

In the Matter Of:

IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR

Public Meeting-ANILCA Section 10 Subsistence Hearing - Cold Bay, Alaska

December 05, 2024

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**CERTIFIED
TRANSCRIPT**

IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR
DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC MEETING
AND
ANILCA SECTION 810 SUBSISTENCE HEARING
COLD BAY, ALASKA
DECEMBER 5, 2024

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

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3 COLD BAY, ALASKA

4 6:30 P.M.

5 -oOo-

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

10 My name is Bill Craig, and I'm the project
11 manager for AECOM, the contractor assisting Fish and
12 Wildlife Service with the Supplemental Environmental
13 Impact Statement. Also here tonight from AECOM are
14 Jon Isaacs, senior planner, and Arika Mercer at the
15 front table. She's a planner with us. And Deirdre
16 is the court reporter.

17 So thank you for hosting us in Cold Bay
18 tonight. It's a nice facility and a beautiful town,
19 and everybody has been really, really nice to us
20 today, and we want to thank you for that. It's been
21 wonderful.

22 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: They ordered sunshine.

23 BILL CRAIG: Yeah, thank you for the
24 weather.

25 You guys probably know this facility better

1 than me, but we've got exits there and the front door
2 that you came in. Restrooms are around the corner
3 back behind me.

4 So I want to emphasize, there will be two
5 separate meetings tonight. We will start with the
6 public meeting on the Draft Supplemental EIS, which
7 will consist of a short presentation by Fish and
8 Wildlife Service followed by public comments. When
9 public comments are finished, we will end the public
10 meeting and begin the ANILCA Section 810 subsistence
11 hearing. Again, Fish and Wildlife Service will give
12 a short presentation followed by public comments on
13 the draft subsistence findings.

14 So thank you for coming and participating
15 tonight. Bobbie Jo is up next and will be giving a
16 presentation on the Draft Supplemental EIS.

17 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I am Bobbie Jo Skibo. I
18 work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, been
19 with the Service -- that light is so in your
20 eyeballs. I'll move over. I've been with the
21 Service for three years, 17 years before that with
22 the Forest Service, but I've been running the
23 Supplemental EIS, Environmental Impact Statement --
24 I'm going to shorten it all night. Hopefully that's
25 okay. Up in the Arctic for oil and gas drilling in

1 ANWR. So I've been leading that project and then
2 I've been leading now the project for the Izembek
3 proposed road land exchange.

4 And I have been in Alaska 30 years working
5 on these types of issues. They're always
6 complicated, but it's always really awesome to hear
7 as many diverse perspectives so we can build that
8 into our projects. So thanks for coming.

9 I live in Palmer now. I have a really
10 great family there, and I'm just really grateful to
11 meet this community. And we went out the road trail,
12 went down to the dock. I almost died on the ladder.
13 We got to see it today. So it was really cool. And
14 thank you, Connie, for hosting us. Really cool
15 facility that you have too.

16 So I wanted to introduce -- you probably
17 know one of our colleagues, Maria. But I'll
18 introduce Karlin. Some of you may have known him as
19 well. And then after their introductions, Maria is
20 going to do just a few slides on the background of
21 Izembek. Some things you probably already know, but
22 some things that we just want to emphasize what the
23 history is.

24 Then we'll go through about 20 slides about
25 the proposed project that's now pending and then

1 we'll take some comments if you're willing to share,
2 and then again talk about the subsistence findings.
3 So with that, Karlin.

4 KARLIN ITCHOAK: Thank you, Bobbie Jo.
5 Apologies. I'm losing my voice. But that's okay,
6 because my job here is to listen. My name is Karlin
7 Itchoak. I'm the Assistant Regional Director for
8 Refuges. I was born and raised in Nome. My father's
9 side of the family is from Utqiagvik. My mother's
10 family is from Upstate New York. And I've spent most
11 of my life here in Alaska.

12 We have 95 million acres of refuges in the
13 United States under the National Wildlife Refuge
14 System, over 570 refuges. Here in Alaska we have 16
15 National Wildlife Refuges encompassing 76.8 million
16 acres of land. So over 90 percent of our National
17 Wildlife Refuge System land is here in Alaska.

18 And we have a great team of 16 managers
19 that manage the land, that manage the refuges, and
20 before I turn it over to our refuge manager, we want
21 to acknowledge the Unangan people and their
22 traditional homelands here, and thank them and thank
23 all of you for allowing us to be here today.

24 And with that, I'll turn it over to our
25 refuge manager.

1 MARIA FOSADO: Good evening. Everybody
2 knows me. Maria Fosado. Izembek Refuge manager.
3 Really appreciate you all coming tonight. We're here
4 to provide some information. I'm doing to start out
5 by just providing a little bit of a background about
6 the refuge itself. So hopefully everyone can hear
7 me. If not, please just raise your hand and I'll try
8 and speak up.

9 So Izembek National Wildlife Range was
10 established by public land order in 1960 as a refuge
11 breeding ground -- as a refuge breeding ground and
12 management area for all forms of wildlife. In 1972,
13 Izembek Lagoon and the surrounding watershed was
14 protected by the Alaska legislature through the
15 establishment of Izembek State Game Refuge.

16 Then with the passage of the Alaska
17 National Interest Lands Conservation Act, otherwise
18 known as ANILCA, in 1980, the Izembek National
19 Wildlife Range was redesignated as the Izembek
20 National Wildlife Refuge, which today encompasses
21 310,000 acres, of which approximately 300,000 was
22 designated as wilderness by Congress.

23 So the Congressionally designated Izembek
24 wilderness areas, which comprise the majority of the
25 refuge, became part of the National Wilderness

1 Preservation System. These areas are administered
2 for the use and enjoyment of the American people in
3 such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for
4 future use and enjoyment as wilderness, to provide
5 for the protection of those areas, and for the
6 preservation of their wilderness character. These
7 areas provide scenic, wildlife, scientific values,
8 and opportunity for primitive and solitude and
9 unconfined types of recreation.

10 Each unit in the National Wildlife Refuge
11 System is established to serve a statutory purpose,
12 and that purpose targets the conservation of native
13 species that depend on those waters and lands. To
14 administer those lands in accordance with their
15 statutory purposes, all activities are evaluated for
16 appropriateness and compatibility.

17 With the passage of ANILCA and the
18 establishment of Izembek Refuge, we also receive
19 ANILCA refuge purposes, and those include to conserve
20 fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their
21 national diversity, including, but not limited to,
22 waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds,
23 brown bears, and salmonids; to fulfill the
24 international treaty obligations of the United States
25 with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;

1 to provide for the opportunity for continued
2 subsistence uses by local residents; and to ensure
3 water quality and necessary water quantity within the
4 refuge.

5 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was the
6 first site in the United States that was designated
7 as a wetland of international importance by the
8 Ramsar Convention in 1986 and was subsequently
9 recognized as an important bird area of global
10 significance by BirdLife International and by the
11 National Audubon Society. Izembek has received
12 these global recognitions due to its diverse
13 habitats, the dynamic landscape, the unique
14 geographical location with it being situated between
15 the highly productive waters of the Bering Sea and
16 the Gulf of Alaska.

