

Stan Leaphart
1311 O'Connor Road
Fairbanks, AK
March 27, 2021

Senator Josh Revak, Chairman
Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 105
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Revak:

I am writing in support of SB101 which would extend the termination date of the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas in Alaska.

I was hired by the original Commission in August 1982. I worked as a research analyst until February 1984 when I was appointed as the Commission's Executive Director. I served in that capacity until July 1999 when funding was lost. From July 2008 until August 2014, I again served as the Commission's Executive Director. Finally, I was member of the Alaska State Lands Advisory Group, which was an advisory group to the Commission.

The original Commission was created in 1981. As stated in one of the Commission's early annual reports: "The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas was established in 1981 by the Alaska State Legislature to protect the rights of Alaskans to continue the traditional uses of federal lands throughout the State. The need for an official State agency to oversee the management of federal lands in Alaska was created primarily by the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. ANILCA placed 124 million acres of land in Alaska into federal conservation units, and outlined specific use requirements and restrictions for those areas."

Legislation of the scope and nature of ANILCA was unprecedented. Not only were millions of acres put into conservation system units, but those conservation system units were to be managed much differently than their lower-48 counterparts. With exceptions for some older park units, access by snowmachine, airplanes, motorboats, non-motorized surface transportation was authorized for traditional uses and for travel to and from villages and homesites, even in designated wilderness. This was a significant departure from similar units outside of Alaska. National preserves and national wildlife refuges were open to sport hunting unless specific regulatory action was taken to close them. ANILCA provided a preference for subsistence harvest of fish and wildlife on all federal lands. Hundreds of mining claims, Native allotments, and other private inholdings, as well as State and Native Corporation lands, were encompassed in the new and expanded units. The potential for conflict between land users, land owners and

federal land managers was great. The Commission was designed, in part, to lessen those conflicts.

During the 1980's the Commission was heavily involved with the initial implementation of ANILCA. Federal land management plans were being written for all the conservation system units, Forest Service wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers created or expanded by the statute. Along with the dozens of management plans, policies were being adopted and regulations implementing specific provisions of ANILCA were being promulgated. These included regulations for access into conservation system units and for use of cabins within national park units and national wildlife refuges. ANILCA also mandated studies for additional wild and scenic rivers, a scenic highway, and reviews of lands within national parks, wildlife refuges and national forests for possible additional wilderness designations.

In conducting our reviews and preparing comments on the various management plans, studies and regulations, the Commission worked closely with the State ANILCA Program and other state agencies. The Commission also worked with the Alaska Land Use Council (ALUC) and its Land Use Advisors Committee (LUAC) until both ceased operation in 1990. The Commission held several joint meetings with the LUAC. Commission staff also worked with federal agency staff and planners and attended numerous federally sponsored meetings throughout the state to hear firsthand the concerns and views of the public.

However, the Commission's primary focus was working