

**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 16, 2024, 4:00 – 6:00 pm Alaska Time**

00:00:03.510 --> 00:00:12.620

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

00:00:12.860 --> 00:00:18.600

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

00:00:18.820 --> 00:00:27.040

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

00:00:27.220 --> 00:00:34.910

Megan Stone - AECOM: I do want to note that closed captioning is available by clicking the Live Transcript button on your Zoom toolbar

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Megan Stone - AECOM: and then selecting show subtitles.

00:00:38.540 --> 00:00:43.789

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you again, everyone, for your patience as we give folks just a few minutes here to join.

00:01:28.950 --> 00:01:36.109

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, welcome everyone to tonight's meeting. We'll go ahead and give folks just another minute here to join.

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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 your subtitle button.

00:01:47.810 --> 00:01:53.189

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

00:03:04.290 --> 00:03:05.850

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello, everyone.

00:03:06.040 --> 00:03:14.500

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

00:03:14.620 --> 00:03:19.849

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

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Megan Stone - AECOM: On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we appreciate your time and participation.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: My name is Megan Stone, with AECOM.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: We're the consulting firm that's working with the Service on this project, and I'm going to be your meeting facilitator tonight.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: Additionally, we have members of the Service with us, who will be introduced in a moment.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:03:53.230 --> 00:03:54.650

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: Before we get started with the presentation, I'm going to go over some brief housekeeping items for the meeting.

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

00:04:07.240 --> 00:04:15.049

Megan Stone - AECOM: You will only be unmuted if and when I unmute you during the Draft SEIS verbal public comment portion

00:04:15.180 --> 00:04:21.100

Megan Stone - AECOM: or ANILCA 810 hearing portion of the meeting, if you are providing verbal input.

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

00:04:26.340 --> 00:04:33.460

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

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

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Megan Stone - AECOM: When public comments on the Draft SEIS are finished,

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Megan Stone - AECOM: we will end the public meeting and begin the ANILCA Section 810 subsistence hearing.

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Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will give a short presentation followed by 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 this evening, written public comments can be submitted on [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

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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: And with that,

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Megan Stone - AECOM: 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.

00:05:37.090 --> 00:06:02.439

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Hello, everybody! Good evening. My name is Bobbie Jo Skibo, as Megan said, I'm the senior planner on this project. I've been with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service now for three years. My other project is

the oil and gas leasing program in the Arctic, and that's also a Supplemental EIS, so I know a few of you from that. I've been working close to 30 years on natural resource

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: projects here in Alaska, and I'm grateful to be here today. I'm going to introduce a few of my colleagues, and then Maria and I will be doing a presentation. But I did want to start off before I pass it over, is to thank Mayor Hoblet for helping us put this together. We recognize that travel logistics were really hard to get all over the Aleutian

00:06:27.430 --> 00:06:50.449

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: chain during the weather and this time of year. So, we wanted to host this meeting to target the geographic area of False Pass, but recognizing other people from the public were more than welcome to join us. So, Mayor Hoblet thank you for hosting and helping to orchestrate this, and to spread the word. Very grateful to have you here tonight as well. So, with that, though,

00:06:50.763 --> 00:06:55.780

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: I'd love to pass it over to my colleague, who's the assistant regional director of refuges.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Thank you, Bobbie Jo, And good evening and welcome all. Thank you for being here tonight. My name is Karlin Itchoak.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: As Bobbie Jo mentioned, I'm the assistant regional director for refuges and I'm here in Anchorage in the regional office on Dena'ina Land.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: And also, we'd like to

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: acknowledge that the ancestral homelands where this proposed project would take place, is on the homelands of the Ugangan

00:07:25.870 --> 00:07:27.150

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: and Aleut.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Again, thank you all for being here. I was born and raised in Noma, Alaska. My grandparents on my father's side are from Utqiagvik and my grandparents on my mother's side are from upstate New York.

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: And as the chief of refuges,

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: I just want to point out something most of you already know. We have over 570 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System,

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Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: encompassing 95 million acres of land throughout the United States. Here in Alaska, we have 16 of those 570 refuges and the land here encompasses 76.8 million acres of our National Wildlife Refuge System. A little over 90% of the National Wildlife Refuge land is here in Alaska.

00:08:22.920 --> 00:08:35.339

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: And so again, my role here tonight will be to listen. We look forward to hearing your comments and your remarks, and now I'd like to turn it over to our refuge manager from Izembek,

00:08:35.940 --> 00:08:39.460

Karlin Itchoak - USFWS: Maria. Good afternoon.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: Thanks, Karlin. As Karlin noted, I am Maria Fosado. I'm the Izembek Refuge manager. I've been working with the Fish and Wildlife

Service for over 15 years now. I did start my career in the state of Minnesota, and I worked at various national wildlife refuges and Wetland management districts, until making my way to Alaska. I did accept the Izembek refuge manager position in 2020, and I've been living and working in Cold Bay since that time.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, I'm here today to provide some background information on the refuge, and we will go ahead and get started. So, if we could move to the next slide, please.

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

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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. And then with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, otherwise known as ANILCA in 1980,

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: the Izembek National Wildlife Range was redesignated as the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, encompassing 310,000 acres, of which approximately 300,000 acres were designated as Wilderness by Congress at that time. Next slide, please.

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

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

00:10:46.980 --> 00:11:04.619

Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, each unit within the National Wildlife Refuge System is established to serve a statutory purpose that targets the conservation of native species that depend on its lands and waters. And to administer those areas in accordance with those statutory purposes, activities are evaluated for appropriateness and compatibility.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, with the passage of ANILCA and the redesignation from the range to the refuge, Izembek refuge also received ANILCA refuge purposes. And those are 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;

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: to fulfill the international treaty obligation of the United States, with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats; to provide for the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and to ensure water quality and necessary water quantity. Next slide, please.

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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 subsequently was recognized as an important bird area of global significance by Birdlife International and the National Audubon Society.

00:11:59.980 --> 00:12:14.639

Maria Fosado - USFWS: Izembek received these special recognitions because of its diverse habitats, the dynamic landscapes, and its unique geographical location with it being situated between the highly productive waters of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. Next slide, please.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: So, from brown bears to Pacific salmon, more than 200 species call the refuge home. At the heart of the refuge, you'll find a coastal ecosystem that's home to one of the largest eelgrass beds in the world, and that's within Izembek Lagoon. Kinzarof Lagoon, which is separated from Izembek Lagoon by narrow isthmus, is considered one of the most significant eelgrass beds on the Pacific coast of the Alaska Peninsula.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: The location of the refuge along avian migration routes, in combination with the abundant food sources that can be found in Izembek Lagoon and the eelgrass beds, make Izembek Lagoon one of the most important migratory bird staging and wintering habitats in the world. The site is especially critical for many species of waterfowl, particularly geese, and shorebirds that undertake transoceanic flights.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: This area supports virtually the entire population of Pacific black brant, more than half the world population of emperor goose, and a significant population—percentage of the population of Steller's eiders and Tavener's Canada goose.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: The highest density of brown bears in Izembek Lagoon occurs within the Joshua Green Watershed. However, these brown bears can be observed all throughout the refuge, as they use a wide variety of habitats, using habitats, including the coastal shorelines, low-lying meadows, and tundra streams all the way into the Alpine areas.

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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 to the southern end of the Alaska Peninsula, with its primary calving grounds located just to the north of Izembek Refuge.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: The Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd's wintering areas have historically extended southward and encompass the area around Izembek Lagoon and Cold Bay. And the narrow isthmus that separates the two lagoons has been an important movement corridor between the wintering grounds and the calving grounds.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: The refuge does support satellite populations of caribou year-round as well.

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Maria Fosado - USFWS: And lastly, Pacific salmon also have a high profile as a refuge purpose species and are a high value for subsistence users. Izembek Refuge does support five species of Pacific salmon, which return to the streams each year to spawn and fuel the coastal ecosystems. And with that, I'll turn it back over to Bobbie Jo.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Thank you so much, Maria.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And I'm going to—just honestly for transparency. I apologize if I sneeze or cough. I did pick up a little bug over the last few weeks, so I'm feeling a little bit down. Okay. So, I am going to go back

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: a little in history. We're not going to start in the beginning of this project because it predates 2009 by a few years, but we'll start there.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And in 2009, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act was passed. We refer to it as the 2009 Act. It has since expired, but at the time it directed the Secretary of the Interior to analyze a land exchange, and that was with King Cove Corporation, and it was slated to be a land exchange

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: for the Izembek National Wildlife refuge into the Wilderness area. And then it also directed the service to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, and that's through the National Environmental Policy Act. And then in 2013, if you've been tracking this project, you're

probably well aware that the Environmental Impact Statement was completed and the "No Action" alternative was selected.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Then in 2019, Secretary of Interior Bernhardt signed a different land exchange agreement and that was in place for a bit. But then in 2023 the sitting Secretary, Secretary Holland, withdrew from that agreement, the 2019 version, citing procedural flaws. And that's what kind of brought us up to speed today with where we're at. So next slide, please.

