

**In the Matter Of:**

**IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR**

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**Public Meeting-ANILCA Section 10 Subsistence Hearing - Bethel, Alaska**

*December 12, 2024*

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**CERTIFIED  
TRANSCRIPT**

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IZEMBEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
LAND EXCHANGE/ROAD CORRIDOR  
DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
PUBLIC MEETING  
AND  
ANILCA SECTION 810 SUBSISTENCE HEARING  
BETHEL, ALASKA  
DECEMBER 12, 2024

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S  
2 YUPIIT PICIRYARAIT CULTURAL CENTER  
3 BETHEL, ALASKA  
4 6:08 P.M.

5 -oOo-

6 BILL CRAIG: Hello and welcome to the  
7 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement public  
8 meeting and the ANILCA Section 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 preparation of the  
13 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. Also  
14 here tonight from AECOM are Jon Isaacs, senior  
15 planner. Arika Mercer is in the back at the table  
16 there. She's a planner. And Deirdre is here to  
17 record the meeting and take your comments.

18 I want to emphasize that there will be two  
19 separate meetings tonight. We will start with the  
20 public meeting on the Draft Supplemental  
21 Environmental Impact Statement, which will consist of  
22 a short presentation by Fish and Wildlife Service  
23 followed by public comment.

24 When public comments on the Supplemental  
25 EIS are finished, we will end the meeting and begin

1 the ANILCA Section 810 subsistence hearing. Again,  
2 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will give a short  
3 presentation followed by public comments on the draft  
4 subsistence findings.

5 Ideally, you would provide your comments on  
6 the Draft Supplemental EIS in the first meeting and  
7 hold your subsistence comments for the ANILCA 810  
8 hearing that follows.

9 This meeting does not have a question-and-  
10 answer component. If you have substantive questions  
11 that you would like answered in the Supplemental EIS,  
12 please provide those questions in your comments.

13 Thank you for coming and participating  
14 tonight. Bobbie Jo is up next.

15 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Hi, everybody. My name  
16 is Bobbie Jo Skibo. I am the senior planner and  
17 project leader for the Izembek proposed land exchange  
18 and road Supplemental EIS. And I've been working  
19 close to 30 years on a myriad of natural resource  
20 management and planning issues here in Alaska.

21 I started my work in Valdez, Alaska, and  
22 I've been all over the state. Most recently my  
23 project that I've been working on is a supplemental  
24 environmental impact statement for oil and gas  
25 leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and

1 then this project as well.

2 I currently live in Palmer. I have three  
3 beautiful boys, wild kids, and I am just grateful to  
4 be here. This is a really cool town. I have never  
5 been to Bethel. I've only heard about it from  
6 friends. Thank you for not being super cold like  
7 last week. And I just really appreciate you letting  
8 us be here today.

9 I'm going to introduce two of my  
10 colleagues, and then we will go through a  
11 presentation, and then we'll get to the good part,  
12 which is to hear from all of you.

13 So with that, Karlin.

14 KARLIN ITCHOAK: Thank you, Bobbie Jo.

15 Good evening. My name is Karlin Itchoak.  
16 I'm the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges. I  
17 was born and raised in Nome, Alaska. My family on my  
18 dad's side are from Utqiagvik and my mother's side  
19 they're from Upstate New York. I am stationed out of  
20 Anchorage in the regional office.

21 Before I go any further, I just want to  
22 acknowledge that we're on the traditional ancestral  
23 homelands of the Yup'ik people, and we thank you for  
24 allowing us to be here today. We also acknowledge  
25 that the issue we're talking about today is on the

1 traditional homelands of the Unangan and the Aleut,  
2 and just wanted to honor them as well.

3 As the Chief of Refuges, and many of you  
4 know, we have about 572 national wildlife refuges  
5 throughout the United States, totaling over  
6 95 million acres of protected lands. And out of that  
7 95 million acres of land, 76.8 million acres are here  
8 in Alaska and represented by our 16 national wildlife  
9 refuges. So Izembek is one of those refuges, and I'm  
10 now going to turn the mic over to our refuge manager  
11 from Izembek.

12 MARIA FOSADO: Thanks, Karlin.

13 Good evening, everyone. Thank you for  
14 coming out and for taking time out of your busy  
15 schedules to hear what we have to say and to provide  
16 feedback on your thoughts as to the proposed action.

17 I'm Maria Fosado. I'm the Izembek Refuge  
18 manager. I've been working for Fish and Wildlife  
19 Service for over 15 years now. I started my career  
20 with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Minnesota and  
21 worked at various national wildlife refuges and  
22 wetland management districts there before making my  
23 way to Alaska.

24 I did accept this position in 2020, and  
25 I've been living and working out of Cold Bay since

1 that time. So with that, I'm here to provide some  
2 background information on the refuge, and then I'll  
3 hand it over to Bobbie Jo for the next part of the  
4 presentation.

5 So I'm here to provide a little bit of  
6 background on Izembek Refuge. Izembek National  
7 Wildlife Refuge was first established as the Izembek  
8 National Wildlife Range by public land order in 1960,  
9 and it was established as a refuge, breeding ground,  
10 and management area for all forms of wildlife.

11 In 1972, Izembek Lagoon and the surrounding  
12 waters were protected by the Alaska legislature  
13 through the establishment of the Izembek State Game  
14 Refuge. And then with the passage of the Alaska  
15 National Interest Lands Conservation Act, otherwise  
16 known as ANILCA, in 1980, the Izembek National  
17 Wildlife Range was redesignated as the Izembek  
18 National Wildlife Refuge. It comprises approximately  
19 310,000 acres, of which approximately 300,000 acres  
20 were designated as wilderness by Congress at that  
21 time.

22 So the Congressionally designated Izembek  
23 wilderness area comprise the majority of the refuge,  
24 and they became part of the National Wilderness  
25 Preservation System. These areas are administered

1 for the use and enjoyment of the American people in  
2 such a manner as will maintain them unimpaired for  
3 future use and enjoyment as wilderness, to protect  
4 the areas, and for the preservation of their  
5 wilderness characters. These areas provide scenic,  
6 scientific, and wildlife values, as well as  
7 opportunities for solitude and primitive and  
8 unconfined types of recreation.

9 So each unit in the National Wildlife  
10 Refuge System is established to serve a statutory  
11 purpose that targets the conservation of native  
12 species that depend on its lands and waters. And to  
13 administer these areas in accordance with those  
14 statutory purposes, we evaluate uses for  
15 appropriateness and compatibility.

16 With the passage of ANILCA and the  
17 redesignation from Izembek Range to Izembek National  
18 Wildlife Refuge, the refuge also received specific  
19 ANILCA refuge purposes, and those are to conserve  
20 fish and wildlife populations and their habitats and  
21 natural diversity to include, but not limited to,  
22 waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds,  
23 brown bears, and salmonids; to full our international  
24 treaty obligations with respect to fish and wildlife  
25 and their habitats; to provide continued opportunity



1 for subsistence by local residents; and to ensure  
2 water quality and necessary water quantity.

3 So Izembek Refuge was the first site in the  
4 United States to be designated as a wetland of  
5 international importance by the Ramsar Convention in  
6 1986, and then was further identified as an important  
7 bird area of global significance by BirdLife  
8 International and the National Audubon Society.  
9 Izembek Refuge received these recognitions, these  
10 global recognitions, because of its diverse habitats,  
11 its dynamic landscapes, and then its unique  
12 geographic location being situated between the very  
13 productive waters of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of  
14 Alaska.

15 So from Pacific salmon to brown bears, more  
16 than 200 species call Izembek Refuge home. At the  
17 heart of the refuge is Izembek Lagoon, which is a  
18 coastal ecosystem which is comprised of one of the  
19 world's largest eelgrass beds. The eelgrass beds, in  
20 conjunction with the abundant food sources -- let me  
21 back up here.

