

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**Izembek National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a Proposed Land**  
**Exchange Involving Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Lands**  
**Virtual Public Meeting Transcript**  
**December 13, 2024, 1:00 – 3:00 pm Alaska Time**

00:00:03.430 --> 00:00:12.869

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello, everyone! I'd like to welcome you all to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

00:00:13.000 --> 00:00:18.470

Megan Stone - AECOM: virtual public meeting and the ANILCA Section 810 subsistence hearing.

00:00:18.660 --> 00:00:25.419

Megan Stone - AECOM: We're going to give folks a few minutes here to join the meeting and then we'll begin the PowerPoint presentation shortly,

00:00:25.490 --> 00:00:27.280

Megan Stone - AECOM: so please stay tuned.

00:00:27.400 --> 00:00:37.380

Megan Stone - AECOM: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by clicking the live transcript button on your Zoom toolbar and then selecting show subtitles.

00:00:37.760 --> 00:00:41.950

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you everyone for your patience as we give folks a moment to join.

00:01:21.330 --> 00:01:28.329

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, welcome everyone to today's meeting. We're going to give folks just a minute more here to join the meeting;

00:01:28.400 --> 00:01:32.259

Megan Stone - AECOM: so please stay tuned and we'll start the presentation shortly

00:01:32.360 --> 00:01:42.710

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, I do want to note that closed captioning is available by clicking the live transcript button on your Zoom toolbar and then selecting show subtitles.

00:01:43.100 --> 00:01:47.969

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you, again, for your patience as we give folks just another minute here to join.

00:02:17.150 --> 00:02:21.839

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello, everyone. We're going to go ahead and get started with our meeting today.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I would like to thank you all for joining us.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: We appreciate your time and participation.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: My name is Megan Stone with AECOM, and we're the consulting firm that is helping the Service on this project.

00:02:38.030 --> 00:02:46.579

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'm going to be your meeting facilitator today. Additionally, we have members of the Service with us who will be introduced in a moment.

00:02:46.850 --> 00:02:48.369

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:02:52.640 --> 00:02:58.310

Megan Stone - AECOM: Before we get started with the presentation; I'll go over some housekeeping items for the meeting.

00:02:58.690 --> 00:03:03.719

Megan Stone - AECOM: First, your microphones and videos will be turned off for the duration of the meeting.

00:03:03.860 --> 00:03:17.210

Megan Stone - AECOM: You will only be unmuted, if and when, I unmute you during the Draft SEIS verbal public comment portion or ANILCA 810 hearing portion of the meeting, if you're providing verbal input

00:03:17.440 --> 00:03:21.890

Megan Stone - AECOM: Second, this meeting is being recorded as part of the project record.

00:03:22.390 --> 00:03:29.370

Megan Stone - AECOM: There will be two separate meetings tonight. We'll start with the public meeting on the Draft Supplemental EIS,

00:03:29.460 --> 00:03:36.690

Megan Stone - AECOM: which will consist of a short presentation by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, followed by public comments.

00:03:37.150 --> 00:03:47.190

Megan Stone - AECOM: When public comments on the draft seis are finished, we'll end the public meeting and begin the ANILCA section 810 subsistence hearing,

00:03:47.490 --> 00:03:52.169

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will give a short presentation

00:03:52.240 --> 00:03:57.289

Megan Stone - AECOM: followed by accepting public comments on the draft subsistence findings.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: If you do not get the opportunity to offer your verbal public comments today,

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Megan Stone - AECOM: written public comments can be submitted on [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

00:04:07.340 --> 00:04:15.299

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll provide further information on how to submit your written public comments during the presentation, and in the Zoom chat.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: With that I'll turn it over to Bobbie Jo Skibo, who's the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service project manager for this effort, and she'll be giving a presentation on the Draft Supplemental EIS.

00:04:30.900 --> 00:04:55.749

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Hi, everybody! I hope you can hear us. We are in a different space today, so we're working out a few kinks. My name is Bobbie Jo Skibo. I am the senior planner and project leader of the Izembek Proposed Land Exchange and Road Project. I have been working almost close to 30 years on natural resource management and planning issues here in Alaska. I live currently in Palmer

00:04:55.750 --> 00:05:13.790

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: with my family and my three wild Alaska boys. And we are coming off, I think our- maybe this is meeting 6 or 7? I can't even remember, but we've had a wonderful time meeting with communities having virtual public meetings. We're sitting in the community of Bethel.

00:05:13.790 --> 00:05:38.770

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Very grateful to have had a meeting last night with the community here, and some of the folks from rural communities came in for it. So, today's meeting, we did have a geographic focus on the communities in the YK Delta; and we can explain that a little later on why we did that. But we're really grateful also to open up this forum to other members of the public and we're just grateful to be

00:05:38.770 --> 00:05:52.059

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: here to listen. I will pass it over to a few of my other colleagues, and then we will have a presentation after that. So, with that, I'd love to introduce our assistant regional director for refuges.

00:05:54.670 --> 00:06:04.729

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Hello! Good afternoon. My name is Karlin Itchoak. I'm the assistant regional director for refuges, based in Anchorage at the regional office, for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: I am today also with Bobbie Jo, and others here in Bethel, on the ancestral homelands of the Yupik people

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: and we acknowledge the stewardship of the Yupik people of these lands since time immemorial.

00:06:20.290 --> 00:06:25.919

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: We also recognize that the topic of today's discussion-

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: the proposal would occur on the traditional ancestral homelands of the Unangan people.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: As the assistant regional director for refuges, I like to start by reminding us that there are over 570 national wildlife

refuges throughout the United States, encompassing over 95 million acres of protected public lands.

00:06:54.260 --> 00:07:02.230

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Out of those 95 million acres, 76.8 million acres are here in Alaska

00:07:02.620 --> 00:07:10.199

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: and comprised of our 16 national wildlife refuges here in Alaska, Izembek being one of them.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: I was born and raised in Nome, Alaska. My grandparents on my father's side are from Utqiagvik, and my grandparents on my mother's side are from upstate New York.

00:07:22.805 --> 00:07:26.050

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: And my role here today is to listen,

00:07:26.060 --> 00:07:36.309

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: and I look forward to hearing your comments. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to our refuge manager from the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Thank you.

00:07:40.000 --> 00:08:04.810

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Good afternoon everyone. As Karlin noted, I am Maria Fosado. I'm the Izembek refuge manager. I've been working for the Fish and Wildlife Service for over 15 years now. I started with the Service working at various national wildlife refuges and wetland management districts in the state of Minnesota, and then eventually made my way to Alaska. I accepted the Izembek refuge manager position in

00:08:04.810 --> 00:08:18.640

Maria Fosado - USFWS: 2020, and I've been living and working out of Cold Bay since that time. So, I'm here to provide a little bit of background information on what we recognize today as Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. So, we'll go ahead and get started.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: Next slide, please.

00:08:23.170 --> 00:08:36.169

Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was first established as the Izembek National Wildlife Range, by public land order in 1960, as a refuge breeding ground and management area for all forms of wildlife.

00:08:36.220 --> 00:08:46.119

Maria Fosado - USFWS: In 1972, Izembek Lagoon and the surrounding watershed was protected by the Alaska Legislature through the establishment of the Izembek State Game Refuge.

00:08:46.520 --> 00:09:09.600

Maria Fosado - USFWS: And then, with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, otherwise known as ANILCA in 1980, the Izembek National Wildlife Range was redesignated as the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. Today that encompasses approximately 310,000 acres, of which approximately 300,000 were designated as Wilderness by Congress at that time.

00:09:09.650 --> 00:09:11.209

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Next slide, please.

00:09:13.650 --> 00:09:36.349

Maria Fosado - USFWS: The congressionally designated Izembek Wilderness areas comprise the majority of the refuge and became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. These areas are administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, for the protection of the areas, and for the preservation of their wilderness character.

00:09:36.590 --> 00:09:46.840

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Wilderness areas provide scenic wildlife and scientific values, as well as the opportunity for solitude, primitive, and unconfined types of recreation. Next slide, please.

00:09:50.380 --> 00:10:19.770

Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, each unit within the National Wildlife Refuge System is established to serve a statutory purpose that targets the conservation of a native species that depends on its lands and waters, and to administer those lands in accordance with their purposes. Activities are evaluated for appropriateness and compatibility. And with the passage of ANILCA and the redesignation from Izembek National Wildlife Range to the National Wildlife Refuge, Izembek Refuge did receive specific ANILCA refuge purposes,

00:10:19.770 --> 00:10:31.699

Maria Fosado - USFWS: which include to conserve fish and wildlife populations and their habitats and their natural diversity, including but not limited to waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds, brown bears, and salmonids;

00:10:32.290 --> 00:10:48.270

Maria Fosado - USFWS: to fulfill international treaty obligations with respect to fish and habitat and excuse me—fish and wildlife and their habitats; and to provide for the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and lastly, to ensure water, quality, and necessary water quantity.

00:10:48.330 --> 00:10:49.830

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Next slide, please.

00:10:52.590 --> 00:11:10.589

Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, was the first site in the United States to be designated as a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention in 1986, and then subsequently it was recognized as an important bird area of global significance by Birdlife International and the National Audubon Society.

00:11:10.920 --> 00:11:26.270

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Izembek Refuge received these global recognitions due to its diverse habitats, dynamic landscapes, and the unique geographical



location where it sits between the highly productive waters of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Next slide, please.

00:11:28.390 --> 00:11:41.309

Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, from brown bears to Pacific salmon, more than 200 species call this refuge home. At the heart of the Refuge, we'll find Izembek Lagoon, which is a coastal ecosystem that supports one of the world's largest eelgrass beds.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: Across Izembek Lagoon, separated by a narrow isthmus, we'll find Kinzarof Lagoon, which is considered one of the most significant eelgrass beds on the Pacific side of the Alaska Peninsula.

00:11:53.310 --> 00:12:07.419

Maria Fosado - USFWS: The location of Izembek Refuge along avian migration routes, combined with the abundant food resources provided by the eelgrass beds, make Izembek Lagoon one of the most important migratory bird staging and wintering habitats of the world.

00:12:07.670 --> 00:12:29.940

Maria Fosado - USFWS: The site is especially critical to many species of waterfowl, particularly geese, and shorebirds, that undertake transoceanic flights. The area supports virtually the entire population of Pacific black brant, supports half the world population of emperor geese, and a significant percentage of the population of Steller's eiders, and Taverner's Canada geese.

