

Alaska's U.S. Senators introduce King Cove road legislation



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Posted: Wed 9:10 PM, Jan 11, 2017 |

Updated: Thu 9:17 AM, Jan 12, 2017



KING COVE, Alaska (KTUU) - Both Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan introduced a bill Wednesday authorizing a land exchange that would allow a road between King Cove and Cold Bay to be built. The proposed 11 mile, single lane gravel road would go through designated wilderness in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge.

“After years of secretarial apathy, I am eager to work with a new administration and a new Interior Secretary to restore common sense, resolve this horrible injustice, and end their needless pain and suffering,” said Murkowski.

The city of King Cove, its tribes, corporation and borough support the road as a way of transporting people to King Cove and its all-weather airport during medical emergencies. “There are times that it will be our lifeline,” said King Cove Corporation Spokesperson Della Trumble. She says the community has been fighting for the road for at least 40 years.

The State of Alaska and federal land exchange was halted in 2013 by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, a decision upheld by the U.S. District Court in 2015. “There’s a lot of scientific evidence that roads impact habitat,

wildlife habitat, and sensitive wetlands habitat and while I can appreciate that the community of King Cove feels that It would do a good job in stewarding this area, there's no question that there would be impacts from the road," said The Wilderness Society Regional Director Nicole Whittington-Evans.

The refuge is habitat to migratory birds from several continents and at least eight environmental groups oppose the road.

"Those birds will always be there. When you compare it to the amount of sport hunting and other things that have happened there, it just doesn't make any sense," said Trumble.

Senator Murkowski said in December that Donald Trump's pick for Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke indicated support for the road.