22 So on the opposite side of Izembek Lagoon  
23 lies Kinzarof Lagoon. Kinzarof Lagoon and Izembek  
24 Lagoon are separated by a narrow isthmus. Kinzarof  
25 lies on the Pacific side of the Alaska Peninsula and

1 is also considered an important and significant  
2 eelgrass bed on the Pacific side.

3 So Izembek Refuge's location along aviation  
4 migration routes, in conjunction with abundant food  
5 sources provided by the eelgrass beds, make this one  
6 of the most important migratory bird staging and  
7 wintering habitats in the world. It is a site that  
8 supports virtually the entire population of Pacific  
9 black brant, half the world's population of emperor  
10 geese, and a significant percentage of the population  
11 of Steller's eiders and Taverner's Canada goose.

12 Additionally, it has the highest density of  
13 brown bears on Izembek Refuge located within the  
14 Joshua Green Watershed, which is located to the  
15 northeast of Cold Bay. But brown bears can be seen  
16 all throughout the refuge in a wide variety of  
17 habitats, ranging from the coastal shorelines to the  
18 low-lying meadows and tundras, the streams, into the  
19 alpine areas.

20 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Do you want to talk a  
21 little bit into the microphone? I think somebody  
22 might have a hard time hearing you.

23 MARIA FOSADO: I'm sorry. Can folks hear  
24 me?

25 JON ISAACS: I think it's off.

1                   MARIA FOSADO: It might have turned off.  
2 I'm going to give her an out. This is meeting  
3 five of the last few days. I'm surprised you have a  
4 voice.

5                   MARIA FOSADO: I'm sorry. I didn't realize  
6 folks could not hear me.

7                   So the highest brown bears on Izembek  
8 Refuge are located within the Joshua Green Watershed  
9 on the northeast side of Cold Bay. However, bears  
10 can be seen all throughout the refuge, as the use of  
11 a wide variety of habitats ranging from the coastal  
12 shorelines to the low-lying tundra, low-lying  
13 meadows, streams, into the alpine areas.

14                  Caribou have a high profile as a  
15 subsistence-purpose species -- as a refuge-purpose  
16 specie and have a high value -- are recognized as a  
17 high value for subsistence users. The Southern  
18 Alaska Peninsula caribou herd ranges from Port Moller  
19 south to the southern end of the Alaska Peninsula,  
20 and its primary calving grounds are situated just to  
21 the north of Izembek Refuge. Its historic wintering  
22 areas do span southward, encompassing Izembek Lagoon  
23 and the Cold Bay area, making that narrow isthmus  
24 corridor an important movement corridor between the  
25 calving areas and the wintering areas. However,

1 Izembek Refuge does support satellite populations of  
2 caribou year-round.

3 Lastly, the Pacific salmon. Izembek is  
4 refuge to the five species of Pacific salmon which  
5 return to the refuge each year to refuel the coastal  
6 ecosystems and provide resources for other species.

7 I apologize for my stutters tonight.

8 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank, Maria. Honestly,  
9 this lady has had five meetings over the last many  
10 days. We apologize. Some of us feel like we can do  
11 it without a script. I will probably screw up too.  
12 I am going to look at my page to make sure I do not  
13 miss critical components of the project.

14 Okay. So let's go -- we are going to go  
15 through a little walk through time. And most people  
16 that know this project will recognize that it  
17 predates 2009 by a few decades. But let's start in  
18 2009.

19 Okay. So in 2009, the Omnibus Public Land  
20 Management Act -- we call it the 2009 Act -- and, of  
21 course, now my page is gone. It's okay.

22 So the Land Act was passed and it directed  
23 the Secretary of the Interior to analyze a land  
24 exchange with the federal government and King Cove  
25 Corporation. It also directed the Service to move

1 forward with an Environmental Impact Statement. So  
2 that was 2009. That 2009 Act has expired, so it's no  
3 longer in place.

4 Then in 2013, the Environmental Impact  
5 Statement was completed, and at that time the  
6 no-action alternative was selected. Okay.

7 Then in 2019, Secretary Bernhardt entered  
8 into a new land exchange and signed that land  
9 exchange with the King Cove Corporation. Then in  
10 2023, Secretary Haaland, as the sitting Secretary at  
11 that time, withdrew from that 2019 agreement, citing  
12 procedural flaws. And that brings us up to why we're  
13 here today.

14 So the Draft Supplemental EIS supplements  
15 the 2013 EIS, Environmental Impact Statement. So  
16 that is why we're here. It was prepared at the  
17 request of Secretary Haaland, and it's to consider a  
18 newly proposed land exchange based on an offer that  
19 was provided to the government by the King Cove  
20 Corporation. And we'll talk about that here in a  
21 little bit.

22 We have evaluated and updated information  
23 and we will continue to do that based on this public  
24 process and the information that's provided to us  
25 between the Draft and the Final Supplement EIS.

1           The Supplement EIS includes a no-action  
2 alternative. That's customary for the NEPA projects  
3 that we do. It also includes four action  
4 alternatives that were evaluated in that 2013 EIS.  
5 And then the new alternative, Alternative 6, is the  
6 one that we've analyzed based on the King Cove  
7 Corporation's offer.

8           So our proposed action is to enter into a  
9 land exchange to add land for conservation,  
10 subsistence, and habitat values to the National  
11 Wildlife Refuge System in exchange for a transfer to  
12 King Cove Corporation of real property interest --  
13 that's both the surface and the subsurface -- of the  
14 government, United States refuge lands, for a  
15 corridor through the refuge, including the  
16 Congressionally designated wilderness.

17           So the purposes of the proposed action are  
18 to provide a safe, reliable, year-round  
19 transportation system, and that is for health and  
20 safety purposes. But it has a particular emphasis  
21 for emergency evacuations. And that's between  
22 King Cove and Cold Bay. Another purpose is to  
23 increase the overall conservation value of lands  
24 preserved in the National Wildlife Refuge System.  
25 And third, it's to maintain or increase the

1 opportunity for subsistence uses by rural Alaskans.

2 There's a need statement in the  
3 Supplemental EIS that takes up a quite a lot of  
4 space, and we didn't want to minimize the language  
5 there by trying to put it on a slide. So I do  
6 recommend to take a look at Section 1.4 and then you  
7 can see a little bit more on that.

8 I want to ask Bill. I don't have a  
9 pointer. But just for all of us to orient to this  
10 area.

11 So we have King Cove down in the corner and  
12 Cold Bay. A few things to note on this map, if you  
13 were aware of what was going on in 2013's EIS, there  
14 was the green and white line. That is a ferry that  
15 goes between Lenard Harbor and Cold Bay. There's  
16 also the purple and white. It's kind of a little  
17 hard to see on this map. That is a hovercraft  
18 alternative. And then the red line above is the  
19 Alternative 6, the proposed road corridor. You can  
20 kind of see a few red dots along that. Those are  
21 going to be material sites. We'll talk about that a  
22 little bit more.

23 And you can see the Kinzarof Lagoon. There  
24 are two yellow parcels on each side. And then this  
25 Mortensen's Lagoon. The yellow is the lands that

1 would be transferred out of the King Cove  
2 Corporation. Just so you can kind of see this on a  
3 bigger map. And we do have them on these posters if  
4 you want to look closer at any of these things at the  
5 end of the meeting.

6 Again, the range of alternatives includes  
7 the no-action. Alternatives 2 and 3 were land  
8 exchanges that were part of 2013, but they were  
9 associated to some State lands, so they are no longer  
10 viable, but we included them in this document for  
11 comparative purposes only. Alternative 4, as I said,  
12 hovercraft operations. Alternative 5 is the Lenard  
13 Harbor ferry. And Alternative 6 is the proposed land  
14 exchange, the one that we're looking at.

