



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Natural Resources

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
FEDERAL AREAS
Stan Leaphart, Executive Director

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February 7, 2014

Senator Cathy Giessel
Chair, Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas supports passage of **SJR 15 - *Oppose International Designations***. The Commission shares your concerns about designations of lands within Alaska under various international initiatives such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man in the Biosphere Program and World Heritage Program; and the Ramsar Convention. No designations should be made without the full agreement and approval of the United States Congress, the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor of Alaska.

While technically, these international designations do not establish any regulatory authority over land owners or managers, they are always considered and invariably influence agencies' management decisions affecting designated areas. A recent example of this influence is found in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) analyzing a proposed land exchange and road construction within the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The designation of the Izembek NWR as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention was a notable factor in the analysis of the proposal and in the decision to reject the land exchange and the road.

The FEIS concluded that direct and indirect effects of road construction would result in the loss of less than 5 acres of wetlands and would be considered "moderate" within the 416,193 acre Ramsar site. However, under the articles of the Ramsar Convention, even this moderate impact to the wetlands must be reported. Although the FEIS states that the Ramsar Convention is "*not regulatory and has no sanctions for violating treaty commitments, the terms of the Ramsar Convention constitutes (sic) a solemn treaty and are binding in international law.*" (*Izembek NWR Land Exchange/Road Corridor Final EIS- pg.4-123*)

In disapproving the proposed land exchange and road, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, cited the “internationally significant” eelgrass beds in the State owned Izembek and Kinzarof Lagoons as the core of the protected area, even though the lagoons are not part of the Izembek NWR.

It is important to point out that the U.S. Senate ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1986 and the Izembek wetlands were designated concurrently with that ratification. The designation was supported by the State of Alaska. While the Ramsar designation in Izembek NWR was only one factor in the final decision disapproving the land exchange and road, this example emphasizes the importance of both Congressional and State approval before these types of designations are made.

In the 1990’s national environmental groups advocating the elimination of commercial fishing in Glacier Bay National Park cited the designation of the park as both a Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site as one of the reasons they considered the State managed fishery in the bay to be an incompatible use.

The Commission is also opposed to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the United States and the Russian Federation which would form an International Protected Area in the Bering Strait region until such time as Congress and the State of Alaska have been fully consulted and given the opportunity to thoroughly assess all potential social and economic impacts resulting from the formation of the area. We find no requirement in the MOU for consultation with the State of Alaska. There is a growing lack of trust between the State and Federal government over the implementation of MOU’s and other agreements. Consequently, no MOU should be signed without approval of Congress and the State of Alaska.

The idea of an international park in this region has been around for more than 25 years, as have significant local and regional concerns about creation of such an area. In 1992, the original Commission opposed a bill that would have created a Beringian Heritage International Park. The Alaska Federation of Natives also passed a resolution at its 1991 annual convention calling for meaningful participation in the Beringian Conservation Program which had been proposed by the National Audubon Society.

The Commission appreciates that the National Park Service Shared Beringian Heritage Program has funded numerous projects over the last 12 years. These projects have collected useful archeological, cultural, historical, natural resource and environmental data. We note, however, that many of these projects are undertaken not in Alaska, but within the Russian Federation. At the same time, the Commission regularly hears complaints from Federal agencies about declining budgets for managing the lands in Alaska for which they are statutorily responsible.

An examination of the proposed FY 2014 National Park Service budget, indicates that the budget for the four National Park Units managed as the Western Arctic National Parklands – Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Noatak National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Kobuk Valley National Park – is approximately \$3.7 million. The Cape Krusenstern National Monument and the Bering Land Bridge National

Preserve are included in the Bering Strait region identified in the proposed MOU for formation of the International Protected Area.

The proposed budget for the Beringia program is \$661,000. While this is not a large budget, these funds would be better spent on the national park units in this region for which the National Park Service has direct management responsibility than used to support an administratively created program.

In its 2013 Annual Report the Commission included the following:

Recommendation: Avoid spending scarce federal funds and resources on special, non-designated areas such as the Beringia International Park or administratively created programs such as the National Water Trails System, National Blueways System, and the BLM Wildlands Program.

The Commission is also concerned about the potential for any international park or heritage area designation to adversely affect the ability of the State of Alaska and ANCSA Regional and Village Corporations to manage their lands without interference. The creation of an International Protected area, as envisioned in the proposed MOU, could affect the future of economic development in the region. For these reasons, the Commission supports the passage of SJR 15.