00:16:14.850 --> 00:16:34.249

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the 2013 EIS is the basis for the Supplemental EIS and we were requested by the Secretary to prepare this. And it was the request of Secretary Holland for us to consider a newly proposed land exchange, and that was based on an offer from the King Cove Corporation.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The exchange is still slated for the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, including a corridor through Congressional designated Wilderness.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, what we've been doing is updating and evaluating everything, new information, new circumstances, in-in places in that 2013 EIS, wherever possible.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It includes the "No Action" alternative which, if you know NEPA, that is customary; and then we have the four action alternatives that were included in the 2013 EIS; and then the Supplemental EIS includes and adds a new alternative, which is Alternative 6. And I'll spend some time talking about that here in a minute. Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the proposed action from the Secretary was to—we were to enter into a land exchange agreement to add land with conservation, subsistence, and habitat values, to add those back to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And that would be for an exchange to transfer the United States property interests of surface and subsurface to the King Cove Corporation, for that corridor of land through the Refuge, again, through some of that Congressionally designated Wilderness. And we'll see some maps here soon.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Next slide. We'll talk about the- the purposes of the project.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the purposes are to provide a safe, reliable, year-round transportation system for health and safety purposes, with particular emphasis on emergency medical evacuations between the communities of King Cove over to Cold Bay;

00:18:14.020 --> 00:18:27.469

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and then to increase the overall conservation value of the lands preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System through the exchange; and then the third purpose is to maintain or increase the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural Alaskans.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The need statement, it's pretty lengthy and so we didn't want to minimize it by shortening it or paraphrasing it, it is in Section 1.4 of the Supplemental EIS, the draft. So, take a look at that if you have questions related to the need. Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so-

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Just to orient us, if you've been tracking this project or new to the project, I can still point out a few things. So I think somebody on the background here of the PowerPoint might be able to help me point out a few things, but King Cove is down in the right-hand corner.

00:19:05.410 --> 00:19:24.930

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Cold Bay is there where that little purple part of land is exactly. A few things to note, the purple and white line, straight across the bay, is the Hovercraft alternative from the 2013 EIS. The green and white line that goes down to Lenard Harbor, that is the ferry.

00:19:25.040 --> 00:19:41.430

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then the red line, there to the top by Kinzaroff Lagoon, is the Alternative 6, the proposed road corridor. So just to give you some perspective on that, we'll talk a little bit more as we go through the maps here in the next few alternatives. Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So-

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The Supplemental EIS considers a reasonable range of alternatives. We have, again, the "No Action", that's customary, always there. Alternatives 2 and 3 that were part of the 2013 EIS, they are no longer viable alternatives. They were associated to the 2009 Act but they have been still included in this draft for comparative purposes, and you'll see-

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: We can talk about that a little bit later. Alternative 4, as we said, is the Hovercraft operations, Alternative 5 is Lenard Harbor Ferry; and then, Alternative 6 is the new proposed land exchange. Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So because Alternatives one, you know, the no action doesn't need a map, 2 and 3 are no longer viable; we'll now catch up to the action alternatives that are viable. So, Alternative 4 was actually- there was a EIS from 2003

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and then in 2013. It was an alternative analyzed in both of those documents and it has been retained in this draft as a viable alternative.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: It considers operations from Cold Bay over to the Northeast Terminal, and that would be for six days of service a week.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Let me see if there's anything on the map. I think that kind of covers it. You could see it there. Okay, next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. Alternative 5 is a ferry to travel approximately 14 miles between the Terminal, down there in Lenard Harbor,

00:21:25.420 --> 00:21:54.689

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: and then it would meet up with a substantially modified dock in Cold Bay. And we were there in Cold Bay, gosh, a week and a half ago now, and the borough did notify us that they are in the beginning baby stages of planning with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. But that is in the works, and it's pretty far out on when that would come together. But that is something that will be forthcoming, and we'll be interested to see what kind of improvements are made to that dock.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: This alternative would not include a land exchange, and again, it has been retained as a viable alternative for the process. Next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so this is the new alternative, and it has been identified by the Department of Interior as the preferred alternative. But one of the things to note, is that even though it has been identified as a preferred alternative, that doesn't constitute a decision at this time, and that ultimate decision would be made by selecting an alternative through the record of decision, and that would be the final stage of the NEPA process. So still a lot more work to get us there.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, if you can look on the map, and I can have some help. Number one is where the terminus of the existing King Cove Access Road is, so there is a road built from King Cove to that point. Then from number one, you go up through that green line. Let me point out, the green line around the map is Congressional Wilderness boundary. Yeah. Thank you. So, the red line, that's going up through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in the Wilderness area,

00:23:04.460 --> 00:23:30.569

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: it's right there. And then you can see the little red dots along the way, those are what would be the material sites to be used to help with the development of the road; and we'll talk a little bit about that in a minute, too. And then, after you go across through the Wilderness boundary, then the corridor terminates at the intersection of Outer Marker Road and Blinn Lake Loop, so that would be that corridor.

00:23:30.880 --> 00:23:35.075

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Few things to note here, the yellow hashed

00:23:35.690 --> 00:24:02.679

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: spots on the map in Kinzaroff Lagoon, there's 1,790 acres right there; some people call those the bookends of that lagoon. Those would be King Cove lands to transfer to the Federal Government, as well as the yellow below, right there by the Mortensens Lagoon. So just to orient you to where these lands exist on the map. Okay, next slide.

00:24:05.280 --> 00:24:12.579

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So with Alternative 6, these are the key components; there's a lot of words on here, but let me help you navigate it.

00:24:12.630 --> 00:24:23.250

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, King Cove Corporation would be transferring 31,198 acres to the Federal government. Okay, that breaks down like this,

00:24:23.290 --> 00:24:47.890

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: 29,459 of those would only be the surface, and those would actually be transferred over to the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge; and then the remaining, which is the 1,739, that would be surface and the subsurface, those would be the acres that would come back into Izembek

National Wildlife Refuge and would become congressionally designated Wilderness.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Then in exchange for the 31,198, the Federal Government—the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge—would transfer 490 acres, 484 of which are surface and subsurface estate and 6 of which are just the subsurface, and that would be used for a material site.

00:25:10.940 --> 00:25:26.239

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And so, again, those would be the acres coming from Izembek transferred to King Cove Corporation. And out of the 490 acres, 336 are currently congressionally designated Wilderness within that green boundary.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, a few more components of this. The road—proposed road would be an 18.9-mile single lane, gravel road. And there would be—the little red dots that you saw on that map would be 15 material sites.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: 13 of them are within the road corridor and then two would be satellites off, a little further outside of that corridor. Okay, next slide.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, another key component of Alternative 6 is that it is restricted to non-commercial uses, and that is different from some of the past exchanges. So it's restricted to non-commercial, further restricted to those necessary for health and safety purposes to use the road, and then it's restricted

00:26:15.800 --> 00:26:29.450

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: to those that are getting access to the refuge resources; so those would be the federally qualified subsistence users who are actively engaged in subsistence. So, that's a component of Alternative 6. Alright. Next slide.



00:26:32.150 --> 00:27:01.869

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay, so this slide gets a little complicated. I've already kind of spoke to most of it in the column of Alternative 6. But for those of you that have been tracking this project for a while or new to it, just to give you an understanding, 2013 had the Alternative 2 and 3 that were associated to the 2009 Act. And if you can see, the road corridors and miles hasn't changed too- too much. There's a few changes. The road corridor and width, the second line down,

00:27:02.260 --> 00:27:22.479

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alternatives 2 and 3 had assumed about a 100-foot width of that corridor and Alternative 6 is now assuming a varying width between 100 and 240, and that's to accommodate topography and different water features along that. That was based on a study from Department of Transportation, as well, to come up with that.