15 Looking at these in a little more detail --  
16 again, our document is about 1,400 pages, so we're  
17 giving you the high-level perspective -- but the  
18 Alternative 4 is from actually the 2003 -- I  
19 apologize -- there was even an EIS that predates '09.  
20 So in 2003 and then 2013, this was considered and it  
21 was analyzed in detail. It would consider operations  
22 for the hovercraft for six days a week between the  
23 Northeast Terminal and Cross Wind Cove. So it has  
24 been retained in this process as a viable  
25 alternative.



1                   Alternative 5, as you can see the green  
2     line there, would use a ferry to travel approximately  
3     14 miles between the terminal and Lenard Harbor, and  
4     it would include a substantially modified Cold Bay  
5     dock. We were in Cold Bay and were notified by the  
6     borough that they are in the baby stages of a design  
7     to upgrade the dock there. So that will be something  
8     that will be pending, and that information will be  
9     forthcoming once they get through the process. And  
10    that is with Alaska Department of Transportation and  
11    Public Facilities. This would not include a land  
12    exchange and it has been retained in this process as  
13    a viable alternative.

14                  So this is the newest alternative. So I'm  
15    going to ask Bill -- like I said, I don't have my  
16    pointer -- but this would start -- well, before I go  
17    there, this has been identified by the Department of  
18    Interior as the preferred alternative. That does not  
19    constitute that a decision has been made. That would  
20    be done in the record of decision, which is the final  
21    stage of the NEPA process.

22                  But at this time, we would start there at  
23    number 1, and that's the terminus of the King Cove  
24    Access Road near the Northeast Terminal. So  
25    King Cove has built a road out to that point. It

1 would then go following that red line all the way  
2 through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and  
3 Congressional wilderness.

4 All of those little red dots are the  
5 material sites that would be used to build the road.  
6 And then it would end and terminate at the  
7 intersection of Outer Marker Road and Blinn Lake  
8 Loop, for those of you that have been out there.

9 Again, you can see the parcels of the  
10 Kinzarof Lagoon and then also the Mortensen's Lagoon,  
11 just to get some perspective on the lands that would  
12 be transferred.

13 Okay. Lots of information here, but I want  
14 to talk through the acres for the exchange. So  
15 31,198 acres. That is 29,00 with some change which  
16 would be the surface, 1,739 acres of surface and  
17 subsurface. Those would come from King Cove  
18 Corporation back to the federal government. And the  
19 1,739 would go back into Izembek National Wildlife  
20 Refuge's Congressionally designated wilderness area.

21 Now, in exchange for a total of 490  
22 acres -- that's 484 that's surface and subsurface --  
23 and then there's an additional six that's subsurface  
24 that's going to be used for material site, and that  
25 would come from the federal government to the

1 King Cove Corporation. 336 acres of that total 490  
2 currently exists within the refuge of Congressionally  
3 designated wilderness.

4 The components of Alternative 6 would be  
5 that this would be built as a 18.9-mile single-lane  
6 gravel road, and there would be 15 material sites  
7 along that corridor, 13 of which would be along the  
8 corridor, two would have a satellite road off of that  
9 corridor.

10 Another key component of Alternative 6 is  
11 that there would be a restriction. It would be  
12 restricted to noncommercial uses, and further  
13 restricted to those necessary for health and safety  
14 purposes, and access to the refuge by federally  
15 qualified subsistence users who are activity engaged  
16 in subsistence uses.

17 So this is a summary of the acres that I  
18 went over. We do have it on poster if you'd like to  
19 take a closer look of it. But we did this so that  
20 you can compare. If you were tracking the 2013  
21 process, then you would know that Alternative 2 and 3  
22 were the road corridors and the acres are a bit  
23 different in miles. So we have 18.9 miles compared  
24 to a little bit higher number there.

25 The Alternative 2 and 3 assumed a 100-foot

1 width of that road corridor, and Alternative 6, it  
2 varies between 100 and 240 feet. The road itself  
3 would be about 13 feet, but that is the width to kind  
4 of go around different features, water features,  
5 etcetera, along that way. And then the material  
6 sites would also be included along that corridor.

7 Again, the acres there you can see. 490  
8 would be coming from Izembek Refuge. 31,198 would be  
9 coming from King Cove. And the one thing to note  
10 here is that, of the 31,198 acres, the 1,739 would  
11 actually come back to wilderness, surface and  
12 subsurface, but the 29,459 acres from King Cove would  
13 actually be surface only, and those would not go back  
14 to Izembek. Those would go back to the Alaska  
15 Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge.

16 And then the last two columns there with  
17 the zeros for Alternative 6 were just to show you  
18 there were other lands associated to Alternatives 2  
19 and 3 that are no longer a part to this proposed land  
20 exchange.

21 Okay. That's the high-level perspective of  
22 what the SEIS is including. Now, once you get  
23 through tonight, we hope that you'll take the time to  
24 provide input. But when you leave here, you may want  
25 to dig deeper into the document, and the way to do

1 that is to find the yellow -- the blocks. So if you  
2 open up a chapter, you will see a square. It will  
3 summarize what's new from the 2013 document, and then  
4 any changes in the actual text will be highlighted in  
5 yellow, and any portions of the document that are  
6 tables, figures, etcetera, will have an asterisk.  
7 It's to help you navigate the document, especially  
8 for those of us that have been tracking this project  
9 for a while. So that is how you will navigate the  
10 document.

11 Okay. So there are numerous ways to  
12 provide input. Tonight we would love to hear you  
13 out. But you can also go to regulations.gov and put  
14 in that docket number and be able to provide  
15 electronically your input.

16 We have a 45-day public comment period, and  
17 that goes to December 30th, and that ends at 11:59  
18 Eastern Standard Time. If we do get public input  
19 postmarked after that date -- or on that date and we  
20 receive it later, we will still include it in the  
21 public process.

22 And then once we get through the public  
23 process, we will spend quite a bit of time digging  
24 in, really analyzing all of the public input, and  
25 starting to develop a Final Supplemental EIS. As we

1 all know, we are in a transition of administrations.  
2 So we're not sure, once everybody gets into their  
3 positions, what the direction will be on how fast or  
4 slow to go with this. But at this point, we do  
5 anticipate a record of decision in 2025.

6 So with that, those are the high points the  
7 SEIS. I'm going to pass this over to Jon Isaacs. He  
8 can give you some of the ground rules on how we're  
9 going to conduct public input. Thank you so much.

10 JON ISAACS: My name is Jon Isaacs. I work  
11 for AECOM. I'm based in Anchorage. I first started  
12 coming out to the Y-K probably in the early 1980s  
13 working on projects and have been here off and on for  
14 the next 40 years doing planning projects, coastal  
15 management, community relocation, and EISs. Thank  
16 you for hosting us. It's nice to be back tonight.

17 As Bobbie Jo said, we're having two public  
18 meetings tonight. One is going to be comments on the  
19 Draft Supplemental EIS, and then we'll have a  
20 presentation and we'll have comments on the ANILCA  
21 810.

22 So we have a court reporter here who is  
23 going to be taking the public comment down. What we  
24 will be doing is we will go through the list as you  
25 signed up and call you up in the order that you

1 signed up. When we get through with those who have  
2 signed up, we'll see if anybody else who didn't sign  
3 up would like to make comments and you will get an  
4 opportunity to do so then.

5 As Bobbie Jo said, this is not the only  
6 opportunity for you to comment. And again, you're  
7 not limited to comment tonight. In addition to  
8 commenting tonight, as she mentioned, we have a  
9 comment form here that indicates how you can get  
10 online to comment, and also, if you want to write  
11 written comments, you can write those up and it has  
12 an address on how to submit those.

13 What we're doing tonight with our comments  
14 is we'll have a timer up on the screen, and typically  
15 we've been asking people to keep their comments  
16 within about three minutes so there's plenty of time  
17 for everyone to comment. This is not a big crowd  
18 tonight so I'm not going to hold you to that. But I  
19 sort of would request, when you get to about three to  
20 four minutes, consider wrapping up so other people  
21 can comment.