17 From brown bears to Pacific salmon, more
18 than 200 species call this place home. The heart of
19 the refuge is Izembek Lagoon, a coastal ecosystem
20 that is home to one of the world's largest eelgrass
21 beds. Kinzarof Lagoon, located on the Pacific side
22 of the Alaska Peninsula, and which is separated from
23 Izembek Lagoon by the narrow isthmus, is considered
24 one of the most significant eelgrass beds on the
25 Pacific Coast of the Alaska Peninsula.

1 The location of Izembek Refuge along avian
2 migration routes, combined with the abundant food
3 source the eelgrass beds provide, make Izembek Lagoon
4 one of the most important habitats for migratory bird
5 staging areas and wintering habitats within the
6 world. This site is especially critical for many
7 species of waterfowl, especially geese and shorebirds
8 that undertake transoceanic flights.

9 Virtually the entire population of Pacific
10 black brant, more than half the word population of
11 Emperor geese, and a significant percentage of the
12 population of Steller's eiders and Taverner's Canada
13 geese depend on Izembek Lagoon.

14 The highest density of brown bears in the
15 Izembek occur within the Joshua Green River watershed
16 on the northeast side of the refuge in Cold Bay.
17 However, as we all know, bears can be observed
18 throughout the refuge and use a variety of habitats.

19 Caribou is a high-profile refuge-purpose
20 specie and a high value for subsistence users. The
21 Southern Alaska Peninsula caribou herd ranges from
22 Port Moller all the way down to the southern end of
23 the Alaska Peninsula, with it's primary calving
24 grounds just north of Izembek Refuge. However, their
25 wintering areas have historically extended southward

1 and encompass the area around Izembek Lagoon in
2 Cold Bay. The narrow isthmus between Izembek and
3 Kinzarof Lagoon is an important migration --
4 migratory corridor for caribou. And, of course, the
5 refuge supports satellite populations of caribou in
6 other areas.

7 And lastly, Pacific salmon also have a high
8 profile as a refuse-purpose species and are a high
9 value for subsistence users. And the refuge supports
10 all five species of Pacific salmon.

11 So thank you. And I'll pass it over to
12 Bobbie Jo.

13 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank you, Maria. And
14 really, your passion for the Izembek Refuge really
15 shines through. I'm sure a lot of people probably
16 know that by now.

17 So we're going to talk a little bit about
18 the project, and I'm assuming a lot of you probably
19 have some history with this. So let's go back in
20 time. And some of the slides, we do sort of read
21 them a little bit to make sure we cover especially,
22 like, the legal language of things. So bear with me.

23 So back in 2009, Omnibus Public Land
24 Management Act directed the Secretary of Interior to
25 actually analyze a land exchange that would go

1 through the refuge and the wilderness, and then it
2 asked the Service to do an Environmental Impact
3 Statement through the NEPA process.

4 So then, in 2013, the Environmental Impact
5 Statement was completed. A record of decision was
6 issued, and that's like the final step, and a
7 no-action alternative was chosen. Then in 2019, the
8 secretary at that time, Secretary Bernhardt, moved
9 forward with a land exchange agreement, but then as
10 Secretary Haaland took her position in 2023, she then
11 withdrew that 2019 agreement, stating that there were
12 procedural flaws. So now here we are.

13 So this EIS -- Supplemental EIS basically
14 supplements, brings new information into that 2013
15 document, and we were directed to do that by the
16 Secretary of Interior, Secretary Haaland. So now we
17 are looking at a land exchange, potential land
18 exchange, in the refuge through the Congressional
19 wilderness, and a lot of the information has just
20 been updated. We're trying to find new information.

21 So now we have the no-action alternative,
22 the alternatives from the past 2013 -- and there will
23 be some slides over this -- and then we've added a
24 new one which is the new land exchange proposed road
25 corridor, Alternative 6. And that's really what most

1 people want to hear about, because it's the one
2 that's on the table for consideration.

3 So let's see. I want to say one other
4 thing. If this land exchange agreement actually goes
5 forward, that's assuming that all the other
6 permitting and regulatory compliance would have to
7 happen as well. So it's not just this process.
8 There would be extra processes after this to make it
9 a go.

10 So our proposed action is to enter into a
11 land exchange to add land with conservation
12 subsistence and habitat values into the national
13 refuge, back to Izembek. There's other lands that
14 might go over to the Alaska Peninsula Refuge. And in
15 an exchange for lands from King Cove Corporation of
16 real property interests surface, the land, and the
17 subsurface, underneath the land, for that corridor
18 through the refuge, which includes the Congressional
19 ordinance to stop the trail there.

20 So the purpose is -- and this is something
21 I think is a bit different from back in 2013, so I'd
22 like to read it. But it's to provide a safe,
23 reliable, year-round transportation system for health
24 and safety purposes with particular emphasis on
25 emergency medical evacuations between the two

1 communities.

2 Another purpose, which is a little
3 different on this one, is to increase the overall
4 conservation value of lands preserved in the National
5 Refuge System and to maintain or increase the
6 opportunity for subsistence uses. So that is kind of
7 a new piece to this.

8 The need for the project is a very long
9 section in the document. Right over here, this is
10 actually the full SEIS. We brought one copy in case
11 somebody wants to look through it. But you'll find
12 the needs statement in here in Section 1.4, in case
13 you want to take a look at that.

14 So just to orient us, so I think you guys
15 know all this way better than me, but now it's great
16 to be in town. I've been looking at maps,
17 Google Earth, but to see it in person is obviously
18 way better. But on this map over here we have
19 King Cove, obviously Cold Bay. The few alternatives
20 that are on the table and still are in our document
21 is the hovercraft alternative, the ferry to
22 Lenard Harbor, and then this one right here is the
23 new road alignment that is under consideration for
24 Alternative 6. And we will go in detail on all of
25 these things here in a minute.

1 So the draft considers we have to comply
2 with the National Environment Policy Act by having a
3 reasonable range of alternatives. No action is
4 always on the table. Then we considered
5 Alternative 2 and 3. Those were from the 2013 EIS.
6 That Ominous Act that I was talking about in 2009
7 expired, so there's no way to consider 2 and 3,
8 because it considered state lands and other factors
9 that are not a part of this current situation. So
10 they were there for comparison, but they are no
11 longer included to be chosen, I guess, to move
12 forward.

13 So then we have Alternative 4 -- you guys
14 know that one -- which was good to kind of see that
15 today. The Lenard Harbor ferry, Cold Bay dock
16 improvements, and then the new one.

17 So Alternative 4 was from the 2003. There
18 was actually another one before this, 2003. So this
19 one is included there. Then in 2013, it seems like
20 you guys have put a good effort into trying these
21 things. And it was analyzed in detail. It
22 considered the hovercraft for six days of week of
23 service, and again, it was retained as a viable
24 alternative here in this document, further
25 consideration.

1 Then Alternative 5, which is a ferry that
2 would go 14 miles from Lenard Harbor to the Cold Bay
3 dock. It has been brought to our attention that
4 there is a replacement dock planning already in the
5 works with Alaska Department of Transportation. So
6 that is on the table. And then this would not
7 include a land exchange. So that is now an
8 alternative that is not going to exchange anything.
9 So it was retained as well as a viable option too.