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Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The acres there, as you see, Alternative 6 has that 490, again, 336 of which are currently Wilderness, and then the exchange would be for that 31,198, and again 1,739 come back in as surface and subsurface back to Wilderness and 29,459 only the surface would be transferred over to the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge.

00:27:48.310 --> 00:28:08.330

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The last two columns there have zeros for Alternative 6. That's just to show that there were other components of the land exchange alternatives from 2013 that are no longer a part of it, and it's because the state—the State of Alaska is no longer a party in this proposed land exchange for this go around. So, with that, next slide.

00:28:10.810 --> 00:28:32.340

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So that's the high-level perspective of the new alternative, some of the old ones. But once—we hope you'll get a chance to provide public input tonight. But if you are still wanting to dig into the draft, we have tried to help; if anybody followed the Willow Project with BLM, they did it this way. We thought it was a good—you know, we would try it.

00:28:32.340 --> 00:28:44.180

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, in the 2013 EIS, that's the base. But in a section, there will be a box up front that will have a summary of the changes that occurred within that chapter or that section.

00:28:44.180 --> 00:29:02.620

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Then within the body of the text, anything that is yellow highlighted will also direct you to that is new. And then there will be an asterisk at any tables, maps, figures to also let you know that those are new and added as the Supplemental EIS. Alright. Next slide.

00:29:04.400 --> 00:29:05.850

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Alright. So,

00:29:06.820 --> 00:29:20.080

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: next steps. Again, we hope that you'll provide input today, public testimony on the ANILCA 810 piece, but you can just provide it electronically. There's a bunch of different ways. You want to go to [regulations.gov](http://regulations.gov),

00:29:20.080 --> 00:29:36.010

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: find the docket or just search Izembek SEIS. We started off with a 45-day public comment period. But after a handful of requests from the communities of interest, the Department has extended that as of the other day.

00:29:36.010 --> 00:29:54.989

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So now we have a 90-day public comment period, that will run until February 13, 2025, that is, 11:59 Eastern Standard Time. So, if we do get it postmarked on that date, you're still good. It'll go into the record if we receive it beyond—you know, we really just want to get it in before then, if possible.

00:29:55.080 --> 00:30:05.579

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The Final SEIS and the record of decision is forthcoming. Obviously, between now and the final, we are going to be taking a look at all the public comment

00:30:05.580 --> 00:30:27.570

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: testimony that has been obtained, and we will be updating the Final SEIS. And for all of us that are aware, we are in a Presidential and administration transition, so, at this time we're not sure you know, of the direction will be given, but we do anticipate that the final and the record of decision will be out at some point in 2025.

00:30:27.790 --> 00:30:32.692

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, next slide. And I think that brings us up to speed on

00:30:33.270 --> 00:30:39.659

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: everything and we would love to now hear from all of you, so I'll turn it back over to Megan. Thanks.

00:30:40.830 --> 00:30:41.980

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

00:30:42.120 --> 00:30:47.390

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll go ahead and now read through instructions for those participants

00:30:47.530 --> 00:31:02.569

Megan Stone - AECOM: who indicated they wanted to offer verbal public comment on the Draft SEIS when they pre-registered for this evening's meeting. We have a list of these participants and will accept comments in the order of registration.

00:31:02.770 --> 00:31:09.019

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

00:31:09.390 --> 00:31:16.300

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.

00:31:16.670 --> 00:31:29.789

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

00:31:30.330 --> 00:31:41.320

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 toolbar.

00:31:41.600 --> 00:31:44.220

Megan Stone - AECOM: And I'll show you where to find those in a moment.

00:31:44.540 --> 00:31:50.160

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

00:31:50.480 --> 00:31:55.630

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

00:31:55.930 --> 00:32:03.989

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

00:32:04.330 --> 00:32:11.420

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have any phone callers on this evening. But if we do get any phone callers later on,

00:32:11.700 --> 00:32:16.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: I will run through the instructions of how to raise your hand on a phone keypad.

00:32:17.260 --> 00:32:19.099

Megan Stone - AECOM: Once you've raised your hand,

00:32:19.270 --> 00:32:25.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: you'll then be unmuted so that you can provide your comment. You may be double muted. If that's the case,

00:32:26.120 --> 00:32:30.760

Megan Stone - AECOM: we'll prompt you to unmute yourself on your end so that we can hear you.

00:32:31.040 --> 00:32:37.690

Megan Stone - AECOM: If I prompt you to unmute, you'll see a little pop up on your screen that says the host has requested you to unmute.

00:32:38.440 --> 00:32:45.479

Megan Stone - AECOM: We ask that you please spell out your first and last name for the record before providing your verbal public comment

00:32:45.640 --> 00:32:51.020

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

00:32:51.610 --> 00:32:55.420

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll allow 3 minutes for everyone to offer their comments,

00:32:55.630 --> 00:33:02.059

Megan Stone - AECOM: so that everyone has a chance to provide a comment. You'll see the clock on the screen

00:33:02.180 --> 00:33:04.500

Megan Stone - AECOM: and it'll show you when your time is up.

00:33:04.650 --> 00:33:09.499

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

00:33:09.880 --> 00:33:16.800

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

00:33:17.380 --> 00:33:22.799

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

00:33:23.060 --> 00:33:28.559

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, once we've worked our way through the current list of pre-registered commenters,

00:33:28.760 --> 00:33:36.970

Megan Stone - AECOM: if we have time, we'll move on to those who registered after the start time of tonight's meeting who selected they wanted to offer a comment.

00:33:37.110 --> 00:33:42.140

Megan Stone - AECOM: If we still have time remaining after we've worked our way through those participants,

00:33:42.290 --> 00:33:48.550

Megan Stone - AECOM: we'll open the verbal public comment portion of tonight's meeting to anyone who would like to offer a comment

00:33:48.710 --> 00:33:52.659

Megan Stone - AECOM: on the Draft SEIS who has not already done so.

00:33:53.210 --> 00:33:54.850

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:33:57.500 --> 00:34:03.070

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, on the screen here, I just have some graphics of where you can find that raise hand feature.

00:34:03.170 --> 00:34:06.600

Megan Stone - AECOM: On the left is the participants list icon,

00:34:06.750 --> 00:34:09.150

Megan Stone - AECOM: that's one way to find the raise hand.

00:34:09.409 --> 00:34:15.050

Megan Stone - AECOM: And on the right, you have the reactions icon, which is another way to find that raise hand.

00:34:15.699 --> 00:34:21.219

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll leave this up for a moment and then move on to our comment portion.

00:34:26.870 --> 00:34:28.500

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:34:31.560 --> 00:34:34.820

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. We'll go ahead and get started.

00:34:34.969 --> 00:34:42.149

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

00:34:42.320 --> 00:34:47.180

Megan Stone - AECOM: As a reminder, your camera and mic control settings are restricted during this time,

00:34:47.409 --> 00:34:51.190

Megan Stone - AECOM: but you will be unmuted if and when you raise your hand.

00:34:51.670 --> 00:34:57.790

Megan Stone - AECOM: The Service wants to hear from all members of the public, so we'll be using the following guidelines this evening.

00:34:58.060 --> 00:35:05.410

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.

00:35:05.890 --> 00:35:09.519

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

00:35:09.750 --> 00:35:12.980

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

00:35:13.360 --> 00:35:20.360

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

00:35:20.620 --> 00:35:24.910

Megan Stone - AECOM: because we are recording this meeting, and others may be live streaming,

00:35:25.030 --> 00:35:29.029

Megan Stone - AECOM: so please do avoid using inappropriate language.

00:35:29.560 --> 00:35:38.079

Megan Stone - AECOM: If that does happen, we'll provide a reminder before unmuting the person to try again using words acceptable to all ages.

00:35:39.270 --> 00:35:46.400

Megan Stone - AECOM: And with that, we'll go ahead and get started with our first pre-registered commenter, who is David Raskin.



00:35:48.000 --> 00:35:50.660

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

00:35:51.790 --> 00:35:55.690

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

00:35:56.530 --> 00:36:01.270

Dr. David Raskin: David, D-A-V-I-D. Raskin, R-A-S-K-I-N.

00:36:01.880 --> 00:36:04.069

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

00:36:05.060 --> 00:36:22.540

Dr. David Raskin: I'm Dr. David Raskin of Homer, Alaska and co-founder, and past President, of Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. I testify today on behalf of the National Wildlife Refuge Association that has worked for 50 years to preserve and enhance all of our national wildlife refuges.