00:12:30.780 --> 00:12:51.619

Maria Fosado - USFWS: The highest density of brown bears within Izembek Refuge can be observed within the Joshua Green Water-Watershed to the northeast of Cold Bay; however, bears can be seen all throughout the refuge as they use a wide variety of habitats, and are using habitats along coastal shorelines to low-lying meadows, tundra's, streams, and into the alpine areas.

00:12:52.200 --> 00:13:16.000

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Caribou have a high profile as a refuge purpose species and are high value for subsistence users. The Southern Alaska Peninsula

Caribou Herd ranges from Port Moller all the way south to the southern end of the Alaska Peninsula, with its primary calving areas located just to the north of Izembek Refuge. Wintering areas have historically extended southward, encompassing Izembek Lagoon and the Cold Bay area.

00:13:16.000 --> 00:13:28.229

Maria Fosado - USFWS: The narrow isthmus has been an important movement corridor from these calving areas to wintering grounds. Izembek Refuge does support satellite populations of caribou year-round, however.

00:13:28.230 --> 00:13:46.200

Maria Fosado - USFWS: And lastly, Pacific salmon also have a high profile as a refuge purpose species and are a high value to subsistence users. Izembek Refuge does support five species of Pacific salmon, which return to the refuge and to the streams each year to spawn and fuel the coastal ecosystem.

00:13:46.240 --> 00:13:50.739

Maria Fosado - USFWS: With that, I'll go ahead and turn it over to Bobbie Jo for her presentation.

00:13:55.690 --> 00:14:25.530

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Hi, everybody! Okay. I'm going to take you down a little bit of memory lane. I am going to recognize, though, that this project did not start in 2009. The background definitely predates this, maybe by a few decades; there was efforts definitely dating 2003. There was an Environmental Impact Statement, for instance, and other activities that occurred before this. But we'll start in 2009, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act. We refer to that as the 2009 Act.

00:14:26.130 --> 00:14:43.980

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It directed the Secretary of Interior to analyze a land exchange between the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the wilderness area with the King Cove Corporation. It also directed us to prepare, as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an Environmental Impact Statement through the National Environmental Policy Act.

00:14:44.230 --> 00:14:52.259

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: In 2013, the Environmental Impact Statement was completed and the "No Action" alternative at that time was selected.

00:14:52.820 --> 00:15:13.110

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The in 2019, the Secretary of Interior, Bernhardt signed the Land Exchange—a different Land Exchange agreement. And in 2023, the sitting secretary, Secretary Haaland, withdrew from that 2019 agreement citing procedural flaws. So, that sort of brings us up to speed on why we're here today. Next slide.

00:15:17.410 --> 00:15:25.299

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The Draft Supplemental EIS that has just been released is a supplement to the 2013 Environmental Impact Statement.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It has been prepared at the request of Secretary Haaland, and it's for us to consider a newly proposed potential land exchange. This is based on an offer that was provided to the Service and Department from the King Cove Corporation.

00:15:39.420 --> 00:15:46.349

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This is located with the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, including the Congressional designated Wilderness, that Maria spoke about.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: In the in the Draft Supplemental EIS we are updating and evaluating information based on new information, new circumstances, anything that we can get our hands on. That is why this public comment period is so very important to us. We'll be taking everything we hear and receive into consideration.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The Supplemental EIS includes a "No Action" alternative which is customary for the National Environmental Policy Act process and four action alternatives that were evaluated in the 2013 EIS.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The supplement

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: adds an alternative, known as Alternative 6, and that is the new action alternative that has been analyzed. Next slide.

00:16:30.720 --> 00:16:54.080

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: 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 that is the surface and the subsurface of the United States to a corridor of land through the Refuge, including the congressionally designated Wilderness. Next slide.

00:16:57.300 --> 00:17:06.179

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The purposes of this Proposed Action are to provide a safe, reliable year-round transportation system for health and safety purposes.

00:17:06.220 --> 00:17:20.459

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This is with a particular emphasis on emergency medical evacuations between the two communities of King Cove and Cold Bay. Another purpose is to increase the overall conservation value of lands preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

00:17:20.670 --> 00:17:27.129

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And a third is to maintain or increase the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural Alaskans.

00:17:27.640 --> 00:17:42.659

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The need for this project is a pretty lengthy paragraph. We did not want to minimize by removing some of the words, so we kept it intact. You can find that and read it in section 1.4 of the Draft Supplement- Draft Supplemental EIS. Thank you. Next slide.

00:17:46.060 --> 00:18:04.999

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, just to orient folks to the project area, and I think I have somebody on the background on this that might be able to help point some things out. But you can see that there is King Cove down in the

right. Yep, there we go—right there is King Cove, and then Cold Bay is up near the purple.

00:18:05.140 --> 00:18:17.820

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And some of the alternatives that were part of the 2013 EIS, and as a part of this supplemental EIS, are documented there on that map. You can see a green and white hash line, that is a ferry.

00:18:17.880 --> 00:18:20.720

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The purple and white line is a Hovercraft.

00:18:20.770 --> 00:18:44.600

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then for purposes of discussion here today, the red line there is the Alternative 6 and the proposed land exchange road corridor, and you can kind of see the green outline where it crosses over the wilderness boundary. There's another map that I'll show you here in a second that really shows the difference of the lands exchange from King Cove, as well. Next slide.

00:18:47.440 --> 00:18:57.249

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. Just again, just to- to go big picture here, we have a range of alternatives that have been considered. The draft considers, again, the "No Action" Alternative,

00:18:57.440 --> 00:19:15.570

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alternatives 2 and 3 are considered no longer viable. This is because they included state parcels at that time that are no longer party to this this process, but they were included in the Supplemental EIS for comparative purposes only, and we'll show you a slide a little later on the comparison.

00:19:15.780 --> 00:19:27.700

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alternative 4 is the Hovercraft Operations, Alternative 5 is a Lenard Harbor Ferry, and again, Alternative 6 is the 2024 Proposed Land Exchange and Road Alignment. Next slide.

00:19:31.890 --> 00:19:37.439

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, let's dig in a little bit to the alternatives that are still retained as viable.

00:19:37.440 --> 00:20:02.430

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the Hovercraft from the northeast terminal. This was from, again, the 2003 plus the 2013 EISs. Alternative 4 was considered reasonable through those processes analyzed in detail and has still been considered as a viable alternative for our Supplemental EIS. It considers operations of the Hovercraft for six days of service

00:20:02.430 --> 00:20:07.129

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: a week, between the northeast terminal and Cross Wind Cove.

00:20:07.450 --> 00:20:08.550

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alternative 5 would use a ferry to travel approximately 14 miles between a terminal in Lenard Harbor, and it would include a substantially modified Cold Bay dock.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We were notified when we were in Cold Bay last week that the borough is in the planning stages with Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and that information will be forthcoming as to what the design would include for a replacement dock.

00:20:39.000 --> 00:20:47.470

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This would not include a land exchange, and it has been retained as a viable alternative for our Supplemental EIS. Thank you. Next slide.

00:20:50.630 --> 00:20:58.209

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so let's dig in a little deeper to Alternative 6, which is the 2024 Proposed Land Exchange and Road Alignment.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This alternative has been identified by the Department of interior as a preferred alternative.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This does not constitute a final decision, but that will ultimately be made in the final step of the NEPA process through the record of decision.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, if you can see on the map, we start at the number one, that is the terminus of the King Cove Access Road near the northeast terminal. There is a current road from King Cove to that point.

00:21:27.280 --> 00:21:36.260

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It then goes through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, and you can see the green outline which is the congressionally designated Wilderness.

00:21:36.370 --> 00:21:44.090

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The red line does have little red dots along the corridor, and those are material sites that I'll speak about here in a second.

00:21:44.180 --> 00:22:12.310

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It then goes to number three, and the road corridor would terminate at the intersection of Outer Marker Road and Blinn Lake Loop, if you've ever been in that area to know where that's at. Okay. So, on this map, you will also see the Kinzaroff Lagoon Parcels. We--some people will refer to those as the bookends, and those are the lagoon parcels that equal 1,739 acres. We'll talk a little bit more about acres here in a second.

00:22:12.310 --> 00:22:22.989

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then right below that on the map is the Mortensens Lagoon Parcel, and so you could start to see a little bit of the acres and where the land is that King Cove would be exchanging.

00:22:23.320 --> 00:22:24.570

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

00:22:27.140 --> 00:22:41.510

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so to speak about acres. The Proposed Land Exchange and Road Alignment. Some key components are that a total of 31,198 acres would come from King Cove to the Federal Government.

00:22:41.810 --> 00:22:55.200

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Out of the 31,198 acres, 29,459 would be surface acres, and 1,739 would include surface and subsurface.

00:22:55.710 --> 00:23:08.010

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The 1,739 acres that you saw there, the "bookends", those would be the acres that would go back into the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge as congressionally designated Wilderness.

00:23:08.460 --> 00:23:20.909

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Of the total 490 acres that would come from the Federal Government, from the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, those would go back to King Cove for the proposed land exchange and road corridor.

00:23:21.260 --> 00:23:33.560

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Of the 490 acres, 484 of those would be surface and subsurface, and would also include 6 acres of subsurface used for a material site.

00:23:34.610 --> 00:23:45.069

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Of the 490 acres, 336 of those are currently within the congressionally designated Wilderness areas that you saw in that green outline.

00:23:45.670 --> 00:23:51.979

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Another component of this would include an 18.9-mile, single lane gravel road,



00:23:52.100 --> 00:24:07.550

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and it would have a total of 15 material sites used for this project. 13 would be within the road corridor, and then two would have a satellite off into an area a little bit further from that road corridor

00:24:07.620 --> 00:24:08.779

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

00:24:11.180 --> 00:24:33.930

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Another key component of Alternative 6 is that it would be restricted- restricted, pardon me- to non-commercial uses and further restricted for uses necessary for health and safety purposes and access to the Refuge resources by federally qualified subsistence users who are actively engaged in subsistence activities.

00:24:34.010 --> 00:24:35.090

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

00:24:37.830 --> 00:24:42.940

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, there is a lot on this slide. But we wanted to reiterate,

00:24:43.461 --> 00:24:48.129

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: that-I'm going to minimize something here, so I can see it a little better. Pardon me.

00:24:48.880 --> 00:25:17.619

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So, if you look at this-the road corridor (miles), we've added the alternative 2 and 3 because those were road alignments from the 2013 EIS. They are no longer viable, as I've already mentioned. We've put them here for comparative purposes, so you can see how they stack up against Alternative 6. So, for the road corridor (miles) for alternative 6, we have 18.9 miles.