10 So I just, like, deviated from this, which
11 is great because I hate reading papers. So cool.
12 But in case I want to pick on 6. So this is the new
13 one. So Alternative 6 would start here over on the
14 King Cove Access Road near the Northeast Terminal.
15 It would then go up through the wilderness and come
16 back down. So this is the wilderness area. These
17 little red dots that are along there would be
18 material sites used for gravel extraction to build
19 the road. There would be -- so that's what those
20 are. Then over here, it terminates at the Outer
21 Marker Road and Blinn Lake Loop, right there where it
22 goes out the trail.

23 There is a lot on this slide, and it's good
24 to just know. This is kind of the details of what's
25 going to happen if this were to go forward with the

1 trade. So this is a total of 31,198 acres from
2 King Cove Corporation. That's 29,000 and some change
3 that's the surface. 1,739, that's the surface and
4 subsurface. And that would come into the federal
5 government. 1,739 acres would go back into the
6 Congressional wilderness area of the Izembek Refuge.

7 Now, we, the federal government and
8 Izembek, would be giving up a total of 490 acres.
9 484 of those are both the surface and sub, and six
10 are just the subsurface, and that would be used for
11 one of the material sites that are slated. And so
12 336 of the acres of the 490 would be current
13 wilderness out on the trail back out there, and
14 then -- yeah. So that's what we'd be giving up, is
15 those 336.

16 So it's slated to be an 18.9-mile
17 single-lane gravel road. And the 15 material sites
18 are those little red dots that you saw, and 13 of
19 them are like little dots along the road corridor,
20 two of which have little spurs off that would be
21 off-site of that exact corridor.

22 So one of the big things as well about this
23 that we really want to emphasize that has restricted
24 some things on it is that this would be restricted to
25 noncommercial uses, and it's further restricted for

1 the necessary health and safety purposes and access
2 to the refuge from federally qualified subsistence
3 users who are actively subsisting. So that is the
4 restriction on top of the other stuff we've shared.

5 And I was actually going to say -- because
6 I think maybe some people would ask this, and I have
7 it in my notes -- if -- let me read this one. This
8 is a sub-bullet of that. The use -- so we just said
9 it's restricted to noncommercial use and you have to
10 be actively subsisting and you have to be a federally
11 qualified subsistence user. But the use of taxis,
12 commercial vans for public transportation and
13 ride-sharing services when used for health and safety
14 or subsistence purposes would not be considered a
15 commercial use in that Alternative 6.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you repeat
17 that?

18 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Okay. The use of taxis,
19 commercial vans or ride-sharing, public
20 transportation type of things, when used for
21 transporting people for public health and safety or
22 subsistence purposes would not be considered a
23 commercial use. Okay?

24 This slide is very complicated and a lot of
25 information. There is a poster outside, but because

1 it is a small group and I think maybe I can just
2 touch on a few things here and you could look at it
3 closer.

4 This Alternative 2 and 3, remember, they're
5 not viable, so we're not going to pick one of these.
6 We can't because it doesn't include the state
7 anymore. But just for comparison. So back in 2013,
8 these numbers up here would have been what was
9 planned. But right now, the 18.9 miles, the
10 right-of-way is somewhere between 100 and 240 feet
11 based on topography, water sources, etcetera, and
12 that does not include gravel material sites along
13 that right-of-way.

14 The 490 acres, we talked about that.
15 That's what Izembek would be giving up. For this
16 number, what King Cove would be giving up. But this
17 1,739 is what would be coming back to Izembek.
18 29,459, just the surface would be going over to the
19 Alaska Peninsula Wildlife Refuge. Just to clarify
20 all that. And these numbers don't exist, again,
21 because those factors were a part of the old plan,
22 things that aren't currently available to us.

23 So when you open up this document, if you
24 get the chance and you want to really dig in, if you
25 saw the 2013 document, that's a big daddy, right? So

1 now, in the front pages of each section, you will see
2 something like this. They will be blocks that are
3 bright yellow and it will summarize the changes to
4 that section.

5 In each section it will also be yellow, any
6 place that was updated or substantially changed. And
7 then on, you know, like a big table or something like
8 that, you will see an asterisk. So if you're really
9 looking at something and you're like, wait, that
10 seems new, well, that's how you'll know it is new and
11 has been supplemented.

12 So once you take a look or have your
13 thoughts composed, you can testify here today, and
14 that will go in the public record. That why we do
15 have Deirdre here as our court reporter. You can
16 write your comments down. We have paper copies out
17 there where Arika was. Or you can go online, and
18 regulations.gov is where we're collecting those
19 public comments. If you have any problems getting
20 there, just ask one of us and we can help you
21 navigate it.

22 We have a 45-day public comment period that
23 we're about at day 20, I think, as of today. And so
24 now we have until December 30th. And we accept
25 comments up to 11:59 Eastern Standard Time online.

1 If they're postmarked to us in the mail by that date,
2 we collect those and use those for the public record
3 as well.

4 Then the final, so the next step how this
5 goes, is we have a draft, you all comment, we take
6 all those comments, we as a team will go through
7 them, respond to them and start to prepare the Final
8 Supplemental EIS. So that takes us a bit of time,
9 plus, as you know, we have a new president, a new
10 administration is coming in, we'll have a new
11 secretary of interior taking a position. So we're
12 going to probably have a little bit of lag time for
13 them to provide us direction on how they want us to
14 move forward with this project.

15 And then, within all of that, then we'll
16 get a final SEIS out, and then there is no other
17 public comment at that time. And then 30 days later,
18 at least -- it could be longer than that, but just a
19 minimum of 30 days, then we can issue the record of
20 decision.

21 At this time, Alternative 6 has been
22 identified as the Department's preferred alternative.
23 They're just saying they prefer it at this time.
24 That doesn't lock us in. It doesn't constitute a
25 decision at this time. But when the record of

1 decision comes out, that is the official decision of
2 the government.

3 So now we have just a few things we wanted
4 to share about how to comment and if you want to
5 comment. And so it looks like -- do we have a few
6 people that wanted to testify or comment today?

7 JOHN ISAACS: We do.

8 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Okay. And so we really
9 appreciate that the more diverse, substantive
10 information we have really helps support our work
11 going forward. So thank you with that.

12 Jon Isaacs is going to give you a few
13 ground rules just to set you up with that and then
14 we'll get started. And we're going to probably pull
15 this back and we will sit up here just so we can be
16 looking at the group of folks. Okay?

17 So Jon, while you're doing that, we'll move
18 things back.

19 JON ISAACS: As Bobbie Jo said, I'm Jon
20 Isaacs. I'm with AECOM based in Anchorage. The
21 first time I came out to Cold Bay was probably the
22 1980s. Came back in, I think, probably the '90s for
23 more community planning, and I came back out for the
24 2012 EIS. So this is my fourth time out. Things
25 have changed, planes have changed, my hair has gotten

1 grayer and thinner, but it's still Cold Bay and a
2 really pretty amazing community. We really
3 appreciate being here tonight.

4 As we said, we're going to be taking public
5 comment on the Draft SEIS, and what I'm going to do,
6 some people have indicated they want to testify and
7 we'll read the names of those folks off first. We've
8 asked everybody in the meetings to try to keep their
9 testimony within three minutes. This is a small
10 crowd. I'm not going to enforce it that heavily, but
11 try to stay focused.