00:36:22.810 --> 00:36:41.550

Dr. David Raskin: I have been involved for 20 years on the need to provide King Cove residents access for emergency medical treatment, including the proposed road and several land exchanges. I've made extensive visits to the Izembek Refuge and explored the proposed road corridor by air and land.

00:36:41.550 --> 00:36:56.829

Dr. David Raskin: I participated in scientific research on the emperor geese that, along with Pacific black brant, depend upon the refuge and its world-class eelgrass beds for sustenance—excuse me—during their annual migrations.

00:36:57.020 --> 00:37:10.780

Dr. David Raskin: The Refuge Association strongly agrees that King Cove must have access for medical emergency evacuations, however, a road through the biological heart of the Izembek Wilderness is not a solution.

00:37:10.800 --> 00:37:31.730

Dr. David Raskin: It would cause irreparable damage to Izembek's wildlife, fisheries, and habitat, and the world's populations of emperor geese and black brant that provide critical subsistence food for western Alaska natives. More than 70 native tribes and villages have formally opposed the road and land exchange.

00:37:31.820 --> 00:37:40.949

Dr. David Raskin: The proposed road would be a death trap because severe winter storms would render it impassable and extremely costly to maintain.

00:37:41.120 --> 00:37:49.200

Dr. David Raskin: Secretary of Interior, Sally Jewell, concluded that the road would be biologically destructive and is not in the public interest.

00:37:49.560 --> 00:37:58.830

Dr. David Raskin: Based on extensive studies and analyses, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concluded that a marine ferry option would be the most reliable;

00:37:58.950 --> 00:38:08.830

Dr. David Raskin: and the recent U.S. DOT 40 million dollars funding for improvements of the Cold Bay dock, make the marine option even more viable.

00:38:09.040 --> 00:38:31.429

Dr. David Raskin: A land exchange for a road would create a precedent for industrial and commercial development within the 150 million acres of Alaska conservation lands established under ANILCA by President Carter, including more than 80% of our national wildlife refuge lands and 60% of our national parks.

00:38:31.580 --> 00:38:48.899

Dr. David Raskin: For all the above reasons, the proposed Izembek land exchange and road should be rejected in favor of a marine ferry option, that will provide safe and reliable medical evacuations for King Cove residents. Thank you very much.

00:38:50.790 --> 00:38:53.049

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

00:38:53.260 --> 00:38:58.420

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll go ahead and move on to our next pre-registered commenter, Debbie Booth.

00:39:04.480 --> 00:39:08.660

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

00:39:09.190 --> 00:39:13.129

Debbie Booth: Yeah. Debbie, D-E-B-B-I-E. Booth, B-O-O-T-H.

00:39:13.830 --> 00:39:15.980

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

00:39:16.190 --> 00:39:17.210

Debbie Booth: Thank you.

00:39:17.967 --> 00:39:23.612

Debbie Booth: Thanks Maria. I liked-I appreciated your detailed

00:39:24.890 --> 00:39:32.079

Debbie Booth: synopsis of-of the situation and appreciate that you're a Cold Bay resident.

00:39:32.220 --> 00:39:42.080

Debbie Booth: I visited Cold Bay this summer for the first time, as an ecological tourist, visited habitats

00:39:43.860 --> 00:39:50.819

Debbie Booth: in Thin Point area and viewed the wildlife there. It-

00:39:51.230 --> 00:39:59.159

Debbie Booth: So, I feel as a visitor and a biologist and botanist, that I understand

00:39:59.550 --> 00:40:05.379

Debbie Booth: the beauty and uniqueness of this ecosystem. So,

00:40:05.850 --> 00:40:10.190

Debbie Booth: in keeping with that I select the "No Action" alternative

00:40:10.300 --> 00:40:15.060

Debbie Booth: as well. And I see that a land swap

00:40:15.170 --> 00:40:18.370

Debbie Booth: and construction and maintenance of a gravel road

00:40:18.500 --> 00:40:22.730

Debbie Booth: cutting through the heart of the refuge, between King Harbor and Cold Bay,

00:40:22.900 --> 00:40:26.239

Debbie Booth: is highly detrimental to this ecosystem.

00:40:27.080 --> 00:40:39.789

Debbie Booth: A road inevitably will invite disturbance, pollution, and the possibility of illegal hunting and fishing beyond the subsistence fishing and hunting that's allowed.

00:40:40.130 --> 00:40:46.909

Debbie Booth: And just the presence of people and construction and maintenance will drive away the wildlife

00:40:47.830 --> 00:40:50.159

Debbie Booth: that call this area home.

00:40:53.100 --> 00:41:03.360

Debbie Booth: The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, I was not familiar with it until I visited it this summer and I was amazed

00:41:04.300 --> 00:41:09.899

Debbie Booth: at the significance of this wetland habitat,

00:41:10.020 --> 00:41:17.120

Debbie Booth: and the designation that it has as a habitat of international importance.

00:41:18.160 --> 00:41:26.679

Debbie Booth: The—I met the—I stayed with residents of Cold Bay and boated with residents of King Harbor. I understand

00:41:27.080 --> 00:41:38.069

Debbie Booth: the weather and isolation that's there, and I hope that there would be a better alternative proposed.

00:41:38.510 --> 00:41:43.370

Debbie Booth: If it's the marine alternative, as a ferry, the dock at Cold Bay seemed

00:41:43.800 --> 00:41:47.230

Debbie Booth: very modernized and—and able to do that.

00:41:47.550 --> 00:41:50.379

Debbie Booth: There may be other options.

00:41:51.513 --> 00:42:01.499

Debbie Booth: For example, an air contracted emergency helicopter that could possibly fly.

00:42:01.620 --> 00:42:07.609

Debbie Booth: So, I hope other options will be looked at and you will save this pristine wilderness.

00:42:07.860 --> 00:42:08.830

Debbie Booth: Thank you.

00:42:11.570 --> 00:42:18.079

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

00:42:18.210 --> 00:42:21.160

Megan Stone - AECOM: who is Reno Sommerhalder.

00:42:21.860 --> 00:42:31.980

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have Reno in our attendees list this evening, but we will make a note and circle back to them if they end up joining later on.

00:42:32.410 --> 00:42:38.310

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, with that we'll move to our next pre-registered commenter, who is Christopher Ray.

00:42:39.630 --> 00:42:42.639

Megan Stone - AECOM: I also don't see that we have Christopher

00:42:42.830 --> 00:42:48.380

Megan Stone - AECOM: in our attendees list, so we'll go ahead and make a note and then circle back to them

00:42:49.250 --> 00:42:55.850

Megan Stone - AECOM: and move on to Laurie Benson, who is our final pre-registered commenter.

00:42:56.760 --> 00:43:01.270

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that we have Laurie in our attendee list, either.

00:43:01.570 --> 00:43:07.119

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, at this time we'll go ahead and open up the verbal public comment portion

00:43:07.360 --> 00:43:13.770

Megan Stone - AECOM: to anyone who would like to provide a comment on the Draft SEIS, regardless of whether

00:43:13.920 --> 00:43:17.679

Megan Stone - AECOM: you registered to sign up to provide a comment.

00:43:18.580 --> 00:43:28.440

Megan Stone - AECOM: Again, if you'd like to provide a comment, you can access that raise hand feature by clicking on the participants list icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen,

00:43:28.730 --> 00:43:31.310

Megan Stone - AECOM: and then clicking the raise hand button.

00:43:31.650 --> 00:43:34.319

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll give it a moment here, as we

00:43:34.530 --> 00:43:38.130

Megan Stone - AECOM: see if there's anybody else who would like to provide a comment

00:43:38.360 --> 00:43:44.020

Megan Stone - AECOM: before we go ahead and move on to the ANILCA 810 hearing portion of the meeting.

00:44:28.520 --> 00:44:36.979

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright, I don't see that we have any hands raised from our attendees list.

00:44:37.560 --> 00:44:41.019

Megan Stone - AECOM: So with that, we'll go ahead and

00:44:41.280 --> 00:44:44.299

Megan Stone - AECOM: just give it one more moment here while we

00:44:44.690 --> 00:44:47.140

Megan Stone - AECOM: copy some links into the chat.

