland withdrew from the 2019 agreement.



# PROJECT OVERVIEW

This **Draft Supplemental EIS (SEIS)** to the 2013 EIS is:

- ▶ Prepared at the request of the Secretary of the Interior to consider a newly proposed potential land exchange.
- ▶ Located within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, including Congressionally designated wilderness.
- ▶ Updated and evaluated based on new circumstances and new information wherever available.
- ▶ Includes a 'no action' and four action alternatives that were evaluated in the 2013 EIS.
- ▶ Adds alternative 6 as the new action alternative.



# PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to:

- ▶ Enter into a land exchange to add land with conservation, subsistence, and habitat values to the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- ▶ In exchange for a transfer to King Cove Corporation of real property interests (surface and subsurface estate) of the United States to a corridor of land through the Refuge, including Congressionally designated wilderness.



# PURPOSE & NEED

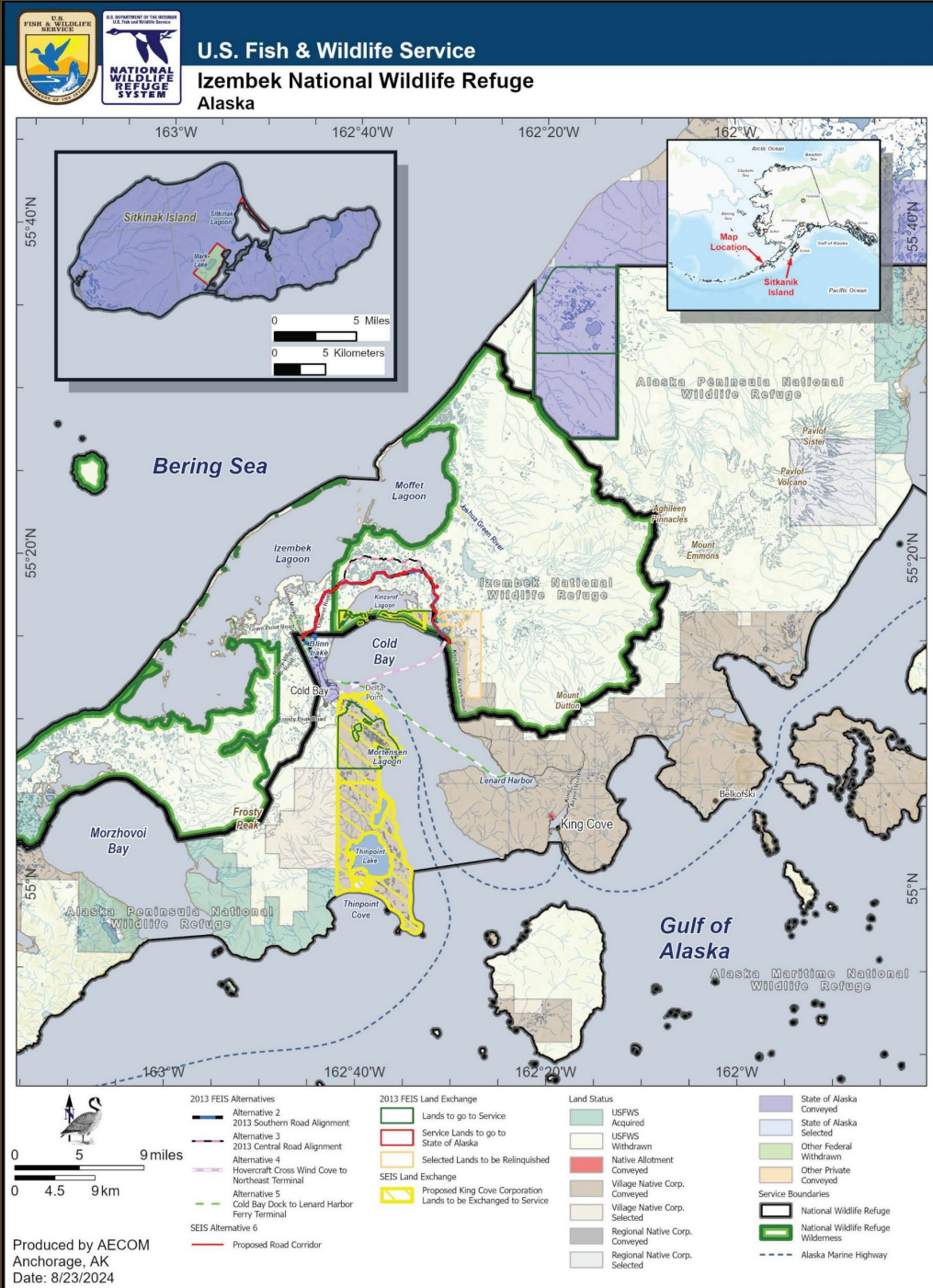
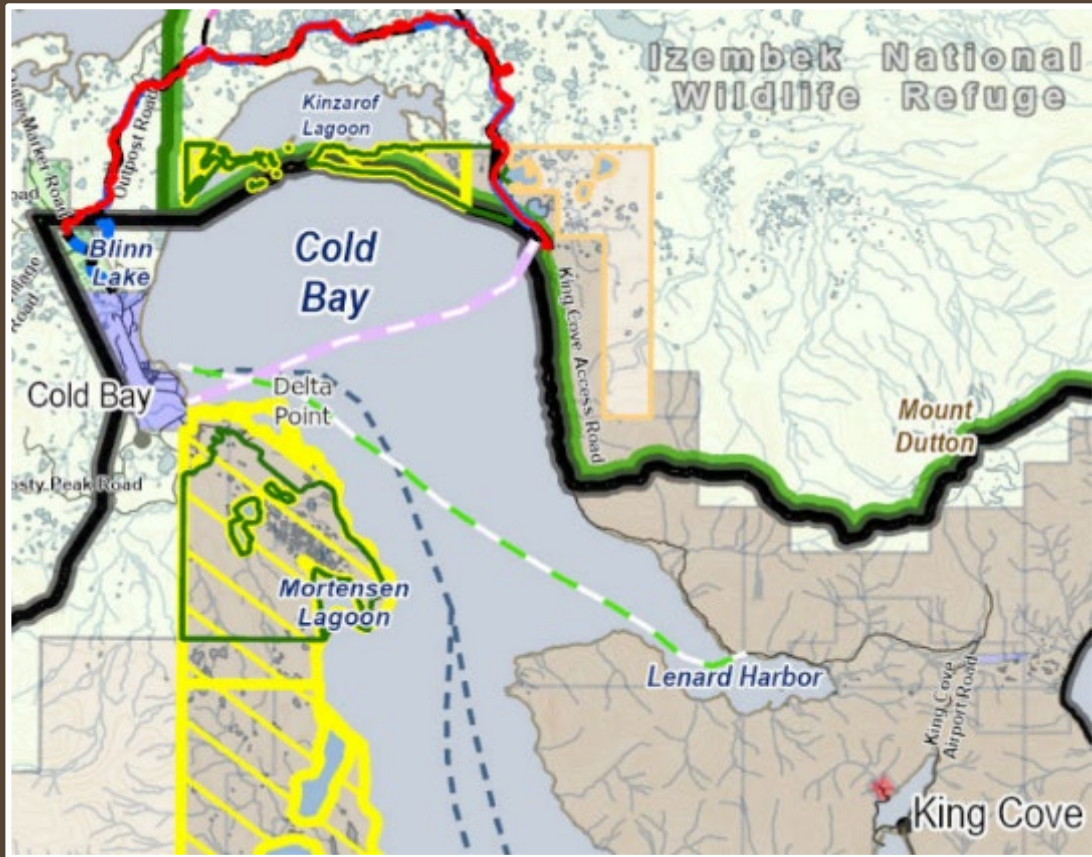
The **purposes** of the proposed action are to:

- ▶ Provide a safe, reliable, year-round transportation system for health and safety purposes, with particular emphasis on emergency medical evacuations, between King Cove and Cold Bay.
- ▶ Increase the overall conservation value of lands preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- ▶ Maintain or increase the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural Alaskans.