22 We do have on one of our posters, as you  
23 may have some new and additional comments if you're  
24 going to do them online, how to make an effective  
25 comment on the EIS so it has the most weight in

1 changing and influencing the decision. So before you  
2 leave tonight, you might want to look at that if you  
3 want to do some more comments.

4 Finally, this project has been around for a  
5 while and we know that there are a lot of heartfelt  
6 opinions on this that people have. And we want to  
7 respect those opinions that we hear, and we also want  
8 you to respect listening to other people here tonight  
9 so everyone gets a chance to say what they feel.

10 So I think with that, I'm going to go ahead  
11 and I'm going to start with those who have signed up.  
12 And we'll start -- what I'll do is I'll bring the mic  
13 over to you so you don't have to come up front. And  
14 we'll start with Myron Naneng and that will be  
15 followed by Edgar Tall.

16 MYRON NANENG: Good evening and welcome to  
17 my place, what local -- called by the local people  
18 here in Bethel. My name is Myron Naneng, Sr., and  
19 I've followed the proposed land exchange for many  
20 years.

21 My comment regarding the proposed land  
22 exchange is, what do we do with 22(g) of Alaska  
23 Native Claims Settlement Act when we're required,  
24 those of us that own land within the National  
25 Wildlife Refuge, have to use lands with compatibility



1 with fish and wildlife purposes? If you want to  
2 build that community here and expand our community,  
3 if we did not get the surfaces or the subsurface,  
4 will we have to request a Congressional approval just  
5 like what is shown up there for us to be able to give  
6 up our communities? That's one question.

7 Because some of our villages are starting  
8 to move because of erosion. I know Nilkapiktik  
9 [phonetic], they have to do a land exchange with U.S.  
10 Fish and Wildlife Service because of being within the  
11 wildlife refuge. And, you know, I cannot see how  
12 many of the villages we're getting in our region are  
13 going to be able to relocate to a site that's not  
14 eroded, that's not going to be subject to flooding,  
15 and have to be approved by Congress that they can do  
16 that.

17 So I'm not in support of any of the land  
18 exchange, because I think the original purpose was to  
19 transport commercial use, and if commercial use is  
20 not going to be included, it's only used for  
21 emergency purposes of transporting those that are  
22 sick. You know, that might be a compatible thing for  
23 the community, but if it's done for one community,  
24 they should take a look at all those possibilities of  
25 villages that are not connected by road to places

1 like Bethel that have a hospital here.

2 So that's the extent of my comment. So I  
3 think what's good for the goose should be good for  
4 the gander.

5 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

6 Next up is Edgar Tall, followed by -- I  
7 think it's Lillian Gump.

8 EDGAR TALL: My name is Edgar Tall. I'm  
9 with the Native Village of Hooper Bay. And this is  
10 my second term as a chief. I just learned about this  
11 like a couple years ago, and I am opposed to it, but  
12 I'm looking forward to alternatives for both  
13 communities.

14 And I simply just -- you know, there's  
15 alternatives to actions that need to be done and to  
16 better save our refuges that were enacted by Congress  
17 to be saved, and that's where I'm learning more and  
18 more about that, is there is alternatives to each  
19 process. And for me, it's still a learning  
20 experience, but I'm still willing and committed to,  
21 you know, protect our way of life and my people, too,  
22 you know. It's hard for us already to eat and  
23 subsist, but there is always alternatives for each  
24 decision that is being made.

25 And that's all I have to say. Thank you.

1                   JON ISAACS: Thank you. I've got the order  
2 slightly mixed up, but we're going to Lillian next,  
3 followed by John Olson.

4                   LILLIAN GUMP: Good evening. My name is  
5 Lillian Gump. Thank you for inviting us here and  
6 thank you for being here. I was not re-elected to my  
7 council, but I was told to go forth with this to make  
8 sure and ensure that our generations are able to  
9 enjoy our subsistence way of life, especially the  
10 species that are being protected or are living off  
11 Izembek.

12                   And our way of subsistence goes on. It  
13 does not end. So one of the important species are in  
14 the Izembek where they're proposing to place a road  
15 across, like Myron said, it's supposed to be only for  
16 health purposes, and I don't believe that. If they  
17 build it just for commercial use, it's going to ruin  
18 everything, not only for Izembek, not only for  
19 Alaska, but globally. Because birds are pretty  
20 important. They spread our berries in our community,  
21 and I'm sure they do other things around the world  
22 that they pass. It's kind of species of who we would  
23 love to have around.

24                   I have more to say, but I will end here.  
25 Thank you.

1 JON ISAACS: Next up is John Olson.

2 JOHN OLSON, JR.: Hi. My name is John  
3 Olson, Jr. Native Village of Hooper Bay.

4 My concern is, you know, if they build this  
5 road, it's just going to destroy the eelgrass that  
6 rely on -- the emperors that rely on it and black  
7 brant. And I know it's not going to only be used for  
8 medical purpose. I know they have -- what you call  
9 that -- sport hunting. And I'm sure once they build  
10 that road, it's just going to be used for access for  
11 sports hunting.

12 And all the species there, you know, once  
13 it's disturbed by sports hunters, you know, the  
14 animals are not going to be well to come. And that's  
15 one of the reasons that I oppose this road. And for  
16 my generation, my kids, my -- the next generation, my  
17 kids, you know, I want to see them hunt these birds.  
18 These are rare birds that people in my area that  
19 loves to eat them, especially the elders that loves  
20 to eat them. My parents used to love to eat those  
21 all the time. I grew up hunting them. And I want to  
22 see my kids continue my legacy that I went through.  
23 You know, it's -- it's priceless.

24 And it's just going to affect the way the  
25 birds migrate, and who knows where will they migrate

1 through, because this eelgrass is a unique place, and  
2 it's -- once it's gone, it's -- who knows where  
3 they'll go, you know. So I really oppose this.

4 And thank you for listening.

5 JON ISAACS: Thank you. Next up is Christi  
6 Heun.

7 CHRISTI HEUN: Thanks. My name is Christi  
8 Heun, H-e-u-n.

9 So I think the DSEIS does a really  
10 excellent job of highlighting all the effects the  
11 road would have on the residents of Izembek. As you  
12 know, the Izembek Refuge encompasses a globally vital  
13 wetlands complex with some of the largest eelgrass  
14 beds in the world that John was just talking about.

15 Unlike the eelgrass beds in areas like  
16 California that are experiencing a reduction in size  
17 and quality, the wetlands are unparalleled to their  
18 productivity here in Izembek. They state an  
19 extraordinary level of biodiversity, including the  
20 people that depend on them for subsistence, also like  
21 these guys were just saying. Building a road through  
22 the Izembek Lagoon complex would permanently alter  
23 these critical feeding and nesting habitats.

24 And according to the law, a land exchange  
25 in Izembek National Wildlife Refuge must further the

1 purposes for which the refuge was established. This  
2 means that a land exchange must further the following  
3 purposes: It must conserve fish and wildlife and  
4 their habitats, fulfill international treaty  
5 obligations, provide opportunities for subsistence,  
6 and ensure water quality and quantity.

7 The preferred Alternative 6, building a  
8 road through the heart of the refuge and critical  
9 lagoon complex, does not further the protection of  
10 Congressionally designated wilderness. It would, in  
11 fact, be at serious odds with enhancing the refuge  
12 conservation values, given what we know about the  
13 effects it would have on migratory birds from other  
14 continents, including listed species and species like  
15 caribou, bears, and wolves, to name a few.

16 In the eyes of wildlife, we would be  
17 destroying the quality of critical habitat along the  
18 isthmus in exchange for lands that wildlife is  
19 already using. This is not a net conservation  
20 benefit. As such, it is exceptionally confusing to  
21 me how the Service landed on Alternative 6 as the  
22 preferred alternative for advancing wilderness values  
23 with land exchange.