00:44:47.973 --> 00:44:55.590

Megan Stone - AECOM: We did want to provide the presentation from this meeting as well as the flyer and a handout,

00:44:56.178 --> 00:45:04.049

Megan Stone - AECOM: so you can access those pieces of information in the Zoom chat and copy those links down.

00:45:10.070 --> 00:45:13.149

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. I see that we have a hand raised.

00:45:14.830 --> 00:45:19.839

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

00:45:20.000 --> 00:45:25.419

Lena Hoblet: Hello. Lena, L-E-N-A. Hoblet, H-O-B-L-E-T of False Pass.



00:45:26.320 --> 00:45:26.910

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

00:45:27.390 --> 00:45:35.130

Lena Hoblet: I'm commenting this evening to support the proposed land exchange, involving

00:45:35.887 --> 00:45:40.990

Lena Hoblet: the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, as detailed in SEIS

00:45:41.801 --> 00:45:47.100

Lena Hoblet: for a few reasons. Number one is the enhancement of conservation efforts.

00:45:47.310 --> 00:45:52.499

Lena Hoblet: The proposed land exchange is projected to increase the National Wildlife Refuge System

00:45:52.790 --> 00:46:02.339

Lena Hoblet: by approximately 30,000 acres, as annotated in Alternative 6, with over 1,700 acres designated as Wilderness status.

00:46:02.690 --> 00:46:09.590

Lena Hoblet: This expansion will bolster habitat protection for numerous species and strengthen the ecological integrity of the region.

00:46:10.440 --> 00:46:29.449

Lena Hoblet: Number two, improved access for local communities, which is very crucial for—those that reside within the region know that weather is very harsh and changes drastically within moments. The land exchange will facilitate the construction of a road connecting King Cove to Cold Bay,

00:46:29.510 --> 00:46:47.279

Lena Hoblet: and it will address longstanding transportation issues. This development is crucial for ensuring safe and reliable access for non-commercial health, safety and subsistence purposes, particularly during medical emergencies, when the current transportation options are limited by severe weather conditions.

00:46:47.690 --> 00:46:51.480

Lena Hoblet: Number three, balancing conservation and community needs.

00:46:51.610 --> 00:47:04.059

Lena Hoblet: Excuse me—The SEIS outlines measures to mitigate potential environmental impacts, ensuring that the road construction and land exchange align with conservation objectives while addressing the essential need of the local communities.

00:47:04.190 --> 00:47:09.569

Lena Hoblet: This balanced approach exemplifies the commitment to both environmental stewardship and human well-being.

00:47:10.720 --> 00:47:11.730

Lena Hoblet: So—

00:47:11.840 --> 00:47:35.020

Lena Hoblet: To conclude, it's strongly supported—the proposed land exchange as it represents a thoughtful compromise that enhances conservation efforts and addresses critical transportation safety needs for the residents of King Cove, and I encourage USFWS to proceed with this proposal, considering the comprehensive analysis presented in the Draft SEIS. Thank you.

00:47:36.180 --> 00:47:40.840

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

00:47:41.090 --> 00:47:44.070

Megan Stone - AECOM: and give it a moment here to see if we have

00:47:44.360 --> 00:47:54.739

Megan Stone - AECOM: any additional hands raised. A reminder, that you can access that raise hand feature by clicking your participants list or the raise hand icon.

00:47:55.090 --> 00:48:00.810

Megan Stone - AECOM: You sometimes need to wave your mouse back and forth to get the little toolbar to pop up.

00:48:01.040 --> 00:48:05.939

Megan Stone - AECOM: But if anyone's having any technical difficulties at any point,

00:48:06.200 --> 00:48:09.429

Megan Stone - AECOM: feel free to chat us, and we can get you some support.

00:48:09.530 --> 00:48:12.550

Megan Stone - AECOM: so, we'll give it just a moment here to see

00:48:12.700 --> 00:48:18.929

Megan Stone - AECOM: if we have any additional comments before we go ahead and move into the ANILCA 810 hearing.

00:48:57.300 --> 00:49:01.320

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

00:49:01.700 --> 00:49:08.969

Megan Stone - AECOM: So with that, I think we'll go ahead and move to the ANILCA 810 hearing portion of this meeting.

00:49:09.810 --> 00:49:11.949

Megan Stone - AECOM: Back over to you, Bobbie Jo.

00:49:12.880 --> 00:49:16.429

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Thank you, Megan. Thank you so much for everybody's public input.

00:49:17.168 --> 00:49:31.099

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So, the next portion of this, I want to just be able to give you a perspective on what the Alaskan National Interest Lands Conservation Act section 18-section 810. What that is, and

00:49:31.100 --> 00:49:54.389

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: what are the evaluation factors that we use at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service to make a determination and our findings. And so, I will then provide you the preliminary findings that are documented in the Supplemental EIS, and then just highlight where we've held the hearings based on those findings, and then we'll hope to hear from some of you related to it. So next slide, please.

00:49:57.600 --> 00:49:59.166

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Okay. So-

00:50:00.460 --> 00:50:29.090

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA, section 810, is—we are required as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service to evaluate—I'm going to read this because I always miss words, and there's always a legal kind of, there's legal words here and I don't want to miss them. So, we are required to evaluate the effects on subsistence uses and needs and determining whether to withdraw, reserve,

00:50:29.150 --> 00:50:38.980

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

00:50:39.680 --> 00:51:06.659

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: ANILCA also requires us to hold public hearings on subsistence resources, and we usually do that in conjunction with our public meetings. And we do this in the vicinity of communities where there has been a positive determination made, and that determination is, "may significantly restrict" determination. And I'll explain this a little further here in the next slide. Go ahead.

00:51:08.880 --> 00:51:32.999

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, in order for a determination to be made, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service uses three factors and this is so that we can understand if there is a significant restriction of subsistence uses and needs that are resulting from our proposed action, the range of alternatives, or the preferred alternative, or the cumulative effects in case. And so there-

00:51:33.000 --> 00:51:54.769

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: I always refer to it as the three A's. There is the abundance, the availability, or access to subsistence resources. So, when we look at, let's say you know, our range of alternatives or proposed action, we're really looking at it through the lens of: will there be a reduction in the abundance of harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes?

00:51:54.990 --> 00:52:08.740

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Will there be a reduction in the availability of those resources used for subsistence that are maybe caused by an alteration of the distribution, the migration patterns, or the location by which where those resources can be found?

00:52:08.850 --> 00:52:36.949

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Or third, is there a legal or physical limitation on access of subsistence users to harvestable resources? And so again, when we are listening to people, which we have been for the last few weeks, it's super helpful for us to hear it from—from the local perspectives or the people that utilize these resources, as to how you feel about the abundance, the availability, or access for these subsistence uses.

00:52:36.950 --> 00:52:41.540

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, with that next slide, we'll go into some of the preliminary findings.

00:52:42.460 --> 00:52:59.830

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, the Supplemental EIS has made a preliminary finding, that because of Alternative 6 in the cumulative case, that it "may significantly restrict" subsistence uses. And so, we have been holding public hearings, and

00:53:00.030 --> 00:53:12.129

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: we've done this in places where there has been a positive finding. And so, we started off in King Cove; went to Cold Bay; had a meeting over in Sand Point, heard from folks there;

00:53:12.150 --> 00:53:33.999

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: we then held a virtual public meeting with members of the community of Nelson Lagoon; and then we're here today with all of you, and a few of you from False Pass to hear from you related to your perspective, again, around the abundance, availability, or access to subsistence resources. And then the next slide will explain that

00:53:34.620 --> 00:54:00.839

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: we also held a hearing in the hub community of Bethel to recognize that the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta communities, you know, could meet the "may significantly restrict" threshold, and that would be based on perhaps a reduction in the abundance of certain migratory species that they rely on and harvest. And so, in addition to an in-person meeting in Bethel last Thursday,

00:54:00.840 --> 00:54:24.919

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: we also held a virtual public meeting because we recognize that it can be cost prohibitive to get into Bethel, so we wanted to hear from as many people as we could. So, we did hold a meeting last Friday and heard from quite a few folks, and even had a few folks from rural communities come into Bethel for that. So that was really great. And so, the next steps of our process are to hear everybody out.

00:54:25.275 --> 00:54:36.289

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And then through that process between, you know, the draft and the final, we'll also be working on a final determination through section 810(A)(3) and that will be

00:54:36.720 --> 00:54:45.329

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: documented in the Final Supplemental EIS and record of decision. So that'll be forthcoming in the next steps of the process. Alright. Next slide.