00:25:17.710 --> 00:25:39.340

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The road corridor width for Alternatives 2 and 3 were assumed to be 100-foot width. Alternative 6 now, it varies between 100 feet to 200 feet, and that is including the material sites along the corridor. That is because of the topography and avoidance of some of the water features along the way.

00:25:40.020 --> 00:25:48.540

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Again, to reiterate the numbers. The acres proposed for exchange from the Izembek National Wildlife refuge would be 490

00:25:48.940 --> 00:25:54.400

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: surface and subsurface, 336 of which are currently Wilderness.

00:25:54.670 --> 00:26:03.990

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Now, the acres that the King Cove Corporation would be giving us back to the National Wildlife Refuge System are 31,198.

00:26:04.060 --> 00:26:30.009

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Again, 1,739 surface and subsurface would be back to the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in the form of Wilderness. Now this is where a little different number comes in. The 29,459 acres remaining from King Cove Corporation, these would be surface only and those would be added to the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge.

00:26:30.460 --> 00:26:46.969

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We also have the acres below there for some other portions of alternative 2 and 3, just to show you that there were other components, but those are no longer a part of our Supplemental EIS due to some of the state lands that are no longer party to this agreement.

00:26:47.280 --> 00:26:48.780

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, next slide.

00:26:50.890 --> 00:27:06.369

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So that is a high-level perspective of the alternatives that are being considered in the Supplemental EIS. So now that

you've heard that, we do hope that you will participate today in the public process by providing public input. But

00:27:06.370 --> 00:27:30.440

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: you know, there's a lot of information still within this document, 1,400 pages to be exact, and you might want to take a look. How you're going to do that is to take a minute to orient to the sections that are in boxes in the beginning of different chapters. Those will help you understand what has been summarized—those are the summaries of what has been changed substantive information within that chapter.

00:27:30.670 --> 00:27:45.750

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Now, any text that has been changed or modified within the different chapters will be highlighted also in yellow. And any sections with headers, tables, etc., those will also have an asterisk. So those are some ways to help you orient to what is new.

00:27:46.190 --> 00:27:48.820

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. Next slide, please.

00:27:50.790 --> 00:28:09.729

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So some new information here on the slide today, hot off the press, you can go to get the Draft SEIS and the public comment form at regulations.gov. You can search for that docket or you can just put in Izembek SEIS, and it should come up for you.

00:28:09.750 --> 00:28:19.649

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Just within the last two hours, I did get official notification that there has been a 45-day comment period extension from the Department.

00:28:19.650 --> 00:28:44.650

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We have had some requests from different entities, some of you may be on the call today. So just know that there is an official extension from December 30th, 2024 and now the comment period will end on February 13th, 2025 at 11:59 Eastern Standard Time. If we receive public comments postmarked by February 13th, 2025, those will

00:28:44.650 --> 00:29:07.040

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: go into the public record. And we really do appreciate you taking your time to submit all of the meaningful input that you have. At this time- you know, we are going to be working after February 13th to analyze and figure out what the pile of information we have, and how to update the Draft Supplemental EIS relevant to that information.

00:29:07.040 --> 00:29:12.759

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then we will be producing a Final SEIS and a record of decision.

00:29:12.980 --> 00:29:32.400

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: As many of us are aware, we are in a transition of administrations. And so, at this time we don't have a full understanding of what that timeline will look like once the new leadership gets into place, but we do anticipate that the Final SEIS and the record of decision will be issued in the year of 2025.

00:29:32.480 --> 00:29:46.070

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Thank you, I think at this point the next slide starts to speak in the public comment period. And again, really appreciate everybody's time and look forward to hearing what you all have to say. So, with that, Megan.

00:29:47.890 --> 00:29:57.699

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you, Bobbie Jo. We'll go ahead and get started with our public comment session to accept comments on the Draft SEIS.

00:29:57.840 --> 00:30:05.509

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll go ahead and read through instructions for those participants who indicated they wanted to offer verbal public comment

00:30:05.630 --> 00:30:10.359

Megan Stone - AECOM: on the Draft SEIS when they pre-registered for today's meeting.

00:30:10.610 --> 00:30:16.970

Megan Stone - AECOM: We have a list of these participants and will accept comments in the order of registration.

00:30:17.270 --> 00:30:23.319

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you registered before the start time of today's meeting, you're on our pre-registered commenter list.

00:30:23.610 --> 00:30:30.690

Megan Stone - AECOM: When it is your turn to provide your comment, we'll read your name aloud from the list and display your name on the screen.

00:30:31.030 --> 00:30:35.440

Megan Stone - AECOM: We will also display the name of the commenter who is next in line.

00:30:35.620 --> 00:30:44.129

Megan Stone - AECOM: When you hear your name called out, please use the raise hand feature so that we know you are available and ready to offer your comment.

00:30:44.680 --> 00:30:56.070

Megan Stone - AECOM: You can access the raise hand feature by clicking on either the reactions icon or the participants list icon, which are both located at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

00:30:56.230 --> 00:31:02.790

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you wave your mouse back and forth across the bottom of your Zoom screen, these icons should appear.

00:31:03.010 --> 00:31:08.199

Megan Stone - AECOM: You may need to exit out of your full screen Zoom view to see those icons.

00:31:08.410 --> 00:31:16.440

Megan Stone - AECOM: You can then select the raise hand feature located either in the reactions icon or at the bottom of that participants list.

00:31:16.900 --> 00:31:27.570

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have any phone callers on, but I'll keep an eye out in case we need to provide instructions for how to raise your phone—your hand if you're on the phone.

00:31:28.630 --> 00:31:34.399

Megan Stone - AECOM: Once you've raised your hand; you'll then be unmuted so that you can provide your verbal public comment.

00:31:34.680 --> 00:31:42.070

Megan Stone - AECOM: You may be double muted. If that is the case, we will prompt you to unmute yourself on your end so that we can hear you.

00:31:42.260 --> 00:31:48.329

Megan Stone - AECOM: Please spell out your first and last name for the record before providing your verbal public comment.

00:31:48.620 --> 00:31:53.510

Megan Stone - AECOM: And if you are representing an organization or group, please say so during your comment.

00:31:53.900 --> 00:31:57.560

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll allow 3 minutes for you to offer your comment.

00:31:58.140 --> 00:32:03.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: Each person will be given up to 3 minutes to speak, so that everyone has a chance to comment.

00:32:03.950 --> 00:32:08.220

Megan Stone - AECOM: You will see the clock on the screen, and it'll show when your time is up.

00:32:08.490 --> 00:32:13.809

Megan Stone - AECOM: We will let you know when your time is nearly expired, so you have time to finish.

00:32:14.130 --> 00:32:21.960

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you're not able to complete your comment in 3 minutes, we'll try to save time to come back to you if time permits.

00:32:22.540 --> 00:32:27.520

Megan Stone - AECOM: After you've provided your comment, we'll mute you and move on to our next commenter

00:32:27.580 --> 00:32:40.529

Megan Stone - AECOM: again. Once we've worked our way through the current list of pre-registered commenters, if we have time, we'll move on to those who registered after the start time of today's meeting who selected they wanted to offer a comment.

00:32:40.750 --> 00:32:53.909

Megan Stone - AECOM: If we still have time remaining after that, which I think we will, we'll open the verbal public comment portion up to anyone who would like to offer a comment on the Draft SEIS who has not already done so.

00:32:54.600 --> 00:32:56.010

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:32:58.190 --> 00:33:09.099

Megan Stone - AECOM: On the screen here, I've just included some graphics in case anyone needs a refresher on Zoom. So, on the left is that participants list. That's where you can find

00:33:09.180 --> 00:33:15.139

Megan Stone - AECOM: the raise hand icon one way. The other way is just looking for the reactions button,

00:33:15.280 --> 00:33:18.109

Megan Stone - AECOM: and that's the other way you'll find that raise hand.

00:33:19.200 --> 00:33:27.370

Megan Stone - AECOM: So I'll give it a second here, and then we'll go ahead and get started. Next slide, please.

00:33:31.500 --> 00:33:34.650

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright, we'll officially begin.

00:33:35.220 --> 00:33:42.830

Megan Stone - AECOM: I do want to note this verbal public comment portion of the meeting is being recorded as part of the official record.

00:33:43.050 --> 00:33:49.000

Megan Stone - AECOM: Your camera and mic control settings will be restricted. You'll be unmuted when we unmute you.

00:33:49.370 --> 00:33:54.769

Megan Stone - AECOM: And we do want to hear from all members of the public, so we'll use the following guidelines today.

00:33:54.990 --> 00:34:02.039

Megan Stone - AECOM: First, please be mindful of the length of your comment so that everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so.

00:34:02.250 --> 00:34:07.120

Megan Stone - AECOM: Second, please be respectful of others and their viewpoints.

00:34:07.200 --> 00:34:10.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: Third, please refrain from using profanity.

00:34:10.590 --> 00:34:27.720

Megan Stone - AECOM: While passion is welcomed in your comment, policy requires that we mute anyone who uses inappropriate language because we are



recording this meeting, and others may be live streaming. So please avoid inappropriate language. If that does happen, we'll provide a reminder

00:34:27.790 --> 00:34:33.670

Megan Stone - AECOM: before unmuting the person to try again using words acceptable to all ages.

00:34:34.389 --> 00:34:40.109

Megan Stone - AECOM: Okay, we will start with our first pre-registered commenter, Bryan Daniels.

00:34:41.489 --> 00:34:45.980

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi Bryan, could you spell your first and last name for the record, please?

00:34:45.989 --> 00:34:50.359

Bryan Daniels: Hello. My name is Bryan Daniels, B-R-Y-A-N

00:34:50.959 --> 00:34:52.999

Bryan Daniels: D-A-N-I-E-L-S.

00:34:53.920 --> 00:34:56.149

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you, Bryan. You can begin your comment.

00:34:57.100 --> 00:34:58.273

Bryan Daniels: Thank you.

00:34:58.960 --> 00:35:04.700

Bryan Daniels: Thanks for this opportunity. My name is Bryan Daniels, and I'm making a comment as a member of the public today.

00:35:04.890 --> 00:35:22.550

Bryan Daniels: I have been a resident for Bethel for almost 9 years, but I'm on vacation currently so I was unable to provide testimony in person

yesterday. I will be laying out some personal bias as well as some facts that Fish and Wildlife Draft SEIS also outlines, that I feel should disqualify the road from being a warranted alternative.