24 This should be a pretty open-and-shut case  
25 for discussion, given this information. However, we

1 have the needs of the community of King Cove who want  
2 to improve the remoteness they have faced since the  
3 Cold Bay airstrip was installed during World War II.  
4 At the last meeting in Anchorage, we heard really sad  
5 stories about medical emergencies in King Cove, and  
6 people are rightly concerned about their health and  
7 emergency access, people precariously navigating icy  
8 ladders and not being able to get onto boats in  
9 extreme weather.

10 Well, this is why the \$43 million in dock  
11 improvements have been secured by the State. And I  
12 think the SEIS should explore the marine alternative,  
13 what people can expect from these dock improvements.  
14 For example, will ladders be heated or covered to  
15 upgrade it? Will breakers be added and docks  
16 modified in meaningful ways to improve access to a  
17 marine route? I would assume, but perhaps I'm  
18 incorrect, that this technology exists and that dock  
19 improvements are a real solution. However, as the  
20 SEIS has not mentioned this yet, it's no wonder  
21 people still have their doubts.

22 Navigating the seas is risky, as we all  
23 know, but certainly so, too, is navigating an  
24 iced-over road in gale-forced winds that can push icy  
25 cars off the icy roads on the isthmus.

1                   Moving forward with this exchange risks the  
2 integrity of all Alaska conservation system units by  
3 opening the doors to future land exchanges for  
4 commercial and private purposes and setting legal  
5 precedent that would jeopardize the protection of  
6 over 150 million acres of public lands.

7                   So on behalf of wildlife and my neighbors  
8 in Western Alaska, I stand behind the 78 tribes who  
9 oppose the land exchange and a road in the Izembek  
10 Refuge.

11                   JON ISAACS: Thank you. Nicole  
12 Whittington-Evans, you put yourself down as a maybe.  
13 Would you like to testify?

14                   NICOLE WHITTINGTON-EVANS: If there are  
15 other people who would like to speak.

16                   JON ISAACS: I will come back after we go  
17 through those who are signed up. But I think the  
18 last person who is signed up to testify as a positive  
19 yes is Warren Wilson.

20                   WARREN WILSON: Hello, folks. Warren  
21 Wilson of King Cove, Alaska. I came up here to visit  
22 your great land on the AYK Delta. I'm a lifelong  
23 resident of King Cove. The last time I was here was  
24 back in 1976 as a basketball player from King Cove  
25 High School. You had a tournament and we came in



1 third place with the sportsmanship award.

2 But anyway, I am currently the mayor in  
3 King Cove for four years. I'm vice president of  
4 King Cove Corporation that's exchanging the land  
5 here. And I'm also on the Aleutians East Borough  
6 Assembly.

7 I want to start out by just talking about  
8 the alternatives here for what we're talking about  
9 here tonight. One thing I want to say is Cold Bay is  
10 not a port that is open year-round. Lenard Harbor  
11 especially freezes over every winter, if we were to  
12 talk about Alternative 4 and 5. The hovercraft is no  
13 longer around. That's not -- we tried that. It did  
14 not work. For the northeast corner it wouldn't work  
15 either because of high winds.

16 And Alternative 6 -- or I mean 5, with this  
17 new dock -- and like I said, I'm on the Aleutians  
18 Borough. We're in the study phase with the Corps of  
19 Engineers about the new design of a dock, and that is  
20 supposed to be finished in 2032. So quite a ways  
21 away from getting anything like that done.

22 But with that Alternative 5 also is that,  
23 back in '012 the Cold Bay entrance -- from the  
24 Cold Bay entrance where the buoys are all the way to  
25 Cold Bay everything was froze over. I do have

1 pictures of that. So that bay is not an open port  
2 all year long. Although with global warming now, you  
3 know, it's a possibility it will be, but that's not  
4 to say that can't happen again.

5 The reason we're on Alternative 6 -- by the  
6 way, I'm also the -- I take care of the airport in  
7 King Cove. I grade the runway and keep it open for  
8 year-round traffic, if we can do that. Anyway, just  
9 stay on the airport for a minute. Our airport, with  
10 the weather in King Cove and the valley that it's in,  
11 a hundred days out of the year the airport is not  
12 accessible from weather.

13 Up to 36 days a year the runway is soft due  
14 to being spring break-up all year long from, like,  
15 the 20th of November till end of May we do have a  
16 soft runway. But 36 days a year I have to close the  
17 runway because of the soft -- being soft, we can't  
18 land those 15,000-pound aircraft that come in there.

19 With this road to Cold Bay where the  
20 corridor is, the road is inland a mile or so from any  
21 of the lagoons on either side, and I know that with  
22 anybody hunting that -- I think it's 800 feet, is  
23 where we do scare birds up if you are in a truck or  
24 walking. So we're well away from the lagoons, and I  
25 know that the black brant are a shorebird. More or

1 less they follow the coast.

2 I witnessed that myself. I was in Seattle  
3 down in Edmonds at my father's house, and we'd see  
4 the brants going by and two weeks later they're  
5 coming by King Cove and coming around up the  
6 peninsula. Because they go through Izembek Lagoon  
7 over to -- I mean, from Kinzarof going over to  
8 Izembek, it's just a short hop over some lakes.

9 And we also use these -- we utilize these  
10 wild birds also for our subsistence in King Cove.  
11 And by getting this road with the land exchange we  
12 haven't had with the book ends up at Thinpoint, we  
13 are adding multiple lakes, three lagoons to the  
14 refuge.

15 With our managers here from Cold Bay and  
16 the managers in the state of Alaska, and through the  
17 laws of the federal government to manage the refuge,  
18 they are managing this refuge right to the T. There  
19 is no -- no hunters getting away with murder down  
20 there, and the Aleuts from King Cove also.

21 But I know that one thing, when this land  
22 exchange does take place, the people of King Cove  
23 will be able to access the Izembek Refuge and/or the  
24 Thinpoint area on Mortensen's Lagoon where we do our  
25 subsistence red salmon fishing.

1           So it's a win/win for the state if we do  
2 this. And I know that on the AYK -- I've had a lot  
3 of meetings in Anchorage where everybody is talking,  
4 we need a road to our hub, we need a road to our hub.  
5 And I come here with a humble heart. And I know that  
6 can happen. If this is allowed, we can open up this  
7 state for all of us Natives and non-Natives using  
8 the -- who are living in our state using our lands.

9           And I come as a friend and I have a humble  
10 heart for everybody that lives in rural Alaska,  
11 because it is tough living out in bush Alaska, just  
12 because we have to fly and/or bring food into our  
13 communities that costs a lot of money.

14           So anyway, with that, I welcome any  
15 questions about our area, especially our community in  
16 King Cove. So thank you very much.

17           JON ISAACS: So that's the last person who  
18 formally signed up. Are there others here who have  
19 not signed up who would like to provide some comments  
20 tonight? State your name for the record.

21           ALBERT GREEN: Hello. My name is Albert  
22 Green, and I'm the second chief for the Native  
23 Village of Hooper Bay.

24           So the proposal for the Izembek road  
25 threatens to carve through one of the most vital and

1 delicate ecosystems where birds and wildlife depend  
2 on the untouched natural sanctuary. I propose  
3 [as spoken] this road, and it's got lots to do with  
4 the people of the Y-K Delta. A lot of people depend  
5 on the birds that come this way, because we've  
6 been -- you know, we've been eating these birds for  
7 generations and generations.

8 To build this road through Izembek is just  
9 like, to me, you guys are -- whoever wants to build  
10 it is like you're playing Russian roulette with our  
11 lives. It's like we really don't know that it's not  
12 going to affect it. We don't know if it's really  
13 going to affect it. So why take that chance?