Sincerely,



Stan Leaphart
Executive Director

Borell Consulting Services LLC

6420 Rockridge Drive
Anchorage, AK 99516
907-230-7580

January 25, 2014

Honorable Cathy Giessel
Resources Committee
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel,

Thank you for introducing SJR-15 which opposes international designations of lands and waters of Alaska unless previously approved by the State Legislature and U.S. Congress.

International land designations such as International Parks, World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves provide one more mechanism for environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) to harass and block development projects. Over the past 25 years I have watched how such designations have been used against projects around the world.

The New World Mine in Montana was blocked in large part by pressure from local and international ENGOS arguing that it was adjacent to Yellowstone National Park, a World Heritage Site. The proposed mine was across the Wyoming border in Montana; it was several miles into Montana; it was on a drainage flowing away from the Park; it was in an historic mining district where mining first began more than 100 years ago; the mine would have cleaned up the historic tailings and environmental problems from the early mining that occurred before current environmental criteria; the mine would have created several hundred skilled, year-around, high-quality jobs. However, the project was blocked by this pressure.

On December 18, 1996 the Volcanoes of Kamchatka World Heritage Site was "enrolled" as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations office that manages such listings. That very day ENGOS sent letters and press releases pressuring the Overseas Private Insurance Corporation (OPIC) to not provide political risk insurance for the proposed Aginskoye Mine because it was near this new World Heritage Site. The area of the proposed mine was not some pristine site. It included all manner of facilities and a village of more than 1000 people that had been exploring the area for a dozen years. If memory serves me, when Russia realized what was happening it moved the boundary of the World Heritage Site and the mine was built. Try that in the U.S.

A uranium mine in Australia that had been in operation for more than 10 years needed additional permits when it came under ENGO attack. It was surrounded by a World Heritage Site and the internationally-organized-connected ENGOS staged protests in Europe outside the board meeting of the company that was buying the yellowcake from the mine.

I cringe to think of what would have happened to the Red Dog Mine if Cape Krusenstern National Monument had been designated an international park as is now being proposed by the

U.S. State Department. The road across Krusenstern required an Act of Congress and I am certain the ENGOs would have lobbied hard against that Act. If such a park was created today what affect would it have on: making changes to the Red Dog Port (Delong Mountains Transportation System); commercial fishing; developing Port Clarence for spill and emergency response vessels; offshore drilling; other offshore minerals exploration; development of state and private lands?

The very existence of an internationally designated area can and has been used in an attempt to block development on adjacent lands. I would fully expect to see a new international park used to harass and block development on State, Bering Straits Native Corporation and NANA lands.

I urge passage of this SJR-15 to help protect the future of all Alaska with my immediate concern being Western Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Borell", written in a cursive style.

Steven C. Borell, P.E.
Principal



ALASKA MINERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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February 6, 2014

Senator Cathy Giessel
Alaska State Capitol Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Alaska Miners Association writes to express its support for Senate Joint Resolution 16, urging the Federal Government to stop providing funding, through federal agencies, to nongovernmental organizations that oppose the development of Alaska's resources.

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) is a non-profit membership organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. We are composed of more than 1,500 individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, vendors, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, and major mining companies. Our members look for and produce gold, silver, platinum, molybdenum, lead, zinc, copper, coal, limestone, sand and gravel, crushed stone, armor rock, and other materials.

Upon being admitted to the United States, Congress recognized that while having a small population, Alaska was rich with natural resources. They realized that the state had the ability to sustain itself through the development of those resources by making them "available for maximum use consistent with the public interest." Today, lawmakers have the responsibility to implement measures that responsibly develop our natural resources: ensuring Alaska has a diverse, vibrant economy while protecting the environment, wildlife, and human health.

Despite the superb management of Alaska's natural resources, there are multiple organizations and individuals who adamantly oppose natural resource development in Alaska; choosing to ignore science and employ exaggerated, disingenuous campaigns to publicize their opposition. AMA does not believe these organizations should be funded by federal government agencies and taxpayer dollars. Therefore, we urge the passage of SJR16 to encourage the federal government to not fund them.

Thank you for introducing this resolution and protecting Alaska's economy.

Sincerely,

Deantha Crockett
Executive Director



Council of
Alaska Producers

**Comments on SJR015
Opposing International Designations**

February 6, 2014

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel
Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Council of Alaska Producers (CAP) is writing in support of Senate Joint Resolution 15, a resolution opposing any international designation of Alaska land or water as an international park, world heritage site, biosphere reserve, Ramsar site, or other classification of land or water that affects the use of land or water by the state or an Alaska Native Corporation without approval of the United States Congress and the Alaska State Legislature.

CAP is a non-profit trade association formed in 1992 and serves as a spokesperson for the large metal mines and major metal developmental projects in the state. Bringing together mining companies with interest in Alaska, the Council represents and informs members on legislative and regulatory issues, supports and advances the mining industry, educates members, the media, and the general public on mining related issues, and promotes economic opportunity and environmentally sound mining practices.

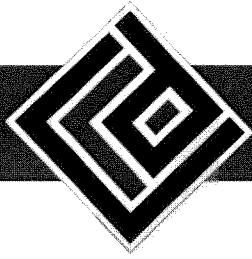
Governor Sean Parnell and U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski have expressed concern that the federal government has not consulted the State of Alaska on its proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Federation to create the Berengia International Park.

Locking up land in an international park simply adds more federal bureaucracy to the management of Alaska's lands and marine resources. CAP does not support measures that could impede access to Alaska's lands or preclude the development of resources on those lands.

Thank you for introducing this resolution and for your efforts to ensure that Alaska can continue to develop its resources for the maximum benefit of its people.

Sincerely,

Karen Matthias
Managing Consultant



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Congressman Don Young

Governor Sean Parnell

February 5, 2014

Senator Cathy Giessel, Chair
Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Senate
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Support for SJR 15: *A resolution opposing any international designation of Alaska land or water as an international park, world heritage site, biosphere reserve, Ramsar site, or other classification of land or water that affects the use of land or water by the state or an Alaska Native Corporation without approval by the United States Congress and the Alaska State Legislature.*

Dear Chairwoman Giessel and members of the Senate Resources Committee:

The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) is writing in support of SJR 15, a resolution opposing any international designation of Alaska land or water as an international park, world heritage site, biosphere reserve, Ramsar site, or other classification of land or water that affects the use of land or water by the state or an Alaska Native Corporation without approval by the United States Congress and the Alaska State Legislature.

RDC is an Alaskan business association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska's oil and gas, mining, forest products, tourism, and fisheries industries. Our membership includes all of the Alaska Native regional corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC's purpose is to expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources.

It is a policy of RDC to advocate for access to and across lands in Alaska for resource and community development. RDC is concerned the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the creation of the Beringia International Park (Beringia) will create another level of bureaucracy inhibiting access to areas in Alaska.

The area under consideration in this proposed MOU is vast and surrounds many rural communities. The MOU lacks consultation and coordination with local and state government, as well as ignores possible impacts to resources, such as oil and gas, and mining exploration and development.

It is also a policy of RDC to advocate for multiple-use of lands, and resource development in the area could provide economic benefits to the region where well-paying jobs are scarce, as well as improved or added infrastructure and access to areas for multiple-users.

RDC maintains that multiple uses should include mining (exploration, leasing, development) for oil and gas, coal, and minerals, as well as recreational and other potential

uses. With less than one percent of Alaska in conventional private ownership, access should be available on other lands, and should not be restricted by an unprecedented one-size fits all MOU that will likely add another layer of federal bureaucracy.

SJR 15 is timely, given the MOU has yet to be signed by the President. Input from those most knowledgeable about Alaska and Alaska's resources should not be ignored. This MOU could seriously jeopardize the ability to access resources that fall in and around Beringia. In addition, past federal government promises assured access to allow resource development in this area and others not set aside through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The passage of ANILCA in 1980 set aside 106 million acres of federal lands in Alaska as conservation system units. Today, Alaska accounts for 70 percent of all national park lands in the United States, as well as 53 percent of designated Wilderness for all of the U.S.

RDC thanks Senator Giessel for introducing this resolution, and urges the Alaska Legislature to pass SJR 15 and to continue to assert the State of Alaska's rights, and consult with the State on this and any future designations of the State's lands and resources.

Sincerely,



Marleanna Hall
Projects Coordinator