

BRISTOL BAY NATIVE ASSOCIATION

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February 25, 2013

Senate Finance Committee
Alaska Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

Tribal Councils
Served by BBNA:

RE: SB 26 Land Disposals/Exchanges; Water Rights

Aleknagik

Dear Senate Finance Committee members,

Chignik Bay

As the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Bristol Bay Native Association, I am writing to convey the serious concerns we have with SB 26 and ask that you take into consideration our comments when the bill comes before the Senate Finance Committee.

Chignik Lagoon

Chignik Lake

Clarke Point

The Bristol Bay Native Association is an Alaska Native regional non-profit corporation and a consortium of the 31 federally recognized tribes of the Bristol Bay region. The watershed of the Bristol Bay region supports the world's most prolific wild salmon runs. Harvesting this resource is essential to the continued cultural and economic viability of the diverse Alaska Native cultures of our region, and to the economic well-being of the State of Alaska.

Coryung

Egegik

Hikuk

Ikroavik

Igiagig

Iliamna

Ivanof Bay

Kamietik

King Salmon

Kokhanek

Kotiganeh

Lemke

Mentokan

Naknek

New Stuyahok

Newhalen

Nondalut

Pedro Bay

Perryville

Pilot Point

Port Heiden

Portage Creek

South Naknek

Togiak

Twin Hills

Ugashik

Bristol Bay Native Association has worked hard to secure over \$500,000 to support water reservation applications by member tribes and other non-governmental entities for the protection of fish and wildlife habitat, migration, and propagation. These funds have been used to pay for field work by USGS and qualified hydrologists as well as the technical expertise needed to perfect (finalize) these applications. To date, this includes fourteen (14) stream reservation applications for which data is still being collected and final applications being worked on in accordance with current water reservation statutes and regulations.

Section 40 in SB 26 is especially troublesome as it removes the ability of organizations such as BBNA to apply for a reservation of water to maintain sufficient water flow for protection of fish and wildlife. In addition to affecting the fourteen stream reservation applications referenced above, this provision would also eliminate the right of tribes and others to file future applications to ensure valuable water resources and uses are protected. Furthermore, there is no fiscal note associated with this bill. Does DNR, ADF&G and DEC have an existing surplus of funding and expertise on hand to take on sole responsibility for reserving water when and wherever needed in the State of Alaska?

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Courtenay Gomez, Natural Resources Director at 907-842-6244 or cgomez@bbna.com if the committee has questions or would like additional information regarding our initial comments.

Sincerely,

Tom Heath

Ralph Andersen, President and CEO
Bristol Bay Native Association

Cc: Senator Stevens
Representative Edgmon
Representative Herron