14 We have to look out for our future, our  
15 children, and our people. Thank you.

16 JON ISAACS: Is there anyone else who  
17 hasn't testified here who would like to testify  
18 tonight? So, I guess, seeing none, I will give the  
19 mic back to Bobbie Jo and you can close this portion  
20 and open the ANILCA 810.

21 Oh, one more. Okay. State your name for  
22 the record. Thank you.

23 NICOLE WHITTINGTON-EVANS: Thank you very  
24 much. My name is Nicole Whittington-Evans, and I am  
25 with Defenders of Wildlife, and I appreciate the

1 opportunity to speak tonight. And I'm honored to be  
2 on the traditional homelands of the Yup'ik and Cup'ik  
3 peoples.

4 As the Izembek Refuge manager has pointed  
5 out here tonight, designated wilderness is intended  
6 to be left unimpaired for future generations for use  
7 and enjoyment as wilderness, and this would not be  
8 the result if this land exchange and road move  
9 forward. The Izembek land exchange is a bad deal for  
10 Izembek Refuge, unlike how it has been characterized.  
11 The refuge would not be protected or enhanced by the  
12 proposed land exchange.

13 Information in the Draft Supplemental EIS  
14 indicates that the highest value lands in the refuge  
15 would be pulled away from designated wilderness and  
16 would come out of the refuge and be exchanged for  
17 much lower value lands.

18 Also, road construction and use through the  
19 isthmus between two key lagoons in the heart of the  
20 refuge would bring significant adverse effects to  
21 refuge, wildlife, and habitat. Roads have a profound  
22 impact on wildlife and lands. Every year we see this  
23 in our country when millions of mammals, birds, and  
24 other wildlife are killed by vehicles. The indirect  
25 impacts of roads on wildlife and their habitat can be

1 just as damaging.

2 The science is clear. Roads affect  
3 wildlife behavior and movement, contribute to air,  
4 water, and noise pollution, and can permanently alter  
5 habitat and whole ecosystems. Not only this, but  
6 they can be a risk to human lives as well. A road  
7 through the heart of Izembek Refuge's globally  
8 important wetlands complex and wilderness has a  
9 potential to further decrease wildlife populations  
10 that are important to subsistence, such as black  
11 brant, emperor geese, tundra swans, caribou, brown  
12 bears, and other species.

13 It also has the potential to impact Izembek  
14 and Kinzarof Lagoons from toxic run-off and other  
15 impacts, further depleting eelgrass that is already  
16 experiencing impacts from climate change. Izembek  
17 Refuge and its large eelgrass beds are unique on a  
18 globe. Harming this ecosystem by punching a road  
19 through it could result in population-level declines  
20 for brant and emperor geese. It also could have  
21 significant impact on the nonmigratory tundra swan  
22 population in the refuge and brown bears, while  
23 depleting other wildlife and important habitat.

24 The notion that the Department of the  
25 Interior can trade away refuge wilderness lands to

1 allow roads to be built through them is antithetical  
2 to ANILCA and threatens not only Izembek Refuge, but  
3 all parks, refuges, wilderness areas, and national  
4 monuments in Alaska.

5 For all these reasons, and particularly  
6 given the federal funds already allocated to upgrade  
7 the Cold Bay dock, we strongly urge the Interior  
8 Department to choose the no-action alternative and  
9 instead work with the Army Corps of Engineers and  
10 other relevant entities to support a marine  
11 transportation alternative.

12 Thank you very much.

13 JON ISAACS: Is there anyone else who has  
14 not testified yet that would like to testify? Seeing  
15 none, I will give the mic back to Bobbie Jo.

16 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Thank you for everybody's  
17 input. We're now going to begin part two of our  
18 meeting, and this will be the Alaska National  
19 Interest Lands Conservation Act Section 810  
20 subsistence hearing. So I am going to go over a few  
21 things with you.

22 So the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is  
23 required by Section 810 of ANILCA to evaluate the  
24 effects on subsistence uses and needs in determining  
25 whether to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise



1 permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public  
2 lands on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. And  
3 I'm sorry I'm going to read those words, because  
4 there's some good meaning behind them, and I don't  
5 want to lose the meaning.

6 ANILCA also requires the Service hold  
7 public hearings on subsistence resources and  
8 activities in conjunction with our public meetings in  
9 the vicinity of communities for which a positive may  
10 significantly restrict determination has been made.

11 So I'm going to go to the next slide and  
12 I'm going to talk about the three factors that are  
13 used in making a determination -- I always refer to  
14 them as the three A's -- abundance, availability,  
15 and access. So when we're determining if a  
16 significant restriction of subsistence uses and needs  
17 may result from our proposed action, the  
18 alternatives, or the cumulative case of our project,  
19 we look at, will this reduce the abundance of  
20 harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes?  
21 We look at, will there be a reduction in the  
22 availability of resources used for subsistence, which  
23 is caused by the alteration of their distribution,  
24 their migration patterns, or their locations? And  
25 third, is there a legal or physical limitation on

1 access of subsistence users to be able to get to  
2 their harvestable resources?

3 So again, each of our alternatives and the  
4 cumulative effects have been analyzed according to  
5 these three factors. And so when we receive public  
6 input during the hearing, it's always really great to  
7 think about those three factors so that it helps us  
8 understand more clearly the impacts that you're  
9 observing, or even positive effects that you might  
10 observe.

11 Okay. So the next slide gives a little  
12 perspective on where we've been and why. So it has  
13 been a preliminary finding that, because of  
14 Alternative 6 and the cumulative case may  
15 significantly restrict subsistence uses, we are  
16 holding these public hearings on the subsistence  
17 resources and activities in the vicinities of  
18 communities for which a positive determination has  
19 been made, and that positive determination was that  
20 it may significantly restrict.

21 The communities are King Cove, Cold Bay,  
22 False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, and Sand Point. We have  
23 already met with all of those communities, minus  
24 False Pass. We do have a virtual public meeting on  
25 Monday next week to hope to hear from folks in that

1 geographic community. Again, all of our virtual  
2 public meetings are open to the public. Just know  
3 that. But we are going to have one last meeting with  
4 a community that has a positive finding.

5 Now, the next slide explains why we're here  
6 today with all of you. We are also holding this  
7 public hearing and meeting tonight on subsistence  
8 resources and activities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta  
9 hub of Bethel, and this is because the Service  
10 acknowledges that a number of communities in the  
11 vicinity who rely on these resources could meet the  
12 may significantly restrict threshold. This is based  
13 on a reduction in abundance to certain migratory  
14 birds that you all harvest.

15 So that is why we are all here. We will  
16 work to gain as much input as we possibly can, and  
17 then through this process, we will go from a  
18 preliminary finding to a final determination and  
19 finding that will be incorporated into the Final  
20 Supplemental EIS, and that is according to ANILCA  
21 Section 810(a)(3).

22 So at this time we are holding this today,  
23 but we recognize there's a lot of communities and  
24 rural folks that might not have been able to be here  
25 tonight. So we do have a virtual public meeting,

1 again with a geographic focus on the Y-K Delta folks,  
2 and that will be tomorrow at 1 to 3 o'clock. So feel  
3 free to join that as well if you want to hear more or  
4 want to testify again. All that information is on  
5 our website. Also, there's information on the back  
6 posters related to how you can get more information  
7 to participate with that.

8 I think at this time that might be the last  
9 slide. We will have the same ground rules. So I  
10 think you probably understand. We give you three  
11 minutes, and we would love to hear you focus, if  
12 possible, on the three A's, access, availability, and  
13 abundance to the resources that you harvest for  
14 subsistence purposes. Thank you.