12 The other thing we sort of recommend is,
13 you know, think about this and try to be
14 constructive. Give us ideas of things that we need
15 to be thinking about as we revise the Supplemental
16 EIS. That will be really most helpful to us.

17 I think this is going to be really a pretty
18 respectful crowd and you guys are going to have a lot
19 of things that are important for us to hear, so I
20 don't think there's going to be any need to sort of
21 ask people to be respectful. This is a small group
22 and there's not a lot of space, so I think what I
23 might do is, when I call your name, if I could have
24 you stand up and if you could state your name to help
25 our court reporter out for the record and then begin

1 your testimony. And then I'll call up the next
2 person.

3 We only have, on the SEIS, three people
4 signed up. So when we finish that, I'm going to see
5 if anybody else has thought about this and if you
6 want to testify. This is not your only opportunity
7 to testify. What I really recommend that you do is,
8 as you've learned some things here tonight, you can
9 go back and look at the EIS, at the ANILCA 810
10 finding, give it some thought, and there are a couple
11 other ways you can testify. We have the comment form
12 that Arika handed out. You can put things on that.

13 You can also go to the website and provide
14 more detailed testimony. Just because you testify
15 here tonight doesn't mean you can't submit these
16 other things. We really recommend you take the
17 opportunity to think about it and give us your
18 comments because we really want to hear that.

19 I think with that, the first person who
20 signed up for public comment is Jeff Wasley. And
21 Jeff, if I can just have you stand up and, again,
22 state your name, and we'd love to hear your comments.

23 JEFF WASLEY: Where should I --

24 JON ISAACS: I'd stay right there.

25 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Wherever you want.

1 JON ISAACS: I'd stay right there. This is
2 pretty tight, so don't feel like you have to work
3 your way around.

4 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Jeff, if you feel
5 confined there, come on up, or stand wherever you
6 want. This is your community. Do what you guys want
7 to do.

8 JEFF WASLEY: I'll stay right here, I
9 guess.

10 Okay. Hello. Thanks, folks, for allowing
11 us this opportunity to speak. I am Jeff Wasley. I
12 am speaking as an individual homeowner and business
13 owner in Cold Bay, not as the mayor. This is just me
14 as an individual.

15 So this has been going on for years and
16 years, and you've kind of shown us some different
17 EISs. I think the media, politicians, and all have
18 gotten this wrapped into, like, you have two choices,
19 and if you come to meetings like this, you find out
20 there's more than that. But mostly it's been either
21 you build the road and you help our neighbors in
22 King Cove or you do nothing and you preserve the
23 wilderness and all the wildlife that rely on it.

24 And I think people that know this issue
25 know that that's not true. There are other

1 alternatives to help our neighbors out in King Cove
2 to get them access to our runway so if they have
3 emergencies, they can get their people safely the
4 care that they need.

5 And I think, in my opinion, like the Lenard
6 Harbor to a dock in Cold Bay, since we are going to
7 redo our dock, hopefully in the next five years, that
8 that would be an efficient way to get folks over here
9 and be able to do so in all weather. From my
10 research, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined
11 that a marine option was 99.9 percent dependable, and
12 I believe that, you know, it would be dependable.
13 There are ships designed for rough weather. The bay
14 is largely protected. Yes, we have wind.

15 But the road option, we drive these roads
16 every day. They're in horrible shape. You cannot go
17 fast. It is a long -- would be a very long drive
18 from King Cove to here. And I don't know how that
19 road would be maintained, who would pay for it, how
20 it would be maintained in the winter when we often
21 have big storms with lots of drifts.

22 But I don't really want to get into the
23 science. You can look into all the science and
24 studies and all the different EISs over the years.
25 Basically they've all come back that the road is very

1 bad for wildlife, and it's just -- I don't want to
2 beat a dead horse -- that's kind of why they've had
3 no alternative for this long.

4 So I think a lot of folks outside of Alaska
5 don't realize that, like, you have a road in remote
6 Alaska, it's very, very difficult, practically
7 impossible, to keep people from going off the road
8 with ATVs, UTVs, whatever. And I don't know who
9 would enforce it. I think all you have to do is look
10 at Google Earth, Google Maps right now and look at
11 the end of the current road and see the trails going
12 as far as the Joshua Green River. And how a road
13 could go through that isthmus and not become a spider
14 web of trails, I just don't know how that's possible.

15 And I just think that, if you build a huge
16 fence to keep people in, then you're going to impact
17 the wildlife that use that corridor. So I don't know
18 how you have a road and keep the people on it without
19 preventing the wildlife to have natural movements
20 that they have now.

21 So I guess, again, like our neighbors in
22 King Cove, I think this should have been done a long
23 time ago. We should have built a harbor here in
24 Cold Bay. And it had a great option. It could have
25 saved lives and improved their quality of life,

1 improve their access to come over here to travel, to
2 fish, to hunt, whatever they want to do.

3 I'm not really sure how, you know, you
4 interpret the road. You just said it was for
5 noncommercial, so unless someone is actively doing
6 subsistence -- so if someone just needed to get to
7 Anchorage, even if it wasn't a medical emergency,
8 they couldn't drive across? Is that my
9 understanding?

10 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: One of the things we
11 probably should have said is it's hard for us in
12 these public meetings to do Q and A's, because -- but
13 if you honestly submit that or write that down, I
14 would love to be able to respond to that with clarity
15 for sure. Thanks.

16 JEFF WASLEY: I think people don't really
17 realize, a lot of locals here, that this is an
18 incredibly unique area. I've traveled around a fair
19 amount. But there's no other place on earth like
20 Izembek. There's no plan B if we screw it up. And I
21 think people have a pretty good history of screwing
22 things up.

23 And I think, with the best intentions, if
24 we build this road, it's going to have some impacts
25 that are going to be far-reaching to our neighbors.

1 also didn't have a prepared speech to get away with
2 thorough points. But regarding Mr. Wasley's
3 statement and Brianne's statement, I am very much
4 believing that this country is based on precedent,
5 and if this road goes through, it's not stopping any
6 other further development across the nation in more
7 ecologically precarious areas, like Ambler Road or
8 the Bears [indiscernible] and stuff.

9 And I think that the ferry from the
10 Lenard Harbor to here would probably be the best
11 option in the long run, as it doesn't allow
12 undocumented access, because, if you build the road,
13 you would have to build a way -- or keep it away to
14 make sure people aren't accessing it outside of the
15 proposed agreed ways, like subsistence or emergency.
16 Because unless you build a fence or put cameras or
17 put people there to monitor it constantly --
18 ironically it's like the movie, if you build it, they
19 will come, and I think that that would happen, that
20 you would have unsurveilled -- unsurveillanced access
21 that would happen up until there would be no point to
22 block it off. At one point it would all be used up
23 and the animals would eventually move in somewhere
24 that's less accessed by people that are bothering
25 them constantly.

1 record, my name is Brianne Rogers.

2 The Pacific black brant brought me here.
3 My dad and I became enamored with the little goose's
4 incredible migration story, and after years of
5 planning, we made the trek to experience Izembek, a
6 designated wetlands of international importance.

7 What we found in Izembek, however, was so
8 much more than a single unique specie, but it's an
9 intricate wilderness full of countless species that
10 dropped our jaws and brought us back multiple times a
11 year. I now spend much of my year in Cold Bay and am
12 grateful each day that I get to spend time in this
13 most special place.

