

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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North to the Future

Senator Cathy Giessel

Senate District N

Sponsor Statement SJR 15 Opposing International Designations

Senate Joint Resolution 15 urges the federal government to cease pursuing the creation of a Beringia International Park. The framework for this Bering Strait-region park is currently progressing via a Memorandum of Understanding written by representatives of the Russian government and our then United States Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, present Secretary of State John Kerry and the National Park Service.

A park designation would connect areas of eastern Russia and parts of northwestern Alaska, bonding Russian and northwestern Alaska cultures together, recognizing their subsistence lifestyles and historic, geographic, archaeological and cultural ties.

While this MOU has yet to be signed by the President of the United States, the planning and execution has been advancing over the years, quietly, without any efforts to coordinate with the state of Alaska regarding possible impacts on fish and game resources, oil and gas development or mining opportunities in those proposed regions.

Alaska's United States Senator Lisa Murkowski, Congressman Don Young, as well as Governor Sean Parnell, have all outlined their concerns regarding an international designation to no avail or consideration; consequently the MOU continues to move forward without regard to or input from Congress or the state of Alaska.

It is undeniable that there exists a geographical, cultural and sociological bond that ties eastern Russia and Alaska's western coast; however, internationally designating more Alaska land to recognize that commonality is not necessary or welcomed by the state as it creates yet another layer of federal bureaucracy and regulation.

SJR 15 strongly urges that the federal government pause this process, consult the State of Alaska in regard to this MOU and any future federal or United Nations designations and that their creation require both the approval of the United States Congress and the Alaska State Legislature.

Please join me in opposition to international designations on Alaska land.

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