

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 18, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

Section 103 of Public Law 104-42, dated November 2, 1995, directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a report on the extent of hazardous substance contamination on lands in Alaska transferred to Alaska Native corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, (Public Law 92-203, 85 Stat. 688) as amended. In December of 1998, the Department submitted a report to Congress entitled *Hazardous Substance Contamination of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Lands in Alaska*.

In that report, the Department acknowledged conveying approximately 650 contaminated sites to Alaska Native corporations. Apparently recognizing the unjustness of conveying contaminated lands to Alaska Native corporations in settlement of aboriginal rights to land, the report (at page 2) “recommends an approach to fully identify contaminated sites and cleanup needs on ANCSA lands,” including the following six recommendations:


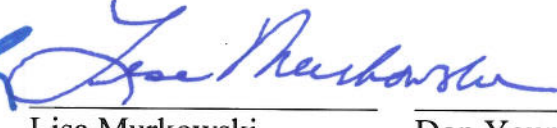

1. Establish a forum of ANCSA landowners and federal, state, local and tribal agencies for exchanging information, discussing issues, and setting priorities;
2. Compile a coordinated, comprehensive inventory of contaminated sites with input from all parties;
3. Apply EPA policies to ANCSA landowners, not to impose landowner liability to federal transferees for contamination existing at the time of conveyance, where the landowner has not contributed to the contamination;
4. Analyze the data collected and report to Congress on sites not covered in existing programs and recommend whether further federal programs or actions are needed;
5. Modify policies, where needed, to address contaminants and structures that may affect public health and safety on ANCSA lands; and

6. Continue to develop, under the leadership of the EPA and any other relevant agencies, a process to train and enable local residents to better participate in cleanup efforts.

The Department stated that it would “coordinate the implementation of these recommendations....”

After 15 years, the Department has had sufficient time to act on the six recommendations in its own report to address contamination on Native lands. We believe it is imperative that progress be made now to clean these lands so they can fulfill the goals of the aboriginal lands claims settlement. We hope for a timely reply listing the actions the Department has and intends to undertake in the future to remedy federal contamination of these lands.

Sincerely,

		
Mark Begich United States Senator	Lisa Murkowski United States Senator	Don Young United States Representative

cc: Neil Kornze, Acting Director, BLM
Bud Cribley, Alaska State Director, BLM