14 I have heard from community members and
15 read in the newspaper weekly the massive disruptions
16 the region is facing, from fishery collapses to
17 changes in caribou populations to permafrost loss,
18 all impacting the livability of remote communities
19 throughout Alaska. We are in the midst of a global
20 biodiversity crisis.

21 Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is a
22 biodiversity stronghold deserving of protection, and
23 decades of studies have repeatedly found that
24 building a road through wilderness would have
25 devastating consequences for the land and wildlife of

1 the refuge. These studies, some done by the state
2 and federal agencies who authored the SEIS up for
3 discussion today, clearly state that a road would
4 be -- would irreparably alter the critical feeding
5 and nesting habitats of Izembek.

6 I was therefore confused how the 2024 SEIS
7 could justify supporting the construction of a road
8 when there are viable nonroad options available for
9 community transportation needs. After all, the
10 mission of the U.S. Fish and Wild Service is, quote,
11 to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance
12 fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the
13 continuing benefit of the American people.

14 While this road would have a limited
15 seasonal health and safety benefit, it would
16 categorically cause harm to a resource valuable to
17 all Americans, including more than 78 tribes and one
18 village corporation who have passed sovereign
19 resolutions opposing the land exchange and road.

20 What justification does DOI give to support
21 the construction of a road when numerous studies have
22 shown comprehensively will negatively impact this
23 unique ecosystem? None. The prior findings of harm
24 to the refuge remain intact with the 2024 SEIS. And,
25 worse yet, in the executive summary, page 31, it

1 shows the impacts of the new proposal are worse in
2 almost every category.

3 Of even greater concern, the land exchange
4 that is involved in the road construction is, quote,
5 intended to serve the purposes of increasing the
6 overall construction conservation value of lands
7 preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System,
8 unquote. In Appendix B, item 2.2, Parcel Scoring and
9 Ranking, we see there is now a net conservation
10 benefit analysis that ranks the lands traded away and
11 lands received by their ecological value.

12 This section provides no clear conclusion
13 regarding the net conservation cost or benefit, but
14 Figure 1 appears to show that the lands that lie
15 under the potential road corridor rank very high
16 ecologically, and the lands coming into public
17 ownership in exchange do not. The lands being
18 exchanged also currently do not face any threat
19 necessitating additional protection.

20 So our federal agencies entrusted with
21 protecting these lands for the continuing benefit of
22 all American people are willing to build a road that
23 they know will cause significant ecological harm to
24 the refuge, and Fish and Wildlife's own ranking of
25 ecological values such that the value of the lands

1 being traded away is very high, much higher than what
2 would come in, and this is before even considering
3 all of the irreversible impacts of the road that are
4 universally known to be ecologically negative. So
5 the notion that DOI and FWS are promoting with this
6 document, that the land exchange would further
7 Izembek's conservation purposes, is simply not
8 tenable.

9 The other area of concern I would like to
10 highlight is the fantasy created by the false promise
11 of, quote/unquote, restrictions on road traffic use
12 types, which would, by definition of our remote
13 location, be in writing only. Anyone who has spent
14 any time in Izembek sees the spider web of ATV tracks
15 that depart from every established road and range in
16 all directions beyond the end of any roads. ATV use
17 is illegal in Izembek, to my understanding, both by
18 the State of Alaska regulation and the federal
19 government, given its wilderness designation, and
20 yet, zero enforcement occurs.

21 There is no law enforcement available in
22 our community of Cold Bay and there is no mention of
23 law enforcement resources being provided in the SEIS.
24 Saying that there will be a restriction on commercial
25 use of the road is worth less than the words written

1 on the page without substantial ongoing resource
2 allocation to monitor and enforce these false
3 promises.

4 Ultimately, we have all been sold a lie
5 that was first created by a foreign-owned seafood
6 corporation who sought a cheaper route to market for
7 their products. This is not a binary choice between
8 safety for our neighbors in King Cove and the
9 preservation of an irreplaceable ecosystem.

10 There is already a road connecting our
11 communities that is safe year-round. It is made of
12 water. The hovercraft operated between King Cove and
13 Cold Bay from 2007 to 2010 and performed over
14 30 medical evacuations and almost every one in
15 conditions. Despite its success, the borough removed
16 the tax payer-funded hovercraft from operation and
17 later sold it. A 2015 Army Corps of Engineers
18 analysis gave a 99.9 percent dependability rating of
19 a marine ferry alternative, and it would be an
20 excellent transportation solution.

21 We drive the road to Grant Point nearly
22 daily each winter and we regularly experience wintry
23 weather conditions, snow drifts, and substantial
24 stretches of degraded potholed road bed that creates
25 serious safety issues and consequently require a low

1 speed that can make a whole world of difference when
2 seconds matter in an emergency. A land road is far
3 from a guaranteed safe alternative during our long
4 winters.

5 In conclusion, the notion that the
6 Department of Interior can trade away refuge
7 wilderness lands to allow roads to be built through
8 them is antithetical to ANILCA and threatens not only
9 Izembek Refuge but all parks, refuges, wilderness
10 areas in the national monuments in Alaska.

11 Because this plan categorically does not
12 further refuge purposes, the secretary of Interior
13 does not have the authority to exchange
14 Congressionally designated wilderness lands within
15 the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge for a road.
16 This exchange opens the door to future land exchanges
17 for commercial and private purposes, jeopardizing the
18 protection of over 150 million acres of national
19 public lands.

20 For all of these reasons, and particularly
21 given that the federal funds are already allocated to
22 upgrade the Cold Bay dock, I strongly urge the
23 Interior department to not choose their new preferred
24 alternative, a land exchange for a road, and instead
25 work with the Army Corps of Engineers and other

1 relevant entities to support a marine transportation
2 alternative.

3 Thank you for your time. I really
4 appreciate you all taking the time to allow our
5 community to provide input and do it in person. It
6 means a lot.

7 JON ISAACS: Thanks for your detailed
8 comments. They were very specific and very helpful.

9 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank you.

10 JON ISAACS: So the only other person that
11 has signed up is Connie Newton.

12 CONNIE NEWTON: Hi. I think everybody
13 knows me. Anyway, yeah, Bri, she has a good argument
14 there. But I've lived in King Cove. I was born and
15 raised there. And in 2006, I bought the Bearfoot and
16 I have traveled the waters between Lenard Harbor and
17 Cold Bay Dock. The dock we're not going to have for
18 five or six years, maybe even longer than that. It
19 is not a year-round thing for that harbor with our
20 winds here, especially during the wintertime.

21 And a hovercraft failed during the winter
22 because of the high winds and stuff. It couldn't
23 run. And I am for the road. I think between
24 Cold Bay, King Cove, and Aleutians East Borough that
25 we can actually come up with a plan and to actually

1 protect the road and get the enforcement that we need
2 out here. Because there is no enforcement. You
3 know, there never has been, what little we have.

4 And that's what really needs to be done,
5 especially with the existing road right now. And
6 they've already marked the road. The guys were out
7 here and already stamped and marked with stakes where
8 the road is supposed to go.

9 The water thing is a hit and miss. I just
10 don't see that working, whatever -- unless they bring
11 in 140-foot crab boat that's 40-foot wide with side
12 shells. Right, Bill? That's not even going to work.
13 No.