15 JON ISAACS: First up to testify on ANILCA  
16 810 is Edgar Tall. Myron. Okay. That's fine.

17 MYRON NANENG: Thank you. My name is Myron  
18 Naneng, Sr. I'm the Chief Operating Officer for  
19 Sea Lion Corporation that owns lands up at  
20 Ugashik Bay, which Fish and Wildlife considers to be  
21 the number one prime nesting area of migratory birds  
22 in the world. Our region has already been severely  
23 restricted since 1980s with the reduction of numbers  
24 of four types of nesting geese: cackling Canada  
25 goose, emperor goose, black brant, and white-fronts.

1                   We've seen those restrictions and we've  
2                   seen our people having to abide by those restrictions  
3                   and trying to work with Fish and Wildlife Service in  
4                   other states on the West Coast, like California,  
5                   Washington, Oregon where the birds winter to try and  
6                   help increase those numbers. We're still being  
7                   restricted on emperor geese. We know that some of  
8                   them likely go down to Izembek, but we know that the  
9                   majority of the black brants go down to Izembek.

10                   And I've been the chairman of the Waterfowl  
11                   Conservation Committee from the 2000 -- about 2001,  
12                   since the beginning -- or 1980s, since the beginning  
13                   of an establishment of the Waterfowl Conservation  
14                   Committee. Our purpose was to try and help increase  
15                   the number of migratory birds.

16                   And every year our people are closed for  
17                   hunting birds in around the month of June, especially  
18                   after the first week of June when the birds have  
19                   nested. Not just only those birds, but also other  
20                   species of birds that fly into the region.

21                   You know, one of our elders made a comment  
22                   at one of our meetings at Hooper Bay when we were  
23                   trying to work on coming up with a plan to protect  
24                   the nesting grounds. Our lands are a place of food.  
25                   It provides us the resources and the food that we

1 eat. To try to share that with our farmers that were  
2 proposing to kill 20 -- 50,000 cackling Canada geese  
3 back in the early 2000s because of their impacts of  
4 the farm lands that they have or the crops before  
5 they migrate north. So there is already significant  
6 impact, and we know that the land exchange and  
7 opening up that area for more hunting will also  
8 impact them.

9 You know, not all birds are used all summer  
10 long. Emperor geese are harvested during springtime,  
11 but right now, because of low numbers, our people are  
12 being restricted. Black brants, the majority of them  
13 are harvested during the springtime, just like the  
14 emperor geese. The cackling Canada geese are mostly  
15 saved for hunting during the fall time when they  
16 fatten up, along with the white birds.

17 So the four Arctic nesting geese for many  
18 of our people, especially when they're arriving, are  
19 the first red meat that they have during springtime,  
20 especially the Interior upriver from the coastal  
21 areas, because emperor geese, cackling, and black  
22 brant are mostly coastal birds. And the white-fronts  
23 are mostly migrating through the upper areas, but  
24 this really has a big impact on our people. And we  
25 don't need any more restrictions.

1                   We're expected to help increase a number of  
2                   nesting birds, yet we are the most restricted and  
3                   monitored hunters in the world. And we're not sports  
4                   hunters. We're subsistence hunters.

5                   With that, I'd like to thank you for the  
6                   opportunity to testify.

7                   JON ISAACS: Edgar Tall.

8                   EDGAR TALL: Like he states, we are  
9                   seasonal hunters, but the last two years I haven't  
10                  been spring hunting or fall hunting due to the lack  
11                  of birds, and I know our elders back home want those  
12                  food. And it's so much -- hard for them to get food  
13                  because only the restrictions are stopping them from  
14                  hunting or their families. Our Native foods are  
15                  getting more and more less, and especially with the  
16                  climate change. Like, for instance, we use the seal  
17                  oil for our fish. But like for me, I haven't done  
18                  that for three years now either.

19                  And I noticed a difference between the  
20                  health of Native food and the health of store-bought  
21                  food just where most of our elders are getting sicker  
22                  and sicker and becoming more given to diabetes or  
23                  cancer, because we are losing so much family members  
24                  every year, especially during the wintertimes when  
25                  they need those Native foods for them.

1                   Like last year we lost like 13, and the  
2                   other year we lost more. And it's still going to go  
3                   up due to restrictions on our Native ways of living.  
4                   We need to start getting together and start thinking  
5                   about what needs to be done, because I want to hunt  
6                   for my kids, but it's getting so hard to do that with  
7                   so much restrictions.

8                   Thank you.

9                   JON ISAACS: John Olson, Jr. Lillian Gump,  
10                  would you like to comment?

11                  LILLIAN GUMP: Thank you. Growing up we  
12                  were healthy. Our racks were full, our river was  
13                  alive. It was beautiful. We had lots of fish to eat  
14                  then. And then we would really respect what Fish and  
15                  Wildlife restricts us with. We loved to go gather  
16                  eggs. So we abide by their rules and we don't take  
17                  all the eggs. We've been doing that since they've  
18                  been placing -- or protecting the nesting grounds.  
19                  So we do still need to have our eggs, but we do not  
20                  take all of them. We make sure we leave two or three  
21                  eggs behind every time. And we try to pass it along  
22                  to our generations to do the same.

23                  But with this fish depleting and we have  
24                  not had fish for a long while. Struggling with fish,  
25                  we turn to this bird now that will sustain what we're



1 not getting from fish. And we do look forward to it  
2 because we look forward to it every spring to eat and  
3 it makes us happy. And it makes all the young boys  
4 happy to go and hunt. They don't stay put if there's  
5 birds. They gladly go out hunting, knowing that  
6 still that they have their limit. And they don't  
7 shoot specific kind of birds, only what is supposed  
8 to be caught.

9 But anyway, it is getting hard to live.  
10 Our daily life struggling with store-bought food,  
11 struggling right now, especially with the government  
12 being slow, and the others, not benefits, people are  
13 actually hungry out there.

14 And quiana. That's all I have to say.

15 JON ISAACS: Thank you. Warren Wilson, did  
16 you sign up to testify on ANILCA 810?

17 WARREN WILSON: Yeah. I share a lot with  
18 you folks here tonight on subsistence. We also see  
19 not as many birds around, but I know that Fish and  
20 Wildlife Service does a lot of surveys of the Izembek  
21 area every year. You can see them on the flight over  
22 there where they do their patterns in the spring and  
23 summer and fall.

24 And the hunting that is done nowadays in  
25 King Cove is nothing like when I grew up. My father

1 would go out and he'd gather in the spring and fall.  
2 We'd get our hunting areas. He grew up as a trapper  
3 down there, so he knew all the good hunting areas for  
4 caribou and geese in the fall. And we would gather  
5 our berries on these lands we're talking about.

6 So we share the subsistence rights of any  
7 Native people in Alaska. And I know that things can  
8 be worked out. And the lifestyles are a little  
9 different down there, but not much. Everybody down  
10 there also eats seal and has seal oil for their fish.  
11 And with the fish that aren't coming back anymore  
12 through our area, it's getting harder and harder.

13 But we do have a few streams that are still  
14 lucrative enough to get our subsistence fish put  
15 away. I am a commercial fishermen, so I take some of  
16 my fish from commercial fishing for use for  
17 subsistence and home use.

18 So just thinking about why we -- I know  
19 this is nothing to do with the road, but I know in  
20 1302(b), we -- on the ANILCA -- under ANILCA, we  
21 could -- there is a provision there for communities  
22 that are majority shareholders are Natives to be able  
23 to trade lands for safety purposes, such as a road  
24 over to Cold Bay, and I know that's all it's going to  
25 be used for.

1           We have -- with that airport, like I said  
2 earlier, we have a lot of trouble getting to Cold Bay  
3 with our ball teams, young people. And people who  
4 are sick. And I know it would be a safe way to  
5 transport to that 10,000-foot runway in Cold Bay and  
6 make better use of it not only because Cold Bay is --  
7 the population there, there isn't very many people  
8 live there anymore.

