

From: [mark.wayson](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Cc: [Ray Kreig](#); [Paul Shearer](#); [Rhonda Boyles](#); [Rep. Wes Keller](#); [Sen. John Coghill](#); [Pete Buist](#); [Mike Tinker](#); [Craig Compeau](#); [Del Ackels](#)
Subject: Alaska needs CACFA more than ever
Date: Sunday, March 29, 2015 7:43:25 PM

ALASKA NEEDS CACFA

The Citizen's Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, CACFA, is at least 90% free government service for the people of Alaska. Is there a better 'investment' that the State could make than to get a 100% 'return' by paying only 10% of the costs? The Commissioners are all dedicated volunteers. They are all so completely involved. There is no ceremonial glory to being a CACFA Commissioner. It is hard, time consuming, often thankless work. It is endless unpaid reading, research, and interviews, as well as public meetings they must attend for the Commissioners to stay on top of the issues. Who benefits? The only 'special interest group' that CACFA listens to, and acts to benefit, is the Alaskan people.

CACFA's economic impact goes beyond the fact that we get them for next to nothing. CACFA is the people's point man on Access. The federal government practice of blocking access to State and individual lands, is on the rise. Yes, public safety is affected, and the denial of traditional uses of the land are relevant and very important to Alaskans. But the economic impact of the feds locking us out of our lands is truly staggering. Particularly at a time of falling oil revenues and necessary State budget cuts, how can we get to our lands to develop our other resources if we have no point man to open the way to those lands? Is the Legislature aware that CACFA is dealing with one of the latest Dept. of the Interior

maneuvers, which is to actually remove existing usable trails and roads and structures from the new government maps being issued? Some of those R.O.W.'s that Interior's USGS division removed from their new maps are well established routes that went into use decades ago in order to develop Alaska's resources. Now they officially no longer exist.

With a short legislative session with many duties attached, it is difficult for the legislators to respond to we the people.

Responses from both the Legislature and the Administration can seldom go beyond a 'thanks for your input,...' reply.

CACFA listens. CACFA responds to us. It is truly a 'citizens' Commission, and it is really all we the people have for input to the government on land issues. I mean no criticism, but it is the government's way to prioritize what it feels is it's responsibilities, and how it is set up that makes it so difficult for direct citizen-government communication.

Two of the year around CACFA Commissioners also double as Legislators, and I think they would agree with me on this point. And because of this unique connection to the citizens that CACFA maintains, both the Governor and the Legislature have an extremely valuable resource connecting them to the people, which they probably would be wise to utilize more often. The Commissioners and the Directors are valuable, because their expertise regarding the layers and overlapping of land status, land usage, the history, and the ever changing regulations, as well as being living archives as to how Alaska has arrived at its present position with the feds regarding our lands. The Commission's savvy and input has been invaluable in past, and in the ongoing State litigation with the federal government. Alaska needs this Commission more

than ever.

Now what about that 10% that we budget for CACFA? What do we get for that cash? To put it simply, we get a lot, and we get more than we pay for. An E-mail response from former CACFA Director Stan Leaphart, sent by him to me, between midnight and three in the morning, on a weekend, because he was too swamped or out of town during the previous week to respond to an inquiry, was not a one-time occurrence. Stan Leaphart retired in August of last year, but he is still showing up at meetings and assisting the Commission. The new CACFA Director is no different. She has hit the ground running, and hasn't stopped. She has made herself so familiar with so many issues and individual cases, so swiftly. Already this weekend I have received two E-mails from her regarding my Inholder access in Denali National Park, as she, like Director Leaphart, doesn't apparently have the same 'weekends off' concept that most of us have. With the pace that she has set since taking over as Director, I'm genuinely curious to learn if CACFA Director Sara Taylor ever actually sleeps,....

And we pay for a CACFA assistant to the Director. Karrie Improte is the CACFA Director's lone assistant. Her work is more behind the scenes, but I have trouble figuring out what she doesn't do. It seems like everything. I have arrived early at a CACFA conference before anyone else I thought, but not before Ms. Improte was already there setting up chairs, arranging the teleconference connections, and distributing information packets she had put together. I watched her work throughout that day, work through breaks, work non-stop

through lunch, and upon inquiring in late afternoon if I could somehow give her a break, had her reassuring me that she was 'fine,' as she bent to another task, with a cold sandwich dropped off at noon, still untouched on her desk.

The drop in the price of oil means Alaska has to do more with less, but I know of no government entity besides CACFA that does so much with relatively so little. CACFA is the citizen's voice in our government, and our Commission is critical to successfully steering into Alaska's future. The State government is stalled now by decreased revenues, and difficult choices must be made to get it going. But not funding or eliminating CACFA now would be like deciding that a stalled automobile would perform more efficiently by removing one of the front wheels.

Mark N. Wayson

CC: Governor Walker