14 And as far as us using it for other things
15 other than getting over to Cold Bay to get on a plane
16 or for emergency travel, the road would be great.
17 Right now, ANMC, which is the Indian Health Services
18 that a lot of people in King Cove travel with,
19 they're putting in a lot of Lake Clark Air, because
20 Lake Clark can pretty much fly in anything. Great
21 pilots. Many of them are not. But that is almost
22 three to four hundred dollars more than a flight out
23 of here.

24 You think about the money that our health
25 services would save by not having to do that, and

1 then you think about the people flying there, it's a
2 milk run. So I don't know. I'm for the road. Have
3 been all my life. So thank you.

4 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

5 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thanks, Connie.

6 JON ISAACS: So no one else is signed up,
7 but we've got lots of time. Is there anybody else
8 who would like to provide some comments or have
9 something to say on the SEIS? Again, don't feel like
10 you have to do it tonight, because you can submit
11 more detailed comments, but we want to give people
12 the opportunity to submit public testimony.

13 Any takers in the audience? I see a hand.
14 Name for the record.

15 CHARLIE SUMMERVILLE: Charlie Summerville.
16 We have Cold Bay Adventurers Lodge. I'm a guide and
17 a boat captain out here. Family's been in Alaska for
18 40 years.

19 I'm kind of torn on the road and the boat
20 system, because I'm on the water every day eight
21 months a year out here, and as Connie said, the water
22 is a treacherous place. And my opinion -- I didn't
23 get to experience the hovercraft, but from what I've
24 seen and what I've heard, it was pretty much a
25 failure overall if you had to look at the big picture

1 of things. I don't know for sure. I just know that
2 it didn't really work out as good as it could have,
3 or maintenance problems and high wind. The ferry,
4 that's a great alternative.

5 The land exchange portion of it kind of
6 gives me a little bit of heartburn, to be honest with
7 you, because they're going to give 40,000 acres away
8 for 400 acres or 40 acres, and I think I'm the only
9 one that actually owns an inholding inside that
10 30,000 acres that King Cove is planning on giving
11 away, but over at Thinpoint, which is another pretty
12 unique situation over in the lagoon.

13 So like I said, I've got a lot of friends
14 in King Cove. I go back and forth for business
15 running boats, people. I'm -- yeah, I would hope
16 that they would come up with an alternative. The
17 road system -- yeah, I don't know. I'm just a --
18 there's a lot of negatives on both ends of it. You
19 know, is it going to work, is it going to be another
20 100 billion dollar boondoggle like the hovercraft and
21 we're going to waste another ten years.

22 I mean, I definitely am in favor of getting
23 a harbor here so that we could at least have a chance
24 to get big boats in and out, whether they can or they
25 can't or some days they can. I mean, I've seen the

1 weather bad enough -- I ran a 70-foot boat out here
2 last summer, and this dock was a complete nightmare
3 trying to get a 70-foot boat to. You couldn't even
4 get people on and off it safely.

5 Bill's run 50-foot, 70-foot, 80-foot,
6 100-foot boats out here, and, I mean, this place is a
7 nightmare without a harbor. So if they can't
8 literally put a real harbor in or something where you
9 can bring stuff in and keep it protected, then it's
10 just my opinion that the whole thing is probably just
11 going to turn into another big boondoggle and waste
12 another ten years and hundreds of millions of
13 dollars. And I guess at that point, the road, for
14 all the damage it's going to do, probably -- I don't
15 know. I'm just a little bit -- I'm not sold on
16 either one.

17 But the land exchange that they change from
18 the state land to the federal land, 30,000 acres
19 to -- that they're given everything from here all the
20 way to Thinpoint and Mortensen Lagoon, all those
21 rivers, all the creeks, all that land, for 40 acres
22 of a road to cross there, it's like an old -- to me
23 it seems like trading blankets and jewels back in the
24 1800s to the Navajo. It seems like a -- they're
25 taking advantage of it. But, again, that's just my

1 personal opinion.

2 Yeah, I'm a little bit in awe. I didn't
3 make a prepared statement. I wasn't quite ready for
4 it, but I wish I would have. Yeah, I have some deep
5 concerns for our family, too, and for the homeowners
6 here, for the businesses, the air travel for the
7 boats.

8 You know, and then this whole commercial
9 road, some of the things that have been brought up
10 about the commercial road. Like you said, who is
11 going to sit there and baby-sit? What do we need,
12 more cops out here to baby-sit on a road when you
13 want to drive to King Cove? I mean, I don't know.
14 Are we going to put a gate out and you got to get a
15 day pass from the doctor to go to King Salmon -- or
16 to Cold Bay. I mean, I don't know how that whole
17 thing is going to work.

18 I mean, in a perfect world, it would be
19 great. But if they're going to build a road at that
20 point, how can you just say, well, if you're not in
21 an ambulance or in a commercial van, I mean, at what
22 level? Okay. We got commercial vans, but do we have
23 Native folks, do we have regular folks? I mean, it
24 just seems like a whole other bill of goods.

25 You either got to -- if you're going to put

1 a road, you got to put a road and let people use it,
2 or you can't have a road and you've got to come up
3 with an alternative, because it's just going to be a
4 can of worms and it's going to be a constant battle
5 of who subsistence use -- what, I'm going to go pick
6 berries in King Cove today or they're going to come
7 here? I mean, I don't know.

8 It's a very complex situation, and I don't
9 have the answer and I have not -- I didn't realize
10 that Alternative 6 was a new alternative that they
11 were going to -- that that's what the government is
12 standing behind, because I'm not a big fan of that.

13 But I guess I'll make a written statement.
14 And thank you for your time, for coming here.

15 JON ISAACS: Thanks for your comments and
16 your time.

17 Anybody else like to make some comment on
18 this? Name?

19 MICHAEL ASHLEY: My name is Michael Ashley.
20 I own a business here in Cold Bay. I've fished here
21 seven years now, but it's a family business. I've
22 heard about the road my entire life, and even as a
23 younger kid, it never really made sense to me,
24 especially on an environmental impact standpoint.

25 And I didn't prepare to speak today. I

1 also didn't have a prepared speech to get away with
2 thorough points. But regarding Mr. Wasley's
3 statement and Brianne's statement, I am very much
4 believing that this country is based on precedent,
5 and if this road goes through, it's not stopping any
6 other further development across the nation in more
7 ecologically precarious areas, like Ambler Road or
8 the Bears [indiscernible] and stuff.

9 And I think that the ferry from the
10 Lenard Harbor to here would probably be the best
11 option in the long run, as it doesn't allow
12 undocumented access, because, if you build the road,
13 you would have to build a way -- or keep it away to
14 make sure people aren't accessing it outside of the
15 proposed agreed ways, like subsistence or emergency.
16 Because unless you build a fence or put cameras or
17 put people there to monitor it constantly --
18 ironically it's like the movie, if you build it, they
19 will come, and I think that that would happen, that
20 you would have unsurveilled -- unsurveillanced access
21 that would happen up until there would be no point to
22 block it off. At one point it would all be used up
23 and the animals would eventually move in somewhere
24 that's less accessed by people that are bothering
25 them constantly.

1 And I think that -- once again, I think
2 that the Lenard Harbor thing is probably the best
3 option. And that's all I really have to say.

