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Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

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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