00:35:23.370 --> 00:35:33.920

Bryan Daniels: I'll begin—I'll begin by stating that I am aware I am biased, and I'm putting my values for wildlife, wilderness, and love of the area above the potential protection of human life.

00:35:34.140 --> 00:35:58.110

Bryan Daniels: I do take people's concerns for emergency situations seriously as I understand them considering I live and work in a rural area, but I am skeptical that it is a true objective to build the road. There is inherent risk due to the lack of emergency evacuation of living in rural Alaska, and although we do things to mitigate it, we must admit that that risk will always be there if we are not living in a populated area with adequate medical care.

00:35:59.380 --> 00:36:21.550

Bryan Daniels: I conducted my Master's research at Izembek in 2011, specifically on Kinzaroff Lagoon, as well as Izembek Lagoon. I spent two months living on Kinzaroff Lagoon during the winter in order to collect data, and I was immersed in the wildlife, became attuned to the land surrounding it, and have a connection to the area because of the experience. I have also returned to Cold Bay numerous times.

00:36:21.590 --> 00:36:26.990

Bryan Daniels: I often say that Cold Bay is one of my favorite places in Alaska, and the area and people there have shaped who I am today.

00:36:27.854 --> 00:36:34.005

Bryan Daniels: During my time I was able to witness caribou and wolves migrating using the isthmus.

00:36:34.760 --> 00:36:41.620

Bryan Daniels: And although many people don't want, or will never have the opportunity to see that, I think it should be an option for them.

00:36:42.738 --> 00:36:44.730

Bryan Daniels: I'm not going to quote

00:36:44.780 --> 00:36:53.679

Bryan Daniels: a bunch of the SEIS, but in many locations in the SEIS, it directly goes against the Fish and Wildlife and

00:36:53.790 --> 00:36:55.730

Bryan Daniels: Izembek Refuge

00:36:57.510 --> 00:37:01.078

Bryan Daniels: missions. And I am a realist.

00:37:01.960 --> 00:37:18.659

Bryan Daniels: Having lived in rural area, rural places across the country, once a road is in place the use by people is going to happen whether or not there's a gate. And Fish and Wildlife has to be willing to admit that it's a scenario that people are going to use the road if it is put in

00:37:18.710 --> 00:37:25.310

Bryan Daniels: for non-emergency purposes and non-subsistence purposes.

00:37:26.630 --> 00:37:30.138

Bryan Daniels: I also believe that Alternate 5 or

00:37:31.130 --> 00:37:39.880

Bryan Daniels: other alternatives that were not in the SEIS, such as a new airstrip on King Cove Land, which was in the 1999-

00:37:40.400 --> 00:37:50.090

Bryan Daniels: or—in an economic analysis previously, is a warranted alternative. So,

00:37:50.230 --> 00:38:11.630

Bryan Daniels: in closing, I do want to say that I empathize with the people of King Cove on wanting a road for emergency purposes, but the degradation of wilderness is too great. It sets too great a precedence for lands conversion and it directly goes against Fish and Wildlife and Izembek missions and purpose; so, I ask that you seriously consider not doing the land exchange. Thanks.

00:38:13.320 --> 00:38:20.069

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Bryan. We'll go ahead and move on to our next pre-registered commenter,

00:38:20.330 --> 00:38:22.330

Megan Stone - AECOM: who is Deborah Williams.

00:38:22.430 --> 00:38:30.879

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have Deborah in our attendees list today, but we will circle back and see if they join later on.

00:38:31.400 --> 00:38:36.909

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that we'll move to our next pre-registered commenter, Julie Toomey.

00:38:39.610 --> 00:38:40.850

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Julie!

00:38:41.080 --> 00:38:44.229

Megan Stone - AECOM: Could you spell your first and last name for the record?

00:38:44.510 --> 00:38:48.189

Julie Toomey: Yes, Julie Toomey. J-U-L-

00:38:48.500 --> 00:38:55.050

Julie Toomey: I-E. Last name is Toomey. T, as in Thomas, O-O-M, as in Michael, EY-.

00:38:56.210 --> 00:38:58.410

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you so much. You can begin your comment.

00:38:58.760 --> 00:39:08.779

Julie Toomey: Hi! Good afternoon. My name is Julie Toomey, and I'm the Vice President of Regional Affairs for the Aleut Corporation. Aleut is the Alaska Native Regional Corporation

00:39:08.940 --> 00:39:13.770

Julie Toomey: serving over 5,000 Unangan shareholders and descendants worldwide.

00:39:14.010 --> 00:39:18.289

Julie Toomey: I am one of those shareholders and my family is from King Cove, Alaska.

00:39:18.340 --> 00:39:36.540

Julie Toomey: I stand—or I stand or sit, I'm here on zoom before you, passionately advocating for the completion of a single lane gravel road from King Cove to Coal Bay. It is a vital lifeline that has been unjustly denied to our people in the community of King Cove for far too long.

00:39:36.940 --> 00:39:43.839

Julie Toomey: Nowhere else in the United States have people been denied access to healthcare, let alone a road to and from their hospital

00:39:43.900 --> 00:39:48.370

Julie Toomey: or to their McDonald's, as the community of King Cove has.

00:39:48.510 --> 00:39:54.720

Julie Toomey: The audacity of having to ask for this road, that is just a commonsense solution for almost 50 years,

00:39:55.100 --> 00:39:57.790

Julie Toomey: greater than my lifetime, is an injustice.

00:39:57.930 --> 00:40:02.409

Julie Toomey: To suggest that the risk is inherent of being in rural Alaska, that is true;

00:40:02.520 --> 00:40:07.320

Julie Toomey: but when there is an option to build something that can save human lives, it just makes sense.

00:40:07.480 --> 00:40:10.980

Julie Toomey: And Karlin's right, these are our ancestral lands.

00:40:11.180 --> 00:40:19.390

Julie Toomey: King Cove Corporation is offering over 31,000 of our ancestral lands for just under 500 acres

00:40:19.630 --> 00:40:21.519

Julie Toomey: of our ancestral lands

00:40:21.850 --> 00:40:24.449

Julie Toomey: to build a road for emergency uses only.

00:40:24.590 --> 00:40:30.170

Julie Toomey: Fish and Wildlife Service has noted that Alternative 6 is the preferred option, and rightfully so.

00:40:30.500 --> 00:40:41.029

Julie Toomey: The marine options have been tried, and over 257 Med Evacs have occurred since 2013 due to the marine options just not being safe or reliable.

00:40:41.610 --> 00:40:42.960

Julie Toomey: We,

00:40:43.630 --> 00:40:52.950

Julie Toomey: the Unangan, are the stewards of the land, and Fish and Wildlife Service has ownership of our ancestral lands and that is something I know all of our Alaska natives understand.

00:40:53.340 --> 00:41:18.450

Julie Toomey: We are considering a road for human safety, and human safety has to be number one priority. Stewardship of the land, waterfowl, and waters are just as important to human safety as well. We are to continue to live and thrive on our ancestral land, so we would ask that our collective Alaskan native tribes and village corporations join us and Fish and Wildlife Service in celebrating and rooting for preferred option number 6.

00:41:18.540 --> 00:41:27.659

Julie Toomey: We are rooting for human rights and environmental justice. Across the country there are countless wildlife refuges that have extensive and active two lane roads,

00:41:27.930 --> 00:41:41.839

Julie Toomey: and some of those roads and refuges are San Diego Bay and Gray's Harbor National Refuges. Both boast large eelgrass beds and see hundreds of thousands of shorebirds each year, including the black brant.

00:41:43.020 --> 00:41:56.809

Julie Toomey: These—both of these national refuges are surrounded by highly urbanized areas. We are, again, grateful that Fish and Wildlife noted that this is preferred option number 6 is to provide a road for human safety.

00:41:56.950 --> 00:42:06.580

Julie Toomey: And if such vibrant refuges, like San Diego Bay and Gray's Harbor, can exist with roads nearby,

00:42:07.410 --> 00:42:13.109

Julie Toomey: prioritizing our human safety doesn't have to come at the expense of environmental stewardship. Thank you so much.

00:42:14.750 --> 00:42:22.420

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Julie. We'll go ahead and move on to our next commenter, Marcia Rutan.

00:42:23.970 --> 00:42:27.379

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll go ahead and unmute you now, Marcia.

00:42:31.910 --> 00:42:34.459

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi there! Are you able to hear us?

00:42:34.460 --> 00:42:35.919

Marcia Rutan: Yes. Can you hear me?

00:42:36.420 --> 00:42:41.629

Megan Stone - AECOM: We can. Would you mind spelling your first and last name for the record, please?

00:42:41.930 --> 00:42:45.460

Marcia Rutan: Marcia, M-A-R-C I-A.

00:42:45.610 --> 00:42:49.360

Marcia Rutan: Rutan, R-U-T-A-N.

00:42:51.020 --> 00:42:52.940

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you. You can begin your comment.

00:42:53.150 --> 00:43:11.180

Marcia Rutan: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I actually am primarily here to learn, through hearing testimonies. That being said, I do come in with a very deep concern about the impact on the animals and plants of this road.

00:43:11.330 --> 00:43:33.509

Marcia Rutan: The integrity of the ecological refuge habitat, given the unique role it plays in supporting the animals mentioned earlier, which I



won't repeat all over again. I do want to say that I am concerned about people's health and safety. I myself lived on an island for 13 years, with only ferry service

00:43:33.950 --> 00:43:43.630

Marcia Rutan: to get off the island in case of emergency. So, I have deep compassion and concern for the people, however, I still

00:43:43.780 --> 00:43:47.350

Marcia Rutan: will say that my bias at this time leans toward

00:43:47.440 --> 00:44:05.430

Marcia Rutan: the protection of that land and habitat. I did also grow up in Grace Harbor, and so now I am going to do some research to find out perceptions of how that road has impacted that refuge. I will do further study and I will go ahead and submit

00:44:05.430 --> 00:44:25.469

Marcia Rutan: a written comment. And like I said, actually earlier, I'm really here primarily to learn. I am a member of the Alaska Wilderness League and also come from that viewpoint. So, I'm going to keep my time short, and thank you for this chance to be here and for all that I'm learning today.

00:44:27.220 --> 00:44:28.329

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you, Marcia.

00:44:29.010 --> 00:44:35.160

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll move on to our next commenter, who is Reno Sommerhalder.

00:44:36.180 --> 00:44:38.210

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll unmute you now.

00:44:38.460 --> 00:44:42.640

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Reno! Could you spell your first and last name for the record, please?