00:54:47.570 --> 00:55:13.629

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: So, with that, that's why, you know, we are here to hear from all of you, and same ground rules. I'll turn it back over to Megan but would love to hear from anybody. And then also, after this, if there are any go backs that you have more to share with us related to the broader SEIS or ANILCA 810, we do welcome that. We are here till 6 o'clock, so feel free to share your thoughts with us. Thank you, Megan.

00:55:14.840 --> 00:55:20.379

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you, Bobbie Jo. And just in case we had anyone new join,

00:55:20.570 --> 00:55:33.809

Megan Stone - AECOM: just wanted to note that we'll go ahead and provide 3 minutes, again, and we'll call on folks in the order of registration. We'll display your name on the screen and that timer as well.

00:55:34.080 --> 00:55:36.860

Megan Stone - AECOM: So we'll go ahead and move to the next slide.

00:55:38.940 --> 00:55:42.930

Megan Stone - AECOM: And this is just a reminder of where you can find the raise hand feature.

00:55:43.040 --> 00:55:50.050

Megan Stone - AECOM: One way is the participants list, which is that graphic on the left and the other is the reactions icon.

00:55:51.330 --> 00:55:52.960

Megan Stone - AECOM: Next slide, please.

00:55:55.350 --> 00:55:56.490

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright.

00:55:57.960 --> 00:56:04.669

Megan Stone - AECOM: We do have Reno Sommerhalder as our first individual signed up to comment.

00:56:04.810 --> 00:56:11.700

Megan Stone - AECOM: I don't see that Reno is in our participants list this evening, so we'll move on to Christopher Roy.

00:56:13.930 --> 00:56:19.889

Megan Stone - AECOM: I also don't see that we have Christopher signed up to provide comments.

00:56:20.490 --> 00:56:29.120

Megan Stone - AECOM: So that was our list of individuals who signed up to provide ANILCA 810 testimony when they registered.

00:56:29.360 --> 00:56:40.380

Megan Stone - AECOM: At this time, we'll now open it up to anyone who would like to provide their comments, regardless of whether you signed up to provide ANILCA 810 testimony when registering.

00:56:41.360 --> 00:56:47.349

Megan Stone - AECOM: I see that we have a hand raised from Debbie Booth, so I'll go ahead and unmute you.

00:56:48.070 --> 00:56:52.449

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi, Debbie. Could you spell your first and last name for the record again?

00:56:53.340 --> 00:56:57.830

Debbie Booth: Hi, yes. D-E-B-B-I-E-B-O-O-T-H.

00:56:58.580 --> 00:56:59.450

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you.

00:57:00.030 --> 00:57:06.788

Debbie Booth: Thank you. I have a prepared statement. I'll read it.



00:57:08.160 --> 00:57:17.519

Debbie Booth: Izembek National Wildlife Refuge exists as a wetland habitat of international importance, supporting a huge array of worlds-

00:57:17.710 --> 00:57:21.960

Debbie Booth: the world's fish, plants, birds, and marine and land mammals.

00:57:22.140 --> 00:57:28.219

Debbie Booth: These are significant in their own right but are also of importance to native tribes,

00:57:28.510 --> 00:57:39.560

Debbie Booth: residents, national and international scientists and tourists who come to the refuge to see and experience this unique and intact wilderness.

00:57:39.710 --> 00:57:42.669

Debbie Booth: I visited the refuge for seven days

00:57:42.890 --> 00:57:52.519

Debbie Booth: in July and August of 2024, and understand the beauty and uniqueness of this vast ecosystem and

00:57:52.660 --> 00:57:56.099

Debbie Booth: therefore, select the "No Action" alternative.

00:57:56.520 --> 00:58:09.769

Debbie Booth: A land swap and construction and maintenance of a gravel road, cutting through the heart of the refuge between King Harbor and Cold Bay, is highly detrimental to the ecosystem.

00:58:09.960 --> 00:58:18.920

Debbie Booth: A road invites disturbance, pollution, and will drive away and reduce the abundance of the wildlife

00:58:19.220 --> 00:58:24.260

Debbie Booth: that call this area home and migrate to other areas of Alaska.

00:58:26.559 --> 00:58:32.380

Debbie Booth: A long gravel road is subject to weather and continuous maintenance,

00:58:32.610 --> 00:58:37.519

Debbie Booth: and is not a viable option in case of medical emergency.

00:58:38.060 --> 00:58:46.750

Debbie Booth: Most of Alaska is roadless and alternative services are more practical in this situation, as in most of Alaska.

00:58:48.150 --> 00:58:59.359

Debbie Booth: I-furthermore, I feel the new newly created Alternative 6 is not a better offer for the people of Alaska including of course, the indigenous people of Alaska.

00:58:59.650 --> 00:59:14.209

Debbie Booth: I stand with the December 2013 record of decision by Secretary Jewell selecting the "No Action" alternative, as this project is not in the best interest

00:59:14.870 --> 00:59:17.310

Debbie Booth: of Alaskans. Thank you.

00:59:19.640 --> 00:59:21.540

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment.

00:59:22.030 --> 00:59:27.699

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll move to anyone else who would like to provide a comment.

00:59:28.040 --> 00:59:32.819

Megan Stone - AECOM: I'll go ahead and continue to monitor to see if we have any hands raised.

00:59:33.170 --> 00:59:39.659

Megan Stone - AECOM: And then if you do need any tech support, feel free to chat us. Perfect. I see

00:59:39.970 --> 00:59:42.250

Megan Stone - AECOM: Lena has their hand raised.

00:59:42.700 --> 00:59:46.819

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

00:59:46.820 --> 00:59:53.270

Lena Hoblet: Hello, yes. Lena, L-E-N-A. Hoblet, H-O-B-L-E-T

00:59:53.520 --> 01:00:15.960

Lena Hoblet: I'm going to express my strong support for the proposed Izembek land exchange and the construction of a road to connect King Cove and Cold Bay. The proposed action is a reasonable and necessary solution that balances environmental protections with critical human health and safety needs, while remaining compliant with section 810 of ANILCA.

01:00:17.320 --> 01:00:25.000

Lena Hoblet: Under Section 810 of ANILCA, Federal agencies evaluates whether a proposed action may be-

01:00:26.007 --> 01:00:34.789

Lena Hoblet: reduce the availability of subsistence resources, restrict access to subsistence resources, or significantly increase competition for subsistence uses.

01:00:35.070 --> 01:00:45.410

Lena Hoblet: The proposed road has been carefully designed to minimize impacts to the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, while fulfilling a lifesaving need for the residents of King Cove.

01:00:47.830 --> 01:00:52.980

Lena Hoblet: The support of subsistent needs and community safety is taken into consideration.

01:00:53.180 --> 01:01:02.299

Lena Hoblet: The community of King Cove faces significant transportation challenges, particularly during medical emergencies, when severe weather makes marine or air travel unsafe.

01:01:03.000 --> 01:01:15.239

Lena Hoblet: There's minimal impact to subsistence resources. The road corridor represents a very small footprint within the refuge and has been specifically planned to minimize disruption to habitat and wildlife.

01:01:15.840 --> 01:01:24.049

Lena Hoblet: Local communities who rely on subsistence resources have a deep cultural and economic connection to the land, and are committed to its stewardship.

01:01:24.660 --> 01:01:31.649

Lena Hoblet: The road construction will not jeopardize these resources as it will be used primarily for non-commercial purposes.

01:01:32.910 --> 01:01:44.029

Lena Hoblet: While section 810 mandates careful consideration of impacts to subsistence uses, it also allows for actions that meet critical needs when no viable alternative exists.

01:01:44.300 --> 01:01:54.089

Lena Hoblet: The proposed road represents a reasonable compromise that respects the ecological value of Izembek, while addressing the urgent health and safety needs of tribal communities.

01:01:56.610 --> 01:02:16.810

Lena Hoblet: The proposed land exchange and road construction represents a critical solution to address the longstanding transportation and safety challenges faced by King Cove residents. Section 810 of ANILCA rightly prioritizes subsistence protections, but it also allows for flexibility in cases where vital community needs are at stake.

01:02:17.480 --> 01:02:25.650

Lena Hoblet: By advancing this project responsibly, we can protect both the subsistence way of life and the health and safety of the King Cove community.

