



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 10 2014

The Honorable Don Young
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 21515

Dear Representative Young:

Thank you for your letter of September 18, 2013, concerning the Department of the Interior (Department) 1998 Report to Congress: "Hazardous Substance Contamination of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Lands in Alaska." You cite several recommendations from the report and ask what implementation steps have subsequently been taken.

The Department recognizes the serious concerns of Alaskans who are potentially exposed to contaminated lands. During my August trip, Senator Murkowski and I had the opportunity to see firsthand the effects that leaking wells can have on the environment. The Department and I are particularly concerned that contaminated public lands may have been conveyed to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations.

For over 40 years the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been charged with conveying public land under the terms of ANCSA. It is the BLM's longstanding policy not to transfer title to property known to be contaminated – even when requested by a corporation. However, with nearly 43 million of the over 45 million acres of ANCSA entitlements already conveyed, some lands, usually former Department of Defense or Federal Aviation Administration sites, were conveyed before it was recognized that contaminants existed on the lands.

The BLM headed the Federal working group that conducted years of research in cooperation with the State of Alaska and ANCSA corporations to produce the 1998 Report. At this time, BLM is reviewing the sites listed in the report to better determine if the lands were ANCSA conveyances. It appears that not all are. Additionally, BLM has met with members of the Alaska Native Village Corporation Association to discuss this issue and has been working cooperatively with the Association on the review.

The Department is committed to determining what sites identified in the 1998 Report were conveyed under ANCSA in order to continue follow-up on the six recommendations. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Environmental Protection Agency, the State of Alaska, ANCSA corporations, and tribal governments as appropriate.

We will continue to keep you apprised of further actions on this matter. Similar letters are being sent to Senators Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich.

Sincerely,

Sally Jewell



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 10 2014

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 21510

Dear Senator Begich:

Thank you for your letter of September 18, 2013, concerning the Department of the Interior (Department) 1998 Report to Congress: "Hazardous Substance Contamination of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Lands in Alaska." You cite several recommendations from the report and ask what implementation steps have subsequently been taken.

The Department recognizes the serious concerns of Alaskans who are potentially exposed to contaminated lands. During my August trip, Senator Murkowski and I had the opportunity to see firsthand the effects that leaking wells can have on the environment. The Department and I are particularly concerned that contaminated public lands may have been conveyed to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations.

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JAN 10 2014

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 21510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter of September 18, 2013, concerning the Department of the Interior (Department) 1998 Report to Congress: "Hazardous Substance Contamination of Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Lands in Alaska." You cite several recommendations from the report and ask what implementation steps have subsequently been taken.

The Department recognizes the serious concerns of Alaskans who are potentially exposed to contaminated lands and I appreciate the leadership you have shown on this issue. I am glad that you and I had the opportunity to view the leaking wells during my August trip. It helped me better understand the consequences contaminated lands have on the environment. The Department and I are particularly concerned that contaminated public lands may have been conveyed to Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations.

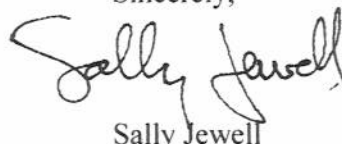
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