Details of the **need** for the project can be found in Section 1.4 of the Draft SEIS.



# PROJECT AREA



# RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

This Draft SEIS considers a **reasonable range of alternatives** that consists of:

Alternative 1	No Action
Alternative 2	Land Exchange and Southern Road Alignment*
Alternative 3	Land Exchange and Central Road Alignment*
Alternative 4	Hovercraft Operations from the Northeast Terminal to Cross Wind Cove
Alternative 5	Lenard Harbor Ferry with Cold Bay Dock Improvements
Alternative 6	2024 Land Exchange and Road Alignment

*\* No longer viable alternatives but included for comparative purposes.*



# ALTERNATIVE 4

## HOVERCRAFT FROM NORTHEAST TERMINAL

- ▶ Alternative 4 is from the 2003 EIS and 2013 EIS. Alternative 4 was considered reasonable in the 2013 EIS and analyzed in detail.
- ▶ Considers operations of the hovercraft for 6 days of service per week between the Northeast Terminal and the Cross Wind Cove.
- ▶ Retained as a viable alternative.





# ALTERNATIVE 5

## LENARD HARBOR FERRY WITH COLD BAY DOCK IMPROVEMENTS

- ▶ Alternative 5 would use a ferry to travel 14 miles between a terminal in Lenard Harbor and a substantially modified Cold Bay dock.
- ▶ A replacement dock is in the planning stages with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.
- ▶ Would not include a land exchange.
- ▶ Retained as a viable alternative.



# ALTERNATIVE 6

## 2024 LAND EXCHANGE AND ROAD ALIGNMENT

Alternative 6 (preferred alternative) would:

- 1 Start at the terminus of the King Cove Access Road near the Northeast Terminal
- 2 Continue through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, including Congressionally designated wilderness
- 3 Terminate at the intersection of Outer Marker Road and Blinn Lake Loop



# ALTERNATIVE 6

## 2024 LAND EXCHANGE AND ROAD ALIGNMENT

Key components of Alternative 6 include:

- ▶ A total of **31,198 acres** (*29,459 surface, 1,739 surface/subsurface*) from King Cove Corporation to federal government.
  - ▶ 1,739 acres which will go into Congressionally designated wilderness.
- ▶ A total of **490 acres** (*484 surface/subsurface and 6 subsurface*) from the federal government to King Cove Corporation.
  - ▶ 336 acres which is Congressionally designated wilderness.
- ▶ An **18.9-mile** single-lane, gravel road.
- ▶ A total of **15 material sites** would be used for the project.



# ALTERNATIVE 6

## 2024 LAND EXCHANGE AND ROAD ALIGNMENT

Key components of Alternative 6 include:

- ▶ To minimize impacts to the environment, the road traffic type of use, frequency, and timing would be:
  - ▶ **Restricted to non-commercial uses**, and further restricted to those necessary for health and safety purposes and access to Refuge resources by federally qualified subsistence users actively engaged in subsistence uses.



# COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF THE ROAD ALTERNATIVES

	<b>Alternative 2:</b> 2013 Land Exchange and Southern Road Alignment <i>For comparative purposes only*</i>	<b>Alternative 3:</b> 2013 Land Exchange and Central Road Alignment <i>For comparative purposes only*</i>	<b>Alternative 6:</b> 2024 Land Exchange and Road Alignment
<b>Road Corridor (Miles)</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>18.9</b>
<b>Road Corridor Width</b>	Assumed Average 100-Foot Width		Varying 100-Foot to 240-Foot Widths with Material Sites along the corridor
<b>Acres Proposed for Exchange from Izembek National Wildlife Refuge</b>	<b>187</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; 131 acres Wilderness)</i>	<b>201</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; 152 acres Wilderness)</i>	<b>490**</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; 336 acres Wilderness)</i>
<b>Acres Proposed for Exchange to be added to National Refuge System (Total)</b>	<b>52,583</b>	<b>52,583</b>	<b>31,198</b>
<b>Acres Added to Izembek National Wildlife Refuge by Land Exchange with King Cove Corporation</b>	<b>2,604</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; added to Wilderness)</i>	<b>2,604</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; added to Wilderness)</i>	<b>1,739</b> <i>(surface/subsurface; added to Wilderness)</i>
<b>Acres Added to Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge by Land Exchange with King Cove Corporation and the State</b>	<b>41,887 from State</b> <i>(added to new Wilderness)</i> <b>8,092 from King Cove Corporation</b>	<b>41,887 from State</b> <i>(added to new Wilderness)</i> <b>8,092 from King Cove Corporation</b>	<b>29,459***</b> from King Cove Corporation <i>(surface only)</i>
<b>Acres of Selection Relinquished by King Cove Corporation and Retained in Izembek Wilderness</b> <i>(King Cove Corporation to select an equal acreage from non-wilderness lands in the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge)</i>	<b>5,430</b>	<b>5,430</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Acres Removed from Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (Sitkinak Island) [withdrawn from U.S. Coast Guard and transferred to State]</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>0</b>