01:02:26.650 --> 01:02:35.970

Lena Hoblet: Again, I'll urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to move forward at the land exchange and road construction, as the project is both reasonable and essential. Thank you.

01:02:38.110 --> 01:02:44.560

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

01:02:45.190 --> 01:02:52.020

Megan Stone - AECOM: And we'll keep an eye out for any hands raised from anyone else who would like to provide comments.

01:06:27.210 --> 01:06:41.520

Megan Stone - AECOM: Just a reminder that will be on for the next 55 minutes or so, ready to listen to any comments that you might have. So, if you'd like to provide a comment, please do access that raise hand feature.

01:06:41.690 --> 01:06:47.649

Megan Stone - AECOM: And if you're having any trouble locating that, please do reach out in the chat and we'll get you some support.

01:06:47.940 --> 01:06:49.189

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you all.

01:06:52.830 --> 01:07:07.709

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And Megan, just to make the point for anybody that's still on, they can do additional public comment to their 3 minutes at this time, as well, on either the Supplemental EIS or ANILCA 810. So, for anybody that is

01:07:07.880 --> 01:07:13.439

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: on and would like to, just remember that we're here to hear more than your 3 minutes original as well.

01:07:15.030 --> 01:07:16.630

Megan Stone - AECOM: Yeah, thanks so much.

01:08:41.189 --> 01:08:44.410

Megan Stone - AECOM: We see that we have a hand raised.

01:08:44.760 --> 01:08:46.979

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

01:08:48.100 --> 01:08:53.300

Megan Stone - AECOM: And it would be great if you could go ahead and spell your first and last name for the record again.

01:09:02.069 --> 01:09:07.190

Megan Stone - AECOM: Just in case you're having trouble unmuting, I'll go ahead and prompt you to unmute.

01:09:10.960 --> 01:09:12.050

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hi there!

01:09:12.750 --> 01:09:14.550

Dr. David Raskin: Hi—you okay?

01:09:15.240 --> 01:09:16.749

Megan Stone - AECOM: Yeah, we can hear you.

01:09:18.799 --> 01:09:27.089

Dr. David Raskin: Okay. Yeah. I have some additional comments about the

01:09:27.229 --> 01:09:34.393

Dr. David Raskin: the road proposal because there are so many other issues that have

01:09:35.209 --> 01:09:39.609

Dr. David Raskin: not been dealt with in the hearing, especially in the 3 minutes.

01:09:39.889 --> 01:09:45.459

Dr. David Raskin: But one of the big issues is that the

01:09:45.779 --> 01:09:49.569

Dr. David Raskin: draft says that the road will be restricted

01:09:49.699 --> 01:10:03.749

Dr. David Raskin: to non-commercial use, just for medical evaluations and subsistence, however, as we know, that will be as of the day that it's enacted.

01:10:03.959 --> 01:10:29.589

Dr. David Raskin: There is nothing to prevent changes later to open that for commercial use. In fact, all of the proponents over the years have stated, especially Senator Murkowski, that the motivation for the road is commercial as well as medical evacuations. And as we know from history, the Dalton Highway

01:10:29.699 --> 01:10:34.399

Dr. David Raskin: in Alaska, the haul road, started out as

01:10:34.799 --> 01:10:59.459

Dr. David Raskin: restricted to uses for the building in the pipeline. It is now a major highway all the way to Prudhoe Bay. There is nothing to prevent that from happening with this proposed road, so it is an illusion to think that this would be restricted to just medical evacuations and subsistence uses.

01:10:59.599 --> 01:11:01.929

Dr. David Raskin: And furthermore, there's no enforcement.

01:11:02.269 --> 01:11:10.769

Dr. David Raskin: There are—There is no police or other presence to enforce that provision.

01:11:10.929 --> 01:11:14.789

Dr. David Raskin: Fish and Wildlife Service has been greatly staffed—

01:11:15.019 --> 01:11:37.169

Dr. David Raskin: strapped, not only in Izembek, but all over the nation in terms of lack of law enforcement. Also there is no provision for any law enforcement, and it would be used for whoever decides to use it, however they want to. So, it's even much more destructive potentially and ultimately

01:11:37.887 --> 01:11:44.459

Dr. David Raskin: than what is stated as the restrictions. So that's just totally unrealistic.

01:11:45.179 --> 01:11:48.829

Dr. David Raskin: So that's what I would like to add. Thank you very much for that opportunity.

01:11:49.940 --> 01:11:53.950



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

01:11:56.200 --> 01:12:02.830

Megan Stone - AECOM: And we'll continue to keep an eye out to see if anybody else has their hand raised and would like to provide input.

01:28:33.530 --> 01:28:44.749

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello again, everyone. Just wanted to provide a reminder that will be on for the next 30 minutes or so, ready to listen to any input that you might have.

01:28:45.130 --> 01:28:52.229

Megan Stone - AECOM: If you'd like to provide a comment this evening, you can go ahead and raise your hand, and we'll get you unmuted.

01:28:52.610 --> 01:29:01.750

Megan Stone - AECOM: Or if you prefer to submit your comments in writing, we have information in the chat on how you can submit those public comments.

01:29:02.370 --> 01:29:09.890

Megan Stone - AECOM: With that, we'll go ahead and continue to look for hands raised and any new folks joining us. Thank you.

01:40:36.350 --> 01:40:44.790

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

01:40:46.170 --> 01:40:49.880

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

01:40:49.940 --> 01:40:56.320

Laurie Benson: Sure, it's Laurie, L-A-U-R-I-E. Benson, B-E-N-S-O-N.

01:40:56.960 --> 01:40:59.019

Megan Stone - AECOM: Great. You can begin your comment.

01:40:59.490 --> 01:41:11.869

Laurie Benson: Okay, and I apologize for being so late. I was out looking for the perfect Christmas tree and totally forgot I registered for this, so I appreciate you still being there. So, my comments are:

01:41:13.400 --> 01:41:28.059

Laurie Benson: I'm opposed to this road. A particular concern to me—first of all, I've spent time in Cold Bay and I've been to False Pass. I've been to King Cove. I even have my Eastern Aleutian Tribes hat on, although I'm not from the Eastern Aleutian Tribes.

01:41:28.600 --> 01:41:52.630

Laurie Benson: And that's a narrow, tiny little neck of land studded with wetlands; and this road is going to bifurcate that. And there's all those material sites you have identified along that road, which is going to be taking— which is going to be even more environmental impact. But mostly I just think it's such a narrow, tiny piece of very important wetland that's going to be cut by this road.

01:41:53.040 --> 01:42:11.099

Laurie Benson: And I also am concerned about terrestrial animals that migrate across that narrow neck of land, and I'm surprised that—I understand there was one comment from False Pass earlier about how this can be great, or whatever—but those caribou, which are in trouble on Unimak Island and elsewhere on the Peninsula,

01:42:11.270 --> 01:42:15.029

Laurie Benson: they migrate over that narrow little neck of land. Now there's going to be a road there.

01:42:15.350 --> 01:42:27.189

Laurie Benson: It's gonna be real easy to shoot them, any one that comes through. And you know, I'm wondering if the tribes are really thinking about how this is going to increase opportunities for sport hunting,

01:42:27.390 --> 01:42:31.199

Laurie Benson: and what kind of competition that's going to be.

01:42:31.580 --> 01:42:39.179

Laurie Benson: Because I think the idea of keeping—you're going to build a road, people are going to be on it. They're going to be on it to hunt. That's a principal use of this road is going to be hunting,

01:42:39.930 --> 01:43:00.700

Laurie Benson: and right there through this incredibly important wetland. The other thing is, and I haven't looked for this in the SEIS, so I need to do that, but has anyone really examined how feasible it is to do an evacuation of this road in winter? Because from when I was there, looking at—

01:43:01.510 --> 01:43:13.069

Laurie Benson: looking across—across from Cold Bay at that terrain, you know, where the existing road goes out to that little terminal, you've got real avalanche country there. Do they keep that road open in winter?