9           So with that, I think Alaska's at a  
10 crossroads with its global warming effect going on.  
11 It is hurting all of us Native people. And I -- but  
12 we will come to solutions for this. And if it comes  
13 down to where sport hunting has to be restricted in  
14 Izembek, maybe they'll look at that, because I know  
15 that King Cove, the hunters aren't really -- there  
16 aren't that many hunters that come out of King Cove  
17 that go over there.

18           So if Izembek is the issue, and I know that  
19 with the road, that the road is up inland where it's  
20 proposed in Alternative 6, is not going to be  
21 hampering the shorebirds like the brant and the  
22 emperors. And I know that the emperors winter out in  
23 Dutch Harbor. The guy who works for me, a welder, he  
24 works for Westward Seafoods and they're all over the  
25 dock out there. So those emperors are -- but I know

1 that numbers are down. We're restricted ourselves  
2 from taking them. In the Izembek Refuge you only can  
3 take so many.

4 So that again restricts us all. And we  
5 have the managers there that manage that refuge right  
6 to the T, that I can see, and -- but, you know, with  
7 anything, there's going to be -- and one thing with  
8 refuges, it is public land, so any resident or person  
9 who is an American citizen can use that refuge for  
10 sport hunting or subsistence. So when we get into  
11 that area of separating sport hunting and fishing,  
12 that will segregate the uses of the land.

13 Trying to tell a sport hunter, you can't  
14 come to Alaska and fish or to be a tourist and get  
15 some fish from our waters, it's -- I mean, it's  
16 really convoluted and it's hard to think about what  
17 we can do. But I know that, as a Native people and a  
18 Native myself, for Native people that come together  
19 and not fight over an issue for safety for our road  
20 to Cold Bay that we're advocating for for the last  
21 30 years, I'm willing to come together. I'm willing  
22 to talk. We can work this out.

23 So that's about all I have. Thank you very  
24 much.

25 JON ISAACS: Thank you.

1           Is there anybody else who has not signed up  
2           that would like to make comments on ANILCA 810  
3           process? Last chance. Okay. Seeing none, thank you  
4           for closing that. I will give the mic back to  
5           Bobbie Jo.

6           BOBBIE JO SKIBO: I'm going to just sit  
7           here for a second and just allow people to take a  
8           second, because we have this meeting until --  
9           scheduled until 8:00. We don't have to go that  
10          entire time, but I do want to offer additional  
11          time -- we call it go-backs -- but anybody that wants  
12          to speak again for an additional three minutes, we  
13          can afford you that at this time.

14          Just want to let folks know that, because  
15          you may have heard something tonight that, you know,  
16          made you think of something else that, you know, you  
17          didn't bring up at first. So I guess I would love to  
18          offer that up before we close out for tonight's  
19          session.

20          JON ISAACS: Thank you. So again, given  
21          Bobbie Jo's comments, would anybody like to talk a  
22          little bit more about the Supplemental Environmental  
23          Impact Statement or the ANILCA 810? Anything you've  
24          heard tonight that you would like to add to or new  
25          thoughts to add to what you might want to say? Keep

1 thinking for a couple minutes.

2 One thing to remind you of is that there  
3 are those other opportunities in how to comment, both  
4 mailing in comments and doing it online. And I  
5 really recommend, if you have the time, to give it  
6 some thought to look at the Supplemental EIS and the  
7 ANILCA 810 finding and it will give you the  
8 opportunity to put in more detailed comments.

9 State your name for the record.

10 IAN DOOLEY: Good evening. My name is  
11 Ian Dooley. I'm an attorney with Earthjustice. I  
12 represent the Native Village of Hooper Bay.

13 Just -- I understand that everyone is  
14 trying to do the best thing here. I've heard a lot  
15 of that tonight. I just want to point out a couple  
16 of things with regard to the subsistence impacts here  
17 that the EIS didn't unequivocally determine that this  
18 activity, that this project, may significantly  
19 restrict the subsistence resources for the people of  
20 Native Village of Hooper Bay, in my view, is a clear  
21 error.

22 The evidence is unequivocal that the  
23 project will have cumulative major impacts on Pacific  
24 black brant and emperor geese. That's what this  
25 document says. That's what the evidence shows. I'm

1 not arguing that point. That's what this document  
2 says.

3 It also says that emperor geese are already  
4 in a restricted status and that any additional  
5 pressure to these species could have population-level  
6 impacts on these species.

7 The evidence shows that this small area,  
8 this peculiar, unique, highly specialized area, is  
9 under substantial stress, in that any additional  
10 stress to this area will have major -- and as defined  
11 by the Fish and Wildlife Service in this document,  
12 means long-term or permanent impacts of medium or  
13 high intensity on these species. It will have those  
14 effects on these species. That's what the scientific  
15 result is from this study so far.

16 So these birds will be harmed by this  
17 project. Their populations will change by this  
18 project. And I believe that the evidence shows that  
19 it's likely to have population-level migratory  
20 effects on these two species.

21 There's no question -- point number two --  
22 that the people of Hooper Bay and the Y-K depend on  
23 these species, and it is not hyperbole to say that  
24 many depend on it, in part at least, for their very  
25 survival, for their very health, for the very

1 well-being of their elders and of their youth.

2 So there's no view of the facts that allows  
3 for anything other than a determination that this  
4 project will significantly restrict subsistence  
5 resources for these communities, for the people of  
6 Hooper Bay, but certainly that it may, meaning that  
7 it meets that standard and the Fish and Wildlife  
8 Service is required by law to make their required  
9 determinations under ANILCA 810, and it's going to be  
10 very difficult to make those determinations in this  
11 situation given that there are other viable  
12 alternatives to this project, given that there has  
13 been an investment to try to meet the needs of the  
14 people of King Cove without causing this harm to  
15 these birds and to the people of the Y-K region who  
16 have stewarded these species since the beginning of  
17 time.

18 JON ISAACS: Anybody else who would like to  
19 testify or add comments? Anything you want to add to  
20 your earlier comments? Thank you.

21 BOBBIE JO SKIBO: Well, again, thank you so  
22 much for everybody's public input and your ANILCA 810  
23 testimony. It's really great to have you folks come  
24 in from Hooper Bay and from King Cove. It's a really  
25 great dialogue, and I'm sure maybe some of that will



1 happen even after we close the meeting.

2 So I wanted to just let folks know, again,  
3 that we are still in the middle of our public comment  
4 period until the 30th. And more information is at  
5 our website as we know it. So if other meetings get  
6 scheduled or if there's a change in the meeting due  
7 to weather, etcetera, that's where you would go to  
8 find out.

9 Again, tomorrow is a virtual public  
10 meeting, 1 to 3 o'clock, with all public invited, but  
11 it's directed towards the Y-K Delta communities.  
12 Again, on Monday the 16th, I believe, we have our  
13 focus meeting with False Pass. On the 17th we have  
14 just added a statewide government-to-government  
15 consultation 1 to 3 o'clock for any tribal  
16 governments. If you are a representative of a tribal  
17 government, please register if you'd like to  
18 participate in that. If you are a consultant, legal  
19 representation, we just ask to have written authority  
20 from the tribe that you can participate.

21 On the 18th we will also hold a government-  
22 to-government -- well, it's actually an ANCSA  
23 consultation with any ANCSA corporations. So that  
24 will be a statewide consultation as well. We will  
25 have representatives from our office and then Raina

1 Thiele will be on both of those calls from Secretary  
2 Haaland's office. So those are the newest updates  
3 that have been provided on the website.

4 And I think, with that, again, thank you so  
5 much for having us here. With that, I guess we will  
6 stop our recording of our public meeting. And we  
7 will be sticking around to help clean up. But if you  
8 do have any questions, we can be available to assist  
9 with anything that's been provided. So thank you  
10 again. Appreciate you.

11 (Proceedings concluded at 7:31 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 27th day of December 2024.



DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE

My Commission Expires 5/31/26

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