4 JON ISAACS: Thanks for your comments.
5 Anybody else?

6 BILL SAGER: I'm Bill Sager, and I live in
7 King Cove most of the time since 1977, and I run
8 boats. I think both of these ideas -- we definitely
9 need something from King Cove to here, and they both
10 have flaws because -- I would be in favor of putting
11 the -- instead of a harbor in Lenard, which is going
12 to cost billions of dollars, we have two in
13 King Cove, which would add an extra five miles of
14 water maybe. So you could use that harbor.

15 But that's about a 90 percent trip, you
16 know. You get rough weather in the winter blowing
17 100 miles an hour. If they get a harbor here, you
18 could safely unload people, like now you can't. That
19 would help. But a road would be a great idea, but
20 that's about a 90 percent thing, too, because who is
21 going to maintain it? We get snow drifts, 70, 80
22 mile an hour winds that will drift it shut, or
23 maintain it, and then like you say, who is going to
24 enforce the spider web of people going everywhere all
25 over the refuge and doing what they want? I mean,

1 there is no one here to enforce that.

2 So, I mean, both of them are good ideas,
3 but I'm just saying we need something, you know. I
4 don't know what the answer is. But there's probably
5 90 percent either way, you know. The road would be
6 great, but, like I say, I don't want more enforcement
7 or cameras or whatever you have to do. You're going
8 to have to buy graders, you know. You're not going
9 to keep people on the road all the time.

10 And the boat, you know, wintertime, there's
11 a lot of times I've seen 120-foot crabbers that
12 couldn't tie up to this dock. It's so rough. You
13 don't want to transport people off this dock. I've
14 seen people almost get killed going up and down these
15 ladders when the boats are jumping up and down.

16 But we're getting a new dock. If they
17 build something -- some kind of harbor, it wouldn't
18 be that big of a deal. You could sheet pile the
19 harbor and make it protected water where it's safe to
20 get people on and off.

21 Either way, I just know we need something.
22 But there's -- I mean, I don't know about you guys,
23 but everybody in this town knows how Grant Air is as
24 far as getting anywhere. Any option would be better
25 than them.

1 JON ISAACS: Thanks for the comments.

2 Would anybody else like to testify as far
3 as the supplemental EIS goes? Any other takers?

4 BILL SAGER: And I'd just like to say the
5 hovercraft is probably the least best way of
6 transportation. It's the most expensive
7 transportation there is. You know, cost-effective, a
8 ferry would be much better.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I had one question
10 after Bill was done.

11 JON ISAACS: We probably are not going to
12 be answering questions tonight, but if you have a
13 question you want to raise for the record that you
14 think needs to be answered in the EIS, that's what I
15 would say. So if you want to raise a question,
16 that's the context. We can't answer it tonight, but
17 ask it to be answered. What's your question?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I apologize. My
19 hearing is a little bit off. I was curious, who is
20 actually going to pay for the road or the boat after
21 it's put in? Is it in that booklet over there of
22 1,500 pages? Or no?

23 JOHN ISAACS: So I think that's a question
24 that the EIS should answer -- should answer your
25 question. So I think it's a good question to raise.

1 So she'll take that down. Because as we prepare the
2 Final EIS, we're going to be addressing these
3 comments that the issues have been raised, the
4 questions have been raised, and it's just something
5 for us to consider as we prepare the Final EIS.

6 That's a good question. No answer tonight, though.

7 Anybody else like to testify? Again, I
8 think you're learning some things tonight. You know,
9 I think we'll have a copy, Maria, that you might have
10 that's available to folks. We have some posters.
11 And you'll have until the end of the month.

12 Okay. We have another taker.

13 NATHANIEL MEINER: My name is Nathaniel
14 Meiner. I just moved here a couple of years ago. I
15 work for the State of Alaska DOT.

16 And with that road going in, it would take
17 another two to three state employees to maintain
18 that. And then, off the record, the State of Alaska
19 is looking at repaving -- I mean, redoing the airport
20 at King Cove. So if the road was to go in, you would
21 have to get more equipment here or else, if it's
22 just -- if they're going to use it for more than just
23 the -- use it for personal use, then what's the point
24 of fixing an airport at King Cove? Just resurface
25 it. This road is going to be done a few years down

1 the road when they resurface it.

2 Then you've got to maintain stuff. Then
3 with the state patrol, then you'd have them guys out
4 here even more. So you'd have to have VPS and all
5 that as well.

6 So that's all I got to say.

7 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

8 Anybody else? Well, I'm going to say,
9 hearing none right now, let's move on to the ANILCA
10 810 piece of it and see if anybody wants to --

11 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I just have a few slides
12 to provide context to what ANILCA 810 is and what
13 kind of information we're looking to gain from all of
14 you.

15 And again, if you didn't say yes, I want to
16 speak to the ANILCA 810, I have a feeling after what
17 I just saw, you might get inspired and want to say
18 something, because it's real important for you to be
19 able to speak up, or at least gain this information
20 today and, like we said, capture your thoughts and
21 type them in, or however you want to get them to us.

22 So essentially, the Alaska National
23 Interest Lands Conservation Act -- such a long
24 name -- but ANILCA, sets us up to evaluate the
25 effects on subsistence uses and needs when there is a

1 proposed action that may impact those uses and needs.

2 So we're required to hold a public hearing
3 on the resources and activities in the vicinity of
4 communities that a determination has been made that
5 is a may significantly restrict. Okay. So when that
6 determination is made in the preliminary document,
7 it's a preliminary finding and we need to come hear
8 from you. So your community has been identified.

9 But these are the three factors, and there
10 are three words that are really important:
11 abundance, availability, and access to those
12 subsistence resources.

13 So basically I'm just going to read some of
14 this just to make sure. So if our proposed action or
15 any of the alternatives or the cumulative effects of
16 everything we've presented to you reduce the
17 abundance of harvestable resources, we need to hear
18 about that. Which species. So again, reduction in
19 the abundance.

20 We then need to be able to hear from you if
21 there's a reduction in the availability of those
22 resources. That could be from altering -- we've
23 heard that today -- altering the patterns of
24 migration, the distribution, where they go, or the
25 locations that they may be.

1 The third factor is, does this action have
2 legal or physical limitations on accessing those
3 subsistence resources?

4 And so, again, abundance, how much are out
5 there; availability to get them; and your access to
6 get them. So if you are a federally qualified
7 subsistence user and you are going out in this
8 beautiful country and you have information on
9 subsistence resources, those are the types of things
10 we're looking at.

11 So when we then take this information back
12 to our offices and start to think about what we've
13 heard, it's just really important to be able to kind
14 of capture under those three A's just so then we can
15 really utilize that information effectively.

16 So Alternative 6, when we looked at the
17 preliminary findings of that alternative and the
18 cumulative effects in case of that, we have made a
19 determination that's a positive determination at this
20 level that it may significantly restrict the access,
21 availability, and the abundance of the resources for
22 those following communities.

23 So last night we were in King Cove. We
24 held a hearing there. We're here tonight. Tomorrow
25 we'll be in Sand Point. And then next week we do

1 have some meetings with False Pass and Nelson Lagoon,
2 but they're going to be virtual because we did have
3 limitations on flight availability to get there.