\* The State of Alaska is no longer a party in the proposed land exchange.

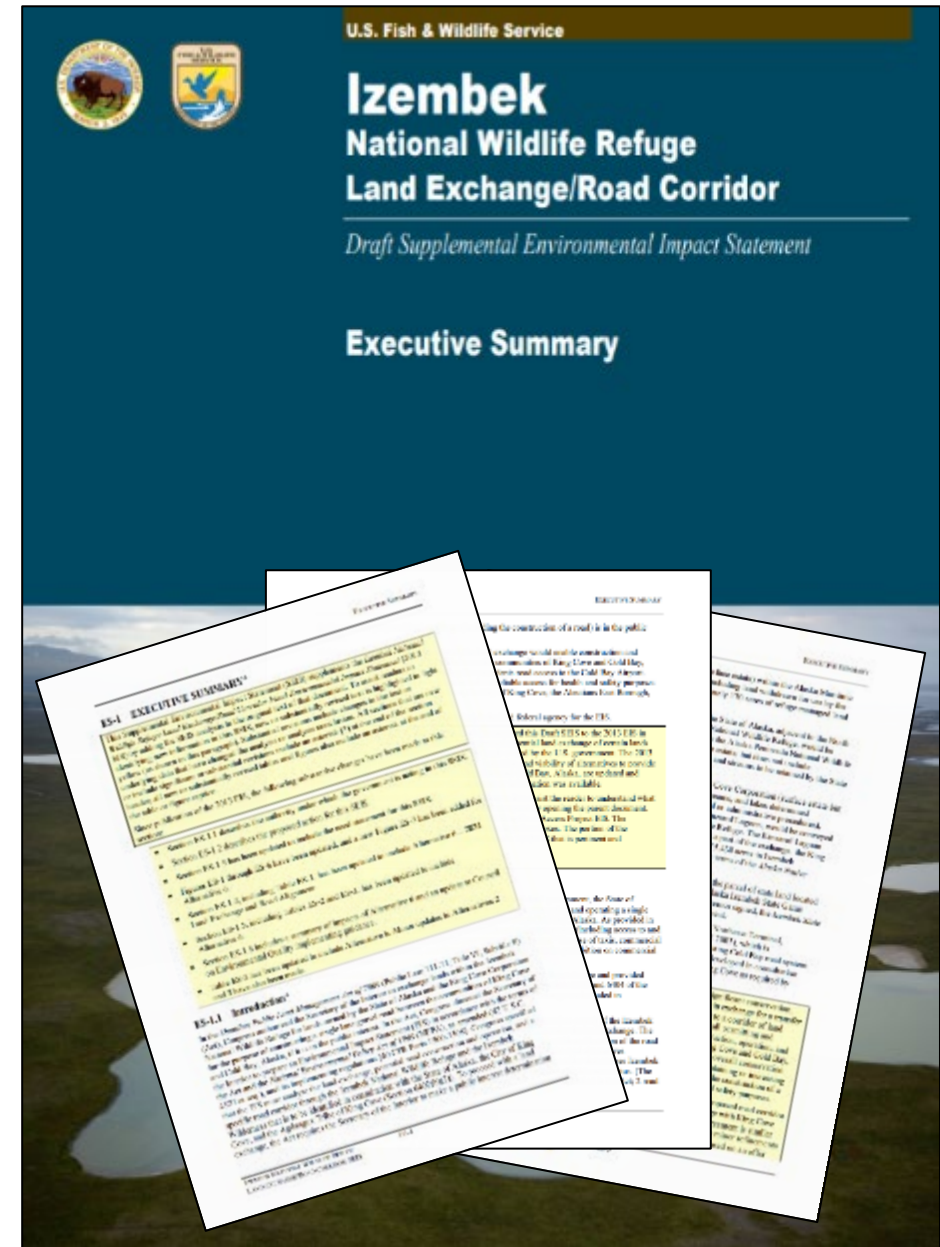
\*\* Includes 6 acres of subsurface estate owned by the U.S. government in the location of a proposed material site on King Cove Corporation surface lands.

\*\*\* Subsurface of approximately 29,459 acres is owned by The Aleut Corporation.



# HOW TO READ SEIS

- ▶ At the beginning of each section of the SEIS, there is a summary of substantive changes since the 2013 EIS.
- ▶ New or substantially revised text is highlighted in light yellow and includes an asterisk (\*) at the end of the section header or table.



# NEXT STEPS

- ▶ **The Draft SEIS is available online at:** [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)

Docket No. FWS–R7–NWRS–2023–0072

- ▶ **45-Day Comment Period**

November 15th, 2024-December 30th, 2024 (at 11:59 p.m. EST)

- ▶ **Final SEIS and ROD**

The Service will utilize comments obtained during the comment period to update and revise the Draft SEIS, as appropriate. A Final SEIS and ROD is anticipated in 2025.





# GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC INPUT



Each person will be given up to **3 minutes to speak.**

A timer will be displayed and will show when your time is up.



Thank you for speaking clearly and for staying within the allotted time to ensure everyone has a chance to share their input.





# AGENDA

## Part 2: ANILCA 810 Hearing

What is ANILCA 810?

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# ANILCA 810 SUBSISTENCE HEARINGS

- ▶ The Service is required by Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) to evaluate the effects on subsistence uses and needs.
- ▶ ANILCA also requires the Service to hold public hearings on subsistence resources and activities in the vicinity of communities for which a “may significantly restrict” determination has been made.



# EVALUATION FACTORS

- ▶ Three factors are considered when determining if a significant restriction of subsistence uses and needs may result from the proposed action, alternatives, or the cumulative case, as follows:
  - ▶ Reduction in the **abundance** of harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes;
  - ▶ Reduction in the **availability** of resources used for subsistence caused by alteration of their distribution, migration patterns, or location;
  - ▶ Legal or physical limitations on **access** of subsistence users to harvestable resources.



# PRELIMINARY FINDING

▶ Because Alternative 6 and the cumulative case may significantly restrict subsistence uses, the Service is holding public hearings on subsistence resources and activities in the following communities for which a **positive “may significantly restrict”** determination has been made:

- ▶ King Cove
- ▶ Sand Point
- ▶ Cold Bay
- ▶ Nelson Lagoon
- ▶ False Pass



# PRELIMINARY FINDING

- ▶ The Service will also hold a public hearing in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta hub community of Bethel.
- ▶ A number of communities in the vicinity of the Y-K Delta could meet the “**may significantly restrict**” **threshold** based on a reduction in abundance of certain migratory bird species that are harvested.
- ▶ A subsistence determination under ANILCA Section 810(A)(3) will be completed after the public hearings.





# GROUND RULES FOR ANILCA 810 TESTIMONY



Each person will be given up to **3 minutes to speak.**

A timer will be displayed and will show when your time is up.



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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT AND INPUT

**For more information and project updates, go to:**

<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

Contact: Bobbie Jo Skibo, Senior Planning Staff and Project Leader, at [bobbiejo\\_skibo@fws.gov](mailto:bobbiejo_skibo@fws.gov)