00:44:43.755 --> 00:44:45.730

Reno Sommerhalder: Yes. Can you hear me?

00:44:46.240 --> 00:44:47.139

Megan Stone - AECOM: We can.

00:44:47.140 --> 00:44:54.759

Reno Sommerhalder: Okay, wonderful. Well, my- my first and last name is Reno Somerhalder. It's R-E-N-O.

00:44:54.880 --> 00:45:00.890

Reno Sommerhalder: Last name is spelled S-O-double M-E-R-H-A-L-D-E-R.

00:45:02.340 --> 00:45:03.210

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

00:45:04.490 --> 00:45:09.509

Reno Sommerhalder: First of all, I highly appreciate being able to comment on this

00:45:10.000 --> 00:45:18.430

Reno Sommerhalder: issue. I'm-I'm actually, I live in Canada. I live in in Canadian National Park

00:45:18.570 --> 00:45:21.720

Reno Sommerhalder: and I'm highly familiar with

00:45:21.910 --> 00:45:32.970

Reno Sommerhalder: conservation related issues such as this one. And-and I feel very privileged again to be able to comment on an issue that seems so far away from me, yet

00:45:33.240 --> 00:45:58.710

Reno Sommerhalder: it connects us. We are connected, you, there, and this beautiful Izembek Refuge that I've had the pleasure to visit for the last three years. It is an absolute ecological gem, and those ecological gems are disappearing worldwide everywhere you look. That is why it is absolutely pertinent that you guys, and we, do everything possible to preserve

00:45:59.313 --> 00:46:15.339

Reno Sommerhalder: these intact places of Wilderness; and I therefore urge you to adopt the "No Action" option of no road, as hard as it may be for the people that might live in King Cove.

00:46:15.480 --> 00:46:28.540

Reno Sommerhalder: We have to come to a place where we put priority on the ecological integrity, on ecological health of our last wilderness places on the planet. Again, they are disappearing.

00:46:28.540 --> 00:46:50.940

Reno Sommerhalder: And the fact that I'm, as a Canadian, being able to comment on an Alaskan issue makes this kind of—makes it sort of unique for me. But I think we are all connected through these ecosystems, and I think it's an issue of international concern that we protect these places. A road is often the beginning of an end, we see that worldwide.

00:46:51.070 --> 00:46:57.559

Reno Sommerhalder: That road will not be able to be mitigated by whatever, some things are not.

00:46:57.600 --> 00:47:08.949

Reno Sommerhalder: You cannot mitigate some impacts, and one of the impacts are roads. Roads is one of the most destructive human impacts that we know of besides climate change maybe.

00:47:09.130 --> 00:47:12.599

Reno Sommerhalder: So again, I urge you to adopt the no option.

00:47:13.365 --> 00:47:18.149

Reno Sommerhalder: Please do not go for that land exchange for the sake

00:47:18.210 --> 00:47:29.019

Reno Sommerhalder: of our future down the road. This is not necessarily only about bears and birds and butterflies, but it is also about people. It is also about human health.

00:47:29.814 --> 00:47:38.440

Reno Sommerhalder: With intact ecosystems—or humans need intact ecosystems that are healthy and vibrant, and roads would do the opposite.

00:47:38.837 --> 00:47:46.880

Reno Sommerhalder: I think I'm at the end of my comment. And again, thank you very much for all the work to all of you do, and highly appreciate it.

00:47:48.300 --> 00:47:50.430

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Reno.

00:47:50.760 --> 00:47:56.079

Megan Stone - AECOM: We will move to our next pre-registered commenter, who is Jean Public.

00:47:57.090 --> 00:48:05.410

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have Jean in our attendees list, but we will circle back to see if they join us later on.

00:48:06.730 --> 00:48:15.740

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that we'll move to our last individual, who signed up to provide a comment on the Draft SEIS when they registered for this meeting;

00:48:16.060 --> 00:48:18.140

Megan Stone - AECOM: and that is Drew Martin.

00:48:19.390 --> 00:48:25.330

Megan Stone - AECOM: Drew, if you'd like to provide a comment, please raise your hand and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted.

00:48:33.400 --> 00:48:37.480

Megan Stone - AECOM: Just in case you're having trouble with that raise hand feature,

00:48:37.580 --> 00:48:40.089

Megan Stone - AECOM: I will go ahead and unmute you.

00:48:40.380 --> 00:48:45.149

Megan Stone - AECOM: There, I see you! Just a moment, here.

00:48:46.050 --> 00:48:48.170

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi! Drew, can you hear us?

00:48:54.610 --> 00:48:56.640

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll prompt you to unmute.

00:48:57.480 --> 00:48:59.450

Drew Martin: Okay, can you hear me now?

00:48:59.980 --> 00:49:04.399

Megan Stone - AECOM: We can hear you. Could you spell your first and last name for the record, please?

00:49:04.400 --> 00:49:06.359

Drew Martin: Yes. D-R-E-W.

00:49:06.580 --> 00:49:11.170

Drew Martin: M-A-R-T-I-N. My name-

00:49:11.170 --> 00:49:13.180

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thanks so much. You—you can begin.

00:49:13.580 --> 00:49:15.289

Drew Martin: Yes, my name is Drew Martin. I'm a

00:49:15.370 --> 00:49:18.289

Drew Martin: member of the Sierra Club, a volunteer member.

00:49:18.580 --> 00:49:23.839

Drew Martin: and I am very much in favor of the “No Action” alternative.

00:49:24.200 --> 00:49:28.659

Drew Martin: I think that building a road is a very negative

00:49:28.720 --> 00:49:33.359

Drew Martin: impact on wilderness and sets a dangerous precedent.

00:49:34.080 --> 00:49:40.209

Drew Martin: It looks to me like there are a number of other options, including upgrading the medical facility

00:49:40.540 --> 00:49:42.420

Drew Martin: there in the town.

00:49:43.160 --> 00:49:47.879

Drew Martin: Also, people have said that you can use a Med Evac.

00:49:48.580 --> 00:49:54.410

Drew Martin: I really wonder how many times it's absolutely necessary. I also think driving on the road—

00:49:54.430 --> 00:49:59.800

Drew Martin: if it's dangerous, too dangerous for Hovercraft, then I would think driving would be equally dangerous.

00:50:00.060 --> 00:50:03.110

Drew Martin: So, I'm not sure why people who said [audio cut out]

00:50:06.160 --> 00:50:15.830

Drew Martin: if the weather was bad. I think that the alternative to build the road will open up Pandora's box.

00:50:16.150 --> 00:50:25.429

Drew Martin: People will use the road for other purposes and violate the sanctity of the wilderness preserve that has been established.

00:50:25.610 --> 00:50:34.609

Drew Martin: Congress established these preserves, or these areas, so that they would be secure from activities.

00:50:34.790 --> 00:50:45.400

Drew Martin: It seems to me that the road would become used for commercial other activities. Once you had available road, there would be lobbying to use it for other purposes.

00:50:45.580 --> 00:50:49.380

Drew Martin: I don't think it would be only for medical reasons.

00:50:50.240 --> 00:50:58.980

Drew Martin: I suggest that the best alternative is for you to build a better facility, which I'm sure, for the cost of a road could be done

00:50:59.130 --> 00:51:06.510

Drew Martin: and have the emergency facility there in the town. If there's an emergency that could handle it.

00:51:06.590 --> 00:51:10.979

Drew Martin: I really wonder how many things could not be handled at such a site,

00:51:11.400 --> 00:51:17.850

Drew Martin: and I believe you could build something that would be equal to the hospital that you're evacuating people to.

00:51:18.530 --> 00:51:22.039

Drew Martin: I think the other problem is, it sets a dangerous precedent

00:51:22.210 --> 00:51:29.989

Drew Martin: and the lands which you've proposed to swap were not equal to the areas that are in wilderness protection.

00:51:30.530 --> 00:51:35.879

Drew Martin: The road itself- the building of the road, will violate the Wilderness

00:51:35.920 --> 00:51:40.660

Drew Martin: itself as well as the people using the road.

00:51:41.340 --> 00:51:45.690

Drew Martin: Even a gate people will violate, and I don't know how much

00:51:45.810 --> 00:51:49.880

Drew Martin: you're going to be able to monitor that, particularly

00:51:50.090 --> 00:51:54.359

Drew Martin: when the weather is bad to keep people from using such a road.



00:51:55.020 --> 00:51:59.669

Drew Martin: So, I am asking that you not move forward with this activity.

00:52:04.310 --> 00:52:06.400

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Drew.

00:52:07.800 --> 00:52:09.570

Megan Stone - AECOM: We will go ahead

00:52:09.870 --> 00:52:15.969

Megan Stone - AECOM: and take a moment now to see if there's any other individuals who would like to provide a comment.

00:52:16.280 --> 00:52:20.449

Megan Stone - AECOM: We reached the end of our list of pre-registered commenters.

00:52:20.920 --> 00:52:27.590

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll be ready to accept comments on the Draft SEIS for the next

00:52:27.900 --> 00:52:36.649

Megan Stone - AECOM: 15 to 20 minute or so, and then we will move into the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing portion of the meeting.

00:52:40.290 --> 00:52:49.479

Megan Stone - AECOM: So again, if you'd like to provide a comment. We have instructions up on the screen, at the top, of how you can access that raise hand feature.

00:52:49.800 --> 00:52:59.090

Megan Stone - AECOM: but you can find that raise hand feature in your participants list or the reactions icon at the bottom of your Zoom toolbar.

00:52:59.670 --> 00:53:05.480

Megan Stone - AECOM: And if anyone is struggling at any point to get that raise hand feature to work

00:53:05.490 --> 00:53:11.799

Megan Stone - AECOM: or their audio, please do reach out to us in the chat, and we'll get you some support.

00:54:43.510 --> 00:54:49.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. I see that we have a hand raised from Steven. I'll go ahead and unmute you now.

00:54:50.390 --> 00:54:55.270

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Steven, can you spell your first and last name for the record, please?

00:54:56.880 --> 00:55:00.360

Steven Mandel: S-T-E-V-E-N M-A-N-D-E-L.

00:55:01.300 --> 00:55:02.150

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

00:55:06.580 --> 00:55:08.260

Megan Stone - AECOM: You can begin your comment.

00:55:11.520 --> 00:55:13.270

Steven Mandel: I'm a physician.