01:43:13.190 --> 01:43:19.329

Laurie Benson: Is that even feasible? And then, when you cross a narrow look-neck of land, you're talking about a blowhole

01:43:19.440 --> 01:43:49.269

Laurie Benson: between the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. And how are you going to keep that clear? And what would it take to clear that to do an evacuation? I mean—okay. I live in Homer on a paved road. We never evacuate by road to Anchorage. I've never heard of it being done. It's all done by air. I understand about the planes, etc. You know—what has to. If the weather is so bad that a helicopter can't fly, I don't see how you're going to make it across that road. So, then we've destroyed this incredible refuge,

01:43:49.840 --> 01:43:56.160

Laurie Benson: not completely destroyed but a really important part of it, for nothing,

01:43:56.270 --> 01:43:58.880

Laurie Benson: if the evacuation isn't going to really work.

01:43:59.640 --> 01:44:03.220

Laurie Benson: And I don't know that anybody's really looked at it. My last point

01:44:03.500 --> 01:44:19.510

Laurie Benson: is, I think the precedent is horrible that the Secretary of the Interior can take a designated conservation unit out, and that the Wilderness could go out. I've worked elsewhere, and I know every county commissioner thinks they have a perfectly good reason to build a road across the Wilderness.

01:44:20.060 --> 01:44:22.049

Laurie Benson: The precedent is horrible.

01:44:23.000 --> 01:44:25.170

Laurie Benson: I think I'm out of time, right?

01:44:25.560 --> 01:44:36.940

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you for your comment, Laurie. We can come back to you if you'd like to provide further comments, but for now I'll go ahead and lower your hand and see if anyone else

01:44:37.190 --> 01:44:39.290

Megan Stone - AECOM: would like to provide a comment.

01:44:39.520 --> 01:44:54.460

Megan Stone - AECOM: I do see that we had another person join us. So I'll remind folks that if you'd like to provide a comment, please do access the raise hand feature. You can find that in the participants list or in your reactions icon,

01:44:54.750 --> 01:44:57.439

Megan Stone - AECOM: and then we'll go ahead and get you unmuted.

01:44:57.760 --> 01:45:00.709

Megan Stone - AECOM: And if you need any support at any time,

01:45:00.960 --> 01:45:04.509

Megan Stone - AECOM: you can go ahead and message us in the chat.

01:45:04.850 --> 01:45:17.230

Megan Stone - AECOM: And just for those who have just joined us, we do have some links in the chat if you'd like to copy those down. We have a link to the presentation

01:45:17.460 --> 01:45:27.100

Megan Stone - AECOM: that was presented earlier today, the Draft SEIS flyer, and an overview handout in addition to the project website.

01:45:28.840 --> 01:45:34.430

Megan Stone - AECOM: So, we'll go ahead and continue to see if anyone else would like to provide a comment.

01:45:34.640 --> 01:45:37.789

Megan Stone - AECOM: We'll be on for the next 15 minutes or so.

01:45:38.346 --> 01:45:49.129

Megan Stone - AECOM: And then for folks who would rather submit those comments in writing, we have information up on the screen about where you can submit those comments as well as in the chat.

01:45:50.030 --> 01:45:51.280

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you all.

01:46:13.350 --> 01:46:22.959

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. I see that we have a hand raised from Laurie. Laurie, if you don't mind spelling your first and last name for the record again. That would be great,

01:46:23.350 --> 01:46:26.079

Megan Stone - AECOM: just so the transcript picks up on that.

01:46:28.980 --> 01:46:31.600

Megan Stone - AECOM: You should be able to unmute now.

01:46:34.820 --> 01:46:37.030

Laurie Benson: L-A-U-R-I-E

01:46:37.250 --> 01:46:39.649

Laurie Benson: B-E-N-S-O-N.

01:46:40.500 --> 01:46:42.590

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

01:46:42.590 --> 01:46:54.270

Laurie Benson: Okay, just one other aside as to how this road is going to be used is ATV abuse is a big problem everywhere. And

01:46:54.410 --> 01:47:09.579

Laurie Benson: because the land is so flat there in the refuge, once people can drive that road with ATVs they will go off that road, you know. If there is a caribou they want to shoot off that road, they're going to go.

01:47:09.810 --> 01:47:13.430

Laurie Benson: And the refuge doesn't have the ability to enforce that.

01:47:14.010 --> 01:47:21.620

Laurie Benson: So, I see a lot of ATV damage, besides the material sites, besides this road itself. There's going to be a lot of ATV damage to the habitat.

01:47:21.900 --> 01:47:25.080

Laurie Benson: It's inevitable. There's just no way to police that.

01:47:25.990 --> 01:47:32.739

Laurie Benson: So, I'm just looking at a lot of damage to a very important refuge for a road that might not

01:47:33.010 --> 01:47:38.490

Laurie Benson: be feasible as a wintertime evacuation.

01:47:40.330 --> 01:47:48.490

Laurie Benson: Okay, that's all I wanted to say. I'm opposed to this road. I'm opposed to the land exchange. And I'm opposed to how it's being done

01:47:49.050 --> 01:48:10.539

Laurie Benson: by the Secretary of the Interior to an ANILCA designated conservation unit and ANILCA designated Wilderness. And it is so true, that every single county commissioner anywhere in this Western United States thinks they have a good reason to put a road across a Wilderness area, a designated Wilderness area. So, the precedent here is absolutely crushing.

01:48:11.040 --> 01:48:14.050

Laurie Benson: Okay, thank you for your time.

01:48:15.480 --> 01:48:17.809

Megan Stone - AECOM: Thank you Laurie for your comments.

01:48:20.950 --> 01:48:29.650

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. We will continue to look out for any new folks who might join, or any folks who would like to provide a comment.

01:48:29.940 --> 01:48:35.509

Megan Stone - AECOM: And we'll leave this slide up on the screen, so everyone has that information ready to go.

01:56:56.450 --> 01:57:07.640

Megan Stone - AECOM: Hello again, everyone, we'll go ahead and do a last call here for any comments that you might have before we turn it back over to Bobbie Jo for some closing remarks.

01:57:07.910 --> 01:57:13.769

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

01:58:40.560 --> 01:58:49.750

Megan Stone - AECOM: Alright. It doesn't look like we have any additional hands raised, so we'll go ahead and turn it back over to the Service for some closing remarks.

01:58:59.150 --> 01:59:06.289

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Well, thank you so much for sticking with us and for participating in our public process.

01:59:06.390 --> 01:59:14.179

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Tonight actually concludes our public meeting sequence. We've had,

01:59:15.000 --> 01:59:16.330

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: let's see,

01:59:16.580 --> 01:59:27.419

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: King Cove, Cold Bay, Sand Point, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, and Bethel, and the Y-K Delta. I believe there were seven meetings altogether.

01:59:27.510 --> 01:59:47.749



Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: And really just appreciate everybody's time. And I'll also take a minute and thank everybody here our staff and our contractor AECOM. You guys have been really great. So as our last public meeting, I really do want to thank you for everything you've done. Tomorrow there will be a statewide

01:59:48.030 --> 02:00:11.500

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: government to government consultation with tribal governments, and that is one to three o'clock. And that is not open to the public, but that is open to representatives of tribal governments or their representatives. And then, on the 18th we will hold a statewide consultation for ANCSA Corporations or their representatives. So that'll be the last two meetings

02:00:11.580 --> 02:00:33.860

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: to conclude our public process. And again, consultation can continue throughout the process. But with that, keep looking at our project website for updates. And again, the project website does now have the comment period extension of 90-days and will end on February 13th. The media has been notified as of today and some of our close stakeholders that have been tracking this project.

02:00:33.860 --> 02:00:46.569

Bobbie Jo Skibo - USFWS: Please spread the word. And again, just really appreciate everybody's input. Thank you so much. And we look forward to releasing our Final Supplemental EIS and record of decision in 2025. Have a good night.

#### Meeting Chat:

00:30:17 Lily Benson - AECOM: Hello everyone - we will begin the meeting momentarily.

00:30:35 Lily Benson - AECOM: Closed captioning is available by clicking the Live Transcript button icon on your Zoom toolbar and then select show subtitles.

01:04:44 Lily Benson - AECOM: The comment period closes on February 13, 2024 (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>

01:14:47 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS presentation:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-public-meeting-and-hearing-presentation>

01:14:54 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS flyer:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-flyer>

01:15:02 Lily Benson - AECOM: Draft SEIS Overview Handout:  
<https://www.fws.gov/media/izembek-nwr-land-exchangeroad-corridor-draft-seis-overview-handout>

01:15:09 Lily Benson - AECOM: Project website:  
<https://www.fws.gov/project/potential-land-exchange-road-between-king-cove-and-cold-bay>

02:30:25 Megan Stone - 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)