4 Now, the next one is that we're also going
5 to be holding a hearing in the hub community of
6 Bethel for the hub community of the Y-K Delta folks.
7 And the reason why we're doing that is because a
8 number of those communities in the vicinity of the
9 Y-K Delta could meet the may significantly restrict.
10 We have not made a final or a preliminary finding
11 that, yes, positive, you have -- and through Maria.
12 She is our official making those findings. So those
13 communities, your community has a positive finding
14 already. The hub communities and around the
15 Y-K Delta, we're just really not sure.

16 So what we're going to be doing is going
17 out hearing from people. Next week we have a meeting
18 in Bethel on the 12th, and then the 13th we're going
19 to do a virtual one with anybody else that's in the
20 Y-K Delta just because, again, we could not get to
21 all of the places where migratory species end up.

22 At the end of this process we have a final
23 subsistence determination, and that's per one of the
24 sections in ANILCA. So everything we hear today or
25 that's written, testimony on paper, we take that, our

1 staff look at it, and we will be taking into
2 consideration everything we hear.

3 So thanks for anybody that does have
4 species, again, that you're concerned about or you're
5 happy about, either way, good, bad, or indifferent,
6 we do need to hear from you in some way if possible.

7 So again, I think we can probably skip this
8 next slide and just go to the next one, if possible.

9 As you've heard Jon say, we have had about
10 a three-minute limit to have anybody talk. Obviously
11 we have time. If you feel like you want to speak on
12 the record on behalf of ANILCA 810 subsistence, we
13 would love to hear it.

14 Do we have folks signed up officially?

15 JON ISAACS: We do have. The only person
16 signed up ahead of time is Jeff to talk about 810.

17 We'll start with you and see if anybody
18 else wants to add some thoughts about the concept of
19 the significantly adverse impact in abundance,
20 availability, and access.

21 JEFF WASLEY: Jeff Wasley. Again, speaking
22 as an individual.

23 Just keep it short. I think if you have
24 increased access, you're going to have impacts to
25 caribou, bears, fish, birds for sure that are going

1 to impact the local -- there's only so many local
2 areas to get fish. And with Mortensen being kind of
3 suppressed lately, there's just a few creeks up in
4 Swan Lake and some up in Kinzarof. So I think adding
5 more pressure to that will definitely impact locals
6 in this community getting their fish.

7 I don't know. It's hard to guess how many
8 people would come over to hunt birds in the spring,
9 but if a lot did, then that would certainly impact
10 locals' use and others that would rely on those
11 species. So that's all. Thank you.

12 JON ISAACS: Thank you. Anybody else like
13 to talk about the aspect of potential significant
14 adverse effect on subsistence resource activities?

15 BRIANNE ROGERS: My name is Brianne Rogers.

16 Still I'm a little confused about the
17 purview of this specific hearing, but I find it
18 really interesting that the topic is subsistence and
19 this is a federal agency that oversees all of Alaska
20 and it's related to ANILCA, which oversees all the
21 state of Alaska. And we know that there are at least
22 78 tribes and one tribal community who have signed
23 resolutions saying that this road will impact their
24 ability to practice their subsistence rights in their
25 communities.

1 So while I appreciate the focus of this
2 hearing to be on the local level, I think, because
3 Izembek is a wetlands of international importance and
4 has global significance for these species -- Karlin
5 shared his great stats about 98 percent of the
6 Pacific black brant, over 50 percent of the Emperor
7 goose -- impacts to local subsistence will clearly
8 hurt but it will also impact other Alaskans'
9 subsistence rights that I think should be considered
10 as part of this work.

11 JON ISAACS: Thank you. Again, I don't
12 know if you'd like to add or elaborate with the
13 Bethel meetings with the consultation that's gone on
14 in terms of responding to potential concerns about
15 those subsistence --

16 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Yeah, I was kind of
17 thinking that. We try -- just so you guys know, the
18 reason why we don't usually do Q and A is because,
19 one, you catch us off-guard, we're like, ah, I don't
20 know, because we're frazzled and pulling off seven
21 meetings in the next two weeks. So it's really not
22 that we don't want to respond. It's just because we
23 don't want to be caught off-guard and then maybe give
24 you the wrong information.

25 The other thing is, is we try to do things

1 consistently in every community so that everybody
2 doesn't get special treatment, like, hey, they heard
3 this in one and they didn't tell me. So that's why,
4 just so you know. We're not trying to hold back
5 information.

6 But as you were bringing that up Brianne, I
7 was thinking, you know, one of the things that we
8 just recently are setting up is a government-to-
9 government consultation, and that was just confirmed
10 as of yesterday. And we are inviting those -- I
11 thought it was 77 the last time I looked at the
12 e-mails, but somewhere in upwards of over 70 tribes
13 and folks.

14 So we are moving forward with that in
15 addition to the hearings. Because those communities
16 did not get a positive -- like pick one out there,
17 right? They didn't get a positive finding, so we
18 aren't obligated to go to that community directly,
19 but we have heard those concerns. We want to be
20 responsive to provide an outlet and a time for them
21 to share.

22 So we are doing that, as well as setting up
23 a statewide -- we're really calling it a statewide
24 government-to-government consultation. It's not a
25 hearing like this, but they will be able to speak

1 directly to our agency leadership on this topic, as
2 well as having a statewide ANCSA corporation session
3 like that as well.

4 So in addition to the Bethel hub meeting,
5 there's other formats that we're working through to
6 ensure that the voices are heard directly into our
7 agency.

8 JON ISAACS: Any other comments on ANILCA
9 810 and subsistence concerns?

10 So, I guess, seeing none, I think we're
11 done with this part of the hearing. Again, we --
12 first of all, I would say thank you so much for being
13 here tonight. Thank you so much for some very
14 thoughtful and detailed comments that I think are
15 going to be addressed as part of this.

16 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I'm going to put the last
17 slide up. It has the project website. Some of you
18 may have already seen that. Out on the posters there
19 are QR codes. I have really bad internet so that
20 might not work. But the website does have everything
21 you need at this moment to be set up to comment.
22 More information is on there about ANILCA 810.

23 And then myself -- my e-mail address is
24 there. If you do have comments, concerns, questions,
25 I'm probably best to answer those when I'm sitting at

1 my desk and I can think about it and respond
2 appropriately. So feel free. If it's something I
3 can't answer readily, I will help you access all
4 these resources. So just feel free to reach out and
5 I will be as responsive as I can.

6 Again, this project has been long-standing,
7 long time. I'm grateful to be here to listen. I am
8 working for the Fish and Wildlife Service and we are
9 being directed by the department to go through this
10 process. So just know we heard you, we have your
11 information on the record, and we look forward to any
12 further information you want to share with us after
13 the public process.

14 So there are posters out there if you do
15 want to take a look at them and there is something I
16 can answer readily out there with the images, let me
17 know. We're in a small enough intimate group and
18 it's not like a big group that I can't do that.

19 So thanks again. This is a cool town. I
20 really appreciate it. It was nice to see all the
21 things out there. I want to go out fishing and I
22 want to go to all these places now. So hopefully
23 we'll be back. So thanks for hosting and we'll wrap
24 this meeting up now. So Deirdre, you can probably be
25 done with the record. Thanks for having us. Have a

1 good night.

2 (Proceedings concluded at 7:47 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 19th day of December 2024.



DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE
My Commission Expires 5/31/26

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