00:55:13.320 --> 00:55:21.340

Steven Mandel: I'm a lover of Alaska. I'm a lover of wilderness. I'm not associated with any organization. I really get-

00:55:22.380 --> 00:55:28.100

Steven Mandel: there are really good reasons to want to get out of that

00:55:28.620 --> 00:55:31.680

Steven Mandel: tight place if you have a medical emergency;

00:55:31.980 --> 00:55:40.450

Steven Mandel: and I also get that, it will absolutely and irrevocably destroy its pristine nature.

00:55:40.960 --> 00:55:52.510

Steven Mandel: I believe, not having done any work toward this at this time, that there are many equally, oh-

00:55:54.620 --> 00:56:00.109

Steven Mandel: safe, effective ways of dealing with medical emergencies at the rate that was discussed earlier,

00:56:00.720 --> 00:56:05.580

Steven Mandel: without imposing a road on this peninsula

00:56:06.736 --> 00:56:09.413

Steven Mandel: One of them was just mentioned,

00:56:09.970 --> 00:56:13.170

Steven Mandel: in terms of improving the existing facilities.

00:56:14.161 --> 00:56:17.169

Steven Mandel: Another is an expert

00:56:17.190 --> 00:56:22.759

Steven Mandel: stabilization program, which would then permit a less emergent evacuation.

00:56:25.330 --> 00:56:34.360

Steven Mandel: I understand, as a family man wanting emergency facility in close proximity,

00:56:34.980 --> 00:56:39.380

Steven Mandel: but in all fairness people knew what they were getting into

00:56:39.420 --> 00:56:45.549

Steven Mandel: when they move there. It's your home and you want it upgraded. It's also the nation's

00:56:48.170 --> 00:56:55.800

Steven Mandel: very precious resource and, as was pointed out by someone from out of the country, it's really in jeopardy.

00:56:56.010 --> 00:56:58.989

Steven Mandel: And everybody wants to say, "well, let's just do mine",

00:56:59.070 --> 00:57:02.699

Steven Mandel: and I totally get that. I lived in ski towns.

00:57:02.890 --> 00:57:09.549

Steven Mandel: I lived on small islands where everybody wanted just a little bit of improvement, you know.

00:57:09.590 --> 00:57:12.470

Steven Mandel: And I get from that perspective

00:57:12.780 --> 00:57:16.119

Steven Mandel: when my children come, and I-I want that too.

00:57:16.290 --> 00:57:21.659

Steven Mandel: I think the nation benefits by not messing with the Wilderness,

00:57:21.990 --> 00:57:24.019

Steven Mandel: even though the neighbors may be-

00:57:24.750 --> 00:57:27.410

Steven Mandel: some of the neighbors might be affected.

00:57:27.500 --> 00:57:34.470

Steven Mandel: I urge you to consider alternative ways of dealing with these pretty infrequent needs.

00:57:34.940 --> 00:57:41.909

Steven Mandel: I also really doubt as a physician who's dealt with emergencies, how a long road like that

00:57:41.920 --> 00:57:46.619

Steven Mandel: is going to be really an upgrade to a medical emergency.

00:57:47.110 --> 00:57:49.109

Steven Mandel: The road is going to be bumpy.

00:57:49.830 --> 00:57:51.659

Steven Mandel: The vehicle is going to be

00:57:51.690 --> 00:57:55.720

Steven Mandel: not able to go very fast, so

00:57:56.110 --> 00:58:05.739

Steven Mandel: I think you're opening a Pandora's box. I think for certain the road would be used for many other purposes. I don't think it will actually benefit the

00:58:05.910 --> 00:58:11.180

Steven Mandel: stated intended purpose very much. I appreciate so much the opportunity to speak.

00:58:13.090 --> 00:58:17.599

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Steven. We'll go ahead and place you back on mute.

00:58:19.060 --> 00:58:28.269

Megan Stone - AECOM: And with that, we're going to go ahead and see if there are any more people who would like to provide a comment before we move to the next portion of our meeting.

00:58:28.730 --> 00:58:37.180

Megan Stone - AECOM: So if you'd like to provide a comment at this time, please use the raise hand feature to let us know that you're ready to provide a comment.

00:58:37.660 --> 00:58:45.360

Megan Stone - AECOM: You can provide the raise-or access that raise hand feature by going into your participants list or going into the

00:58:45.510 --> 00:58:48.970

Megan Stone - AECOM: reactions icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

00:58:49.370 --> 00:58:53.469

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll give it a moment here, as folks navigate to those buttons.

00:59:07.360 --> 00:59:11.309

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright, I see that we have a hand raised from Max Brown.

00:59:11.780 --> 00:59:13.749

Megan Stone - AECOM: I will go ahead and unmute you.

00:59:14.700 --> 00:59:18.699

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Max. Can you spell your first and last name for the record, please?

00:59:19.310 --> 00:59:21.569

Max Brown: This is Max. M-A-X.

00:59:21.660 --> 00:59:24.880

Max Brown: Brown. B-R-O-W-N.

00:59:26.400 --> 00:59:27.260

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you. You

00:59:27.260 --> 00:59:28.219

Megan Stone - AECOM: can begin your-

00:59:29.140 --> 00:59:33.729

Max Brown: Thank you and thank you for your presentation today. I've learned a lot

00:59:34.140 --> 00:59:40.749

Max Brown: on the issue. Could you please put the slide back on the screen that showed the six choices?

00:59:46.100 --> 00:59:48.199

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Max.

00:59:48.380 --> 00:59:55.479

Megan Stone - AECOM: At this time, we're not addressing questions. We're accepting comments on the Draft SEIS.

00:59:55.540 --> 00:59:57.077

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we will

00:59:58.010 --> 01:00:04.079

Megan Stone - AECOM: have to move on, but if there's any additional comments you'd like to provide, please do so.

01:00:19.990 --> 01:00:25.120

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. With that, again, we'll do-

01:00:25.510 --> 01:00:33.139

Megan Stone - AECOM: I see that we do have another hand raised for a comment, where we did momentarily have a hand raised

01:00:34.460 --> 01:00:36.730

Megan Stone - AECOM: from Ellen Napoleon.

01:00:36.980 --> 01:00:39.369

Megan Stone - AECOM: Ellen, if you'd like to provide a comment,

01:00:39.460 --> 01:00:41.840

Megan Stone - AECOM: we can go ahead and unmute you;

01:00:42.090 --> 01:00:45.189

Megan Stone - AECOM: but I'll give you a moment here to raise your hand again.

01:01:16.950 --> 01:01:22.860

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. I don't see that we have any additional hands raised.

01:01:23.590 --> 01:01:33.519



Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, if you're trying to access that raise hand feature, you'll just go to the bottom of your Zoom screen and click on the participants list or the raise hand icon.

01:01:44.330 --> 01:01:47.710

Megan Stone - AECOM: And while we're waiting to see if there's any more hands raised,

01:01:47.740 --> 01:01:51.250

Megan Stone - AECOM: we'll go ahead and post some links in the chat

01:01:51.350 --> 01:01:55.590

Megan Stone - AECOM: including where you can find this PowerPoint presentation.

01:01:55.620 --> 01:02:00.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll also post a link to a flyer and a handout as well,

01:02:00.700 --> 01:02:03.519

Megan Stone - AECOM: so folks can copy that information down.

01:02:32.340 --> 01:02:41.639

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. It doesn't look like we have any further comments or hands raised for the Draft SEIS comment portion

01:02:41.700 --> 01:02:49.760

Megan Stone - AECOM: of the meeting, so we'll go ahead and move on to the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing portion of the meeting.

01:02:49.940 --> 01:02:51.510

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

01:02:57.430 --> 01:03:02.410

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll go ahead and turn it over to Bobbie Jo Skibo to provide a brief presentation.

01:03:03.980 --> 01:03:28.630

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Hi, again. Thank you again for all of the public input that you provided today. Thank you to the AECOM staff for posting the link in there that will show you the PowerPoint, like they just said. And for anybody who does have questions, just as a reminder, please put that in your public comment so we can respond to that officially during the public comment period. Thank you for understanding that we don't do Q and A during the public meetings.

01:03:28.910 --> 01:03:47.839

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so we will be moving on to what is the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, section 810 subsistence hearing? Why do we do this? We're going to talk about the evaluation factors that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses to make preliminary and final determinations.

01:03:47.840 --> 01:04:04.009

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We're going to give you a highlight of what the preliminary findings are; and then touch base on where the location of the hearings have been and where they are today; and then we'll get into public testimony, just like we did with the 3 minute timer, etc. So, next slide, please.

01:04:06.860 --> 01:04:18.940

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And I always have to warn folks, especially if you haven't been to one of these public meetings already, some of the language associated to ANILCA 810 is very specific for the law, so I don't want to miss

01:04:20.820 --> 01:04:25.800

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: anything that's important to this. So, I'm going to pull up my paperwork. Thank you for understanding.

01:04:26.403 --> 01:04:41.090

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so for the Alaskan National Interest Lands Conservation Act, again, shorthand is ANILCA, the Service is required by Section 810 to evaluate the effects on subsistence uses and needs.

01:04:41.180 --> 01:04:52.089

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And this is because that when we have a proposed action, we have to figure out if there will be effects on subsistence uses and needs when determining whether to withdraw,

01:04:52.130 --> 01:05:02.869

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands on national wildlife refuges here in Alaska.

01:05:03.950 --> 01:05:19.760

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: ANILCA also requires the Service to hold public hearings on subsistence resources and activities when we are holding our public meetings, and we do that in the vicinity of communities for which a "may significantly restrict" determination has been made.

01:05:19.910 --> 01:05:21.000

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

01:05:23.430 --> 01:05:28.229

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, when the Service evaluates, you know the effects,

01:05:28.250 --> 01:05:37.100

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: we are looking at, you know—we're determining if a significant restriction of subsistence uses and needs may result from the proposed action,

01:05:37.300 --> 01:05:40.520

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: the range of alternatives, or the cumulative case.

01:05:40.650 --> 01:05:50.249

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, we call it the three A's, or that's how I think about it. There is abundance, availability, and access to the resources.

01:05:50.730 --> 01:06:06.620

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, when we are looking at this and when you are speaking during the public testimony. It's really helpful for us to understand from your perspective, if there's going to be a reduction in the abundance of harvestable resources used for your subsistence purposes.

01:06:06.910 --> 01:06:18.670

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Will there be a reduction in the availability of resources used for subsistence caused by the alteration of their distribution, migration patterns, or the location where they exist?

01:06:18.800 --> 01:06:37.020

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And third, is there a legal or physical limitation on access of the subsistence user to get to those harvestable resources? So again, as you're speaking on this topic, it is always so helpful to understand your perspective on abundance, availability and access

01:06:37.120 --> 01:06:38.290

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide.

01:06:41.890 --> 01:06:58.309

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so the preliminary finding that is documented within the Supplemental EIS, there is an appendix that states this, and it's because Alternative 6 and the cumulative case, we believe, may significantly restrict subsistence uses.

01:06:58.310 --> 01:07:16.820

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So that is why we have held public meetings and subsistence hearings in the following communities. The following communities have in the preliminary finding—have been determined to have a positive “may significantly restrict” finding. So, we were in King Cove, Cold Bay, and

01:07:16.820 --> 01:07:23.909

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Sand Point. We then held a virtual public meeting with the geographic focus of Nelson Lagoon.

01:07:23.990 --> 01:07:31.339

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We then have a virtual public meeting, hoping to attract folks from False Pass, and that'll be on Monday.

01:07:31.470 --> 01:07:36.000

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then the next slide will explain why we're here today. Next slide.

01:07:39.120 --> 01:08:03.709

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the Service is also holding the public hearing yesterday here in Bethel, and we did that as a Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta hub community that you all know. So, we were here in Bethel, and had people come in from rural areas to speak to us. And it's because that there's a number of communities in the vicinity of the Y-K Delta that we believe could meet the "may significantly restrict threshold"

01:08:03.800 --> 01:08:27.589

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and that is preliminarily based on a reduction in the abundance of certain migratory bird species that are harvested in that region. And so, recognizing the burden of travel, especially with the weather, you know, etc., and the holidays; we wanted to accommodate the broader community of the Y-K Delta by holding today's virtual public meeting. So, thank you for those of you from that region who are here.

01:08:27.590 --> 01:08:52.520

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We still have another opportunity on Monday. So, if you know of other folks that would like to speak on this topic, we would love to have them next week. As we go forward through this process, a final determination will be made, and that will be per ANILCA Section 810(A)(3). That will be documented in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, whenever that is issued.

01:08:52.930 --> 01:08:57.789

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, with that I think that is the last slide that we have on ANILCA,

01:08:57.970 --> 01:09:03.649

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and we would look forward to hearing from anybody that has signed up today to speak on this topic. Thank you very much.

01:09:06.270 --> 01:09:08.236

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for that presentation.

01:09:09.010 --> 01:09:17.090

Megan Stone - AECOM: Just a reminder here. Again, we'll use the 3 minute timer. It'll show on the screen shortly here.

01:09:17.160 --> 01:09:22.470

Megan Stone - AECOM: And we thank everyone for speaking clearly and staying within that allotted timeframe.

01:09:22.640 --> 01:09:28.009

Megan Stone - AECOM: Please do raise your hand, and we'll have you spell out your first and last name for the record

01:09:28.120 --> 01:09:29.899

Megan Stone - AECOM: just like we did before.

01:09:30.500 --> 01:09:32.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that, we'll move to the next slide.

01:09:38.479 --> 01:09:50.029

Megan Stone - AECOM: Just in case anybody needs a refresher, this is where you can find the raise hand feature. On the left is the participants list and on the right is the reactions icon.

01:09:53.569 --> 01:09:55.130

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

01:09:58.910 --> 01:10:05.300

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. We'll go ahead and start with our list of pre-registered commenters.

01:10:05.400 --> 01:10:12.959

Megan Stone - AECOM: These are the folks who indicated they wanted to provide verbal input during the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing.

01:10:13.270 --> 01:10:16.469

Megan Stone - AECOM: Our first commenter is Julie Toomey.

01:10:18.080 --> 01:10:21.770

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Julie, can you spell your name for the record again?

01:10:21.770 --> 01:10:31.760

Julie Toomey: Yes, thank you. J-U-L-I-E. Toomey. T, as in Thomas, O-O-M, as in Michael, E-Y.

01:10:33.140 --> 01:10:36.144

Julie Toomey: Oh, and I guess my time probably started.

01:10:37.310 --> 01:10:38.020

Julie Toomey: Oh-

01:10:38.020 --> 01:10:39.569

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll start your timer now.

01:10:39.570 --> 01:10:48.659

Julie Toomey: Okay, thanks, Megan. Last week Senator Lisa Murkowski wrote a compelling piece published in the American Bar Association's Human Rights Magazine.

01:10:48.740 --> 01:10:57.650

Julie Toomey: In this piece Murkowski reminds us that when Izembek was created, it was done so without the consultation of the local Alaska natives.

01:10:57.740 --> 01:11:02.439

Julie Toomey: Public meetings were held in Anchorage and Cold Bay, but not in King Cove.

01:11:02.660 --> 01:11:06.070

Julie Toomey: And then after the passage of ANILCA,

01:11:06.240 --> 01:11:11.080

Julie Toomey: personal property, such as our subsistence cabins in the area were burned overnight.

01:11:11.630 --> 01:11:24.139

Julie Toomey: So, I just—I want that to kind of be center stage for individuals that consider individuals who live in King Co being in rural Alaska, that they know what they're doing that they- they should just

01:11:24.310 --> 01:11:26.340

Julie Toomey: live with what they've got.

01:11:26.350 --> 01:11:32.889

Julie Toomey: I'd like you to consider the fact that we've subsisted off this land for millennia, and we continue to do so.

01:11:33.160 --> 01:11:49.480

Julie Toomey: I want to say, thank you again for drafting the environmental impact study which was favorable for the road being placed in Izembek. I also want to continue to thank the Alaska Delegation, especially Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, for their unwavering support of King Cove on this issue.

01:11:49.690 --> 01:11:54.599

Julie Toomey: Our land, our land is where our people have lived for millennia.



01:11:54.880 --> 01:12:09.439

Julie Toomey: Access to healthcare is a crucial piece of the complex puzzle that will allow our people to thrive in this beautiful place we have called home for thousands of years, called home, and where we've also subsisted for thousands of years.

01:12:09.830 --> 01:12:23.790

Julie Toomey: In closing, I urge you to recognize the humanity of this issue. And I'm calling on the individuals who continually suggest that this is just—you know, this needs to be about the birds and the bees. This needs to also be about humans.

01:12:24.100 --> 01:12:30.779

Julie Toomey: This is not just about a road. It's about the human lives of an entire community. It is about dignity.

01:12:31.020 --> 01:12:35.860

Julie Toomey: it's about justice and the right to access lifesaving resources.

01:12:35.870 --> 01:12:45.340

Julie Toomey: For nearly 50 years the people of King Cove have been asking for a commonsense solution. And this is the simple, the practical, and the fair. And we've waited long enough.

01:12:45.410 --> 01:12:52.799

Julie Toomey: This proposed one lane gravel road is not an extravagant request. It's not going to destroy the- the fabric of humanity.

01:12:53.240 --> 01:12:54.699

Julie Toomey: It is a lifeline.

01:12:55.000 --> 01:12:58.460

Julie Toomey: Thank you for the time and opportunity to speak.

01:13:00.690 --> 01:13:02.780

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Julie.

01:13:03.630 --> 01:13:08.290

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll go ahead and move on to our next pre-registered commenter.

01:13:08.630 --> 01:13:11.390

Megan Stone - AECOM: Who is Reno Sommerhalder.

01:13:14.440 --> 01:13:17.480

Megan Stone - AECOM: And Reno, if you'd like to provide input,

01:13:18.110 --> 01:13:20.340

Megan Stone - AECOM: please do use that raise hand.

01:13:21.370 --> 01:13:26.690

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'm actually seeing that Reno is not in our attendees list anymore.

01:13:26.710 --> 01:13:32.460

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll move on to our next pre-registered commenter, who is Jean Public.

01:13:33.170 --> 01:13:37.580

Megan Stone - AECOM: I also don't see that we have Jean Public in our attendees list,

01:13:37.810 --> 01:13:41.110

Megan Stone - AECOM: but we'll keep an eye out to see if they join later on.

01:13:41.660 --> 01:13:54.699

Megan Stone - AECOM: So at this time, I'd like to open up this comment session to anyone who would like to provide a comment for the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing, regardless of whether you registered.

01:13:55.260 --> 01:13:59.539

Megan Stone - AECOM: And I also did miss someone, so I'll go back to that in a second.

01:13:59.610 --> 01:14:05.989

Megan Stone - AECOM: But we'll open up the meeting after this last pre-registered commenter to anyone who wants to provide input.

01:14:07.560 --> 01:14:09.900

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi Drew. Sorry about that.

01:14:10.100 --> 01:14:12.460

Drew Martin: No problem. Can you hear me?

01:14:13.090 --> 01:14:14.270

Megan Stone - AECOM: We can hear you.

01:14:14.270 --> 01:14:19.632

Drew Martin: My name is Drew Martin. D-R-E-W. M-A-R-T-I-N.

01:14:20.170 --> 01:14:23.500

Drew Martin: I really want to say that,

01:14:24.130 --> 01:14:28.029

Drew Martin: while I respect very much the people who live in this area,

01:14:28.040 --> 01:14:36.050

Drew Martin: I would note that they have lived in this area for 50 years without this road. And it seems to me that they have lived quite

01:14:36.190 --> 01:14:38.520

Drew Martin: well and quite successfully.

01:14:39.180 --> 01:14:41.369

Drew Martin: It seems to me then that

01:14:41.490 --> 01:14:50.280

Drew Martin: it's more just people wanting to have their way, which is to have a road because they- they have decided that's the only solution.

01:14:50.780 --> 01:15:04.849

Drew Martin: And I'm-It's unfortunate that you as well have made the choice to pick this as the as the best solution, because it seems to me there are many, many other solutions that you could have selected.

01:15:05.300 --> 01:15:08.989

Drew Martin: You could have selected to upgrade the medical facilities.

01:15:09.630 --> 01:15:15.100

Drew Martin: I myself, if I had a medical emergency, would not want to be driven over a

01:15:15.340 --> 01:15:25.110

Drew Martin: gravel road in very bad weather. I would prefer to be held at a site that was set up to handle a medical emergency

01:15:25.270 --> 01:15:43.279

Drew Martin: right where I was. And then, once the weather had improved significantly, then I could be transferred to another location. Most of us don't live near to ideal medical solutions as well. In fact, much of rural America does not

01:15:43.330 --> 01:15:45.689

Drew Martin: and people live with this every day.

01:15:45.960 --> 01:15:50.239

Drew Martin: It seems to me also that you could very well upgrade,

01:15:50.430 --> 01:15:56.700

Drew Martin: for the cost of a road and this land swap, the medical facilities right there in the town.

01:15:56.940 --> 01:16:05.310

Drew Martin: And the doctor who commented earlier seemed to state that he thought that would work, and I would trust his judgment.

01:16:05.350 --> 01:16:09.499

Drew Martin: I also have not seen that there's a lot of need for this.

01:16:09.670 --> 01:16:20.740

Drew Martin: And how many times would you absolutely have to have someone immediately driven out. If I had a serious, painful injury, I would not want to be driven.

01:16:20.770 --> 01:16:25.400

Drew Martin: I would rather be flown in a Med Evac or on a Hovercraft.

01:16:25.430 --> 01:16:38.060

Drew Martin: I'm not sure why, a road would be any easier to travel during bad weather than a Hovercraft, and I know, as a former coast guardsman that Coast Guard goes out in many,

01:16:38.060 --> 01:16:55.499

Drew Martin: many difficult situations and still manages to get people. And so, maybe what you need is the addition of a Coast Guard unit that will help ferry people across in bad weather again. Thank you so much for allowing me to comment. I very much appreciate it.

01:16:58.100 --> 01:17:02.099

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Drew. We'll place you back on mute.

01:17:03.190 --> 01:17:17.209

Megan Stone - AECOM: At this time, we've moved through our list of pre-registered commenters; those who indicated they wanted to provide verbal testimony during the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing portion of this meeting

01:17:18.170 --> 01:17:21.950

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that, we'll go ahead and be on for the next

01:17:22.110 --> 01:17:30.400

Megan Stone - AECOM: 43 minutes or so, ready to listen to any input you have related to the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing.

01:17:30.920 --> 01:17:35.179

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, if you'd like to provide input, you can raise your hand

01:17:35.220 --> 01:17:39.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: by clicking on the raise hand button at the bottom of your participants list

01:17:40.830 --> 01:17:45.259

Megan Stone - AECOM: and we'll give it a moment and see if we get any raised hands.

01:17:47.570 --> 01:17:55.599

Megan Stone - AECOM: If anybody needs any technical support at any point, please do reach out to us in the chat, and we'll get you some help

01:17:56.240 --> 01:18:00.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that, thank you for your patience as we look for additional hands raised

01:18:41.040 --> 01:18:46.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright, I see that we have a hand raised from Elaine Rhode. I'll go ahead and unmute you now.

01:18:47.940 --> 01:18:52.049

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Elaine, could you please spell your first and last name for the record?

01:18:59.480 --> 01:19:06.220

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that you've unmuted. So just in case you're having trouble with your microphone, I'll prompt you. Oh, it looks like you got it!

01:19:06.220 --> 01:19:08.680

Elaine Rhode: Got it. Thank you. It's-

01:19:08.680 --> 01:19:09.060

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

01:19:09.060 --> 01:19:13.290

Elaine Rhode: Elaine, E-L-A-I-N-E. Rhode, R-H-O-D-E.

01:19:14.650 --> 01:19:17.010

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you so much. You can begin your comment.

01:19:17.330 --> 01:19:20.469

Elaine Rhode: Well, I think it's telling that you're meeting

01:19:20.490 --> 01:19:26.289

Elaine Rhode: both personally and on Zoom in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

01:19:27.590 --> 01:19:37.330

Elaine Rhode: The people living there have been subsisting on wildlife, especially on waterfowl

01:19:37.790 --> 01:19:41.859

Elaine Rhode: that goes through the Izembek refuge, and back and forth.

01:19:42.110 --> 01:19:51.660

Elaine Rhode: And they also totally have the same experience of medical considerations for their lifestyles of-

01:19:53.420 --> 01:19:57.419

Elaine Rhode: if they have a clinic, how close are they to a hospital?

01:19:57.760 --> 01:20:04.540

Elaine Rhode: But I don't hear them demanding road access.

01:20:06.940 --> 01:20:12.780

Elaine Rhode: I think that it would be wise to listen to the people there, on how they deal with that.

01:20:13.690 --> 01:20:26.360

Elaine Rhode: And also for the Y-K Delta people, how they depend on continued waterfowl subsistence, especially brant.

01:20:29.340 --> 01:20:31.690

Elaine Rhode: That's just my thoughts in-

01:20:35.990 --> 01:20:42.080

Elaine Rhode: in looking at this situation, and what I'm hearing and not hearing during this testimony.

01:20:42.320 --> 01:20:46.019

Elaine Rhode: So, thank you very much for the opportunity to learn



01:20:46.510 --> 01:20:49.319

Elaine Rhode: and to put in my two cents.

01:20:50.160 --> 01:20:50.930

Elaine Rhode: Thank you.

01:20:51.342 --> 01:20:53.820

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Elaine.

01:20:53.970 --> 01:20:56.379

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll go ahead and lower your hand.

01:20:58.090 --> 01:21:03.980

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that, we'll continue to look for hands raised for anyone who would like to provide

01:21:04.010 --> 01:21:08.539

Megan Stone - AECOM: testimony related to the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing.

01:21:09.110 --> 01:21:11.500

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, we'll be on for the next

01:21:12.320 --> 01:21:17.160

Megan Stone - AECOM: 39 minute or so, ready to listen to any input that you might have.

01:21:17.320 --> 01:21:22.079

Megan Stone - AECOM: And I'll continue to keep an eye out for hands raised and messages in the chat.

01:21:22.280 --> 01:21:23.389

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you all.

01:23:05.040 --> 01:23:11.759

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello again everyone, just a reminder that we are on and willing to accept

01:23:11.830 --> 01:23:16.459

Megan Stone - AECOM: comments for the next 37 minutes or so here.

01:23:16.550 --> 01:23:25.859

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you'd like to provide a comment on the Draft SEIS for testimony for the ANILCA 810 subsistence hearing, you're welcome to do so.

01:23:26.000 --> 01:23:30.640

Megan Stone - AECOM: Please do use that raise hand feature, and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted.

01:32:44.090 --> 01:32:51.120

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello again, everyone! I just wanted to provide a reminder that we are on and ready to listen

01:32:51.230 --> 01:32:53.670

Megan Stone - AECOM: to any comments that you might have.

01:32:53.880 --> 01:32:59.670

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll continue to see if we have any hands raised or anything coming in through the chat.

01:33:00.060 --> 01:33:09.140

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, to raise your hand, you can press the participants list icon or the reactions icon on the bottom of your Zoom screen.

01:33:09.250 --> 01:33:10.980

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll get you unmuted.

01:33:11.180 --> 01:33:16.499

Megan Stone - AECOM: And if anyone is having any technical issues at any point, please do reach out in the chat.

01:33:17.030 --> 01:33:18.560

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you everyone.

01:43:52.590 --> 01:43:59.560

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, just wanted to provide a reminder that will be on for the next 15 minutes or so,

01:43:59.590 --> 01:44:02.969

Megan Stone - AECOM: ready to accept any comments that you might have.

01:44:03.130 --> 01:44:10.939

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you'd like to offer a comment, please go ahead and use that raise hand feature and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted. Thank you.

01:52:05.280 --> 01:52:17.109

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello again, everyone. We'll go ahead and continue to accept comments for another 5 minutes or so, before turning it back over to the Service for some closing remarks.

01:52:17.250 --> 01:52:25.439

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, if you'd like to provide a comment, please feel free to use that raise hand feature and we'll go ahead and get you unmuted. Thank you.

01:57:55.970 --> 01:58:05.959

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello, everyone. It looks like we don't have any more hands raised. So with that, we're going to go ahead and pass it back over to Bobbie Jo for some closing remarks.

01:58:13.430 --> 01:58:37.790

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alright. Thank you so much, and thanks for sticking with us for the few attendees. We really appreciate everybody's time. We wanted to stay until the end, just in case somebody joined us late. But knowing that there are no more people commenting on the SEIS or the ANILCA 810, we'll conclude today's meeting. But before we go, I just wanted to let you know that that project website that is listed there, will have updates as we

01:58:37.860 --> 01:58:49.060

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: know them. Feel free to drop me an email or give me a shout, if you have any questions on how to navigate, to get to the website where you can submit comments or the actual document itself.

01:58:49.080 --> 01:59:13.099

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And just as a reminder, the comment period has been extended by 45 days to February 13th. We just as we had a little bit—a few minutes of downtime got that updated on our website, and we will be issuing an official press release over the next few days once I can get staff on top of that. But definitely spread the word or if people want to see it officially, it is updated on our website at this time.

01:59:13.190 --> 01:59:21.680

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, with that again, thank you for everybody's input and time. And we do have our follow up meeting—another virtual meeting on Monday.

01:59:21.720 --> 01:59:45.160

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then we are having two statewide consultations, and that was with tribal governments on the 17th and ANCSA Corporations on the 18th. Those are also recently added to our schedule of meetings. So, I think those are the updates today. And again, just really appreciate your time. So, with that, have a great day, and we'll talk soon. Happy holidays.

#### Meeting Chat:

00:30:09 Lily Benson - AECOM: Hello everyone - we will begin the meeting momentarily.

00:30:39 Lily Benson - AECOM: Please join using your computer audio. You can access computer audio by navigating to the mute icon, clicking on the arrow next to the mute icon to open audio options, and then selecting join using computer audio.

00:30:46 Lily Benson - AECOM: Closed captioning is available by selecting the Live Transcript button icon on your Zoom toolbar and then selecting show subtitles.

01:04:42 Lily Benson - AECOM: The comment period closes on February 13, 2025 (at 11:59 p.m. EST). If you are unable to offer or complete your verbal public comment during the hearing today, the USFWS encourages you to submit your comment in writing via the project webpage:  
<https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072>

01:32:07 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS presentation:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-public-meeting-and-hearing-presentation>

01:32:14 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS flyer:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-flyer>

01:32:20 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS Overview Handout:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-overview-handout>

01:32:26 Lily Benson - AECOM: Project website:  
<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

01:53:32 Lily Benson - AECOM: As a reminder, the comment period closes on February 13, 2025 (at 11:59 p.m. EST). If you are unable to offer or complete your verbal public comment during the hearing today, the USFWS encourages you to submit your comment in writing via the project webpage:  
<https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072>

01:53:46 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS presentation:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-public-meeting-and-hearing-presentation>

01:53:55 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS flyer:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-flyer>

01:54:06 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS Overview Handout:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-overview-handout>

01:54:12 Lily Benson - AECOM: Project website:  
<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

01:55:14 Lily Benson - AECOM: For more information and project updates, go to: <https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

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

02:28:45 Lily Benson - AECOM: For more information and project updates,  
go to: <https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

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