

Chairman Patkotak
House Resources Commttee Members
Pouch V
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Chairman Patkotak and Members of the House Resources Committee:

I would like to go on record in support of HB 63.

I purchased the old cannery on the north side of Funter Bay in 1990. The cannery property was the site of one of the Aleut internment camps in Southeast Alaska and is adjacent to the cemetery which is being protected by this legislation.

I became aware of the history of the internment when I purchased the property from the Bristol Bay Native Corporation, which was a previous owner of Peter Pan Seafoods. The remains of the old bunkhouse which housed the internees is on our property; in 1990 it was dilapidated but still standing. My friend Jake Lestenkof, from the Pribilofs, described to me the sad history of the internment.

I later sold portions of the property to some of my friends. We have subsequently built cabins and used them for the past 30 years. All of us have supported the creation of the Coot Cove Marine Park and are very familiar with all of the State Lands which would be incorporated into State Parks management under the bill. The land is de facto recreation land and has no commercial timber or mining value. It is used extensively by the public for deer hunting, berry picking, or camping while using the marine resources of the state park.

Primary access to the cemetery is via the public dock at the cannery. People can only access the area by float plane or boat. The path to the cemetery is just a short walk from the dock along the tidelands.

When I first purchased the property, the cemetery was neglected, overgrown and rarely visited. Fortunately, it has since been cleaned up and mostly restored. I was pleased to be present during the commemoration ceremony at the cemetery several years ago.

Having much firsthand experience at the site for over 30 years, I have strong empathy for the conditions faced by the Aleut people at the camp. The bunkhouse was substandard; there was no good water source or adequate sanitation; there was inadequate health care; and the internees faced general isolation due to the remote location. Many unnecessary deaths occurred there as a result of these conditions.

It is appropriate for this cultural historic site to be protected and its management be transferred to the Division of Parks which is already the steward of the adjacent state park land.

If you have any question, feel free to contact me. I have attached some photographs so you can see the cemetery and what is left of the internment bunkhouse.

Sincerely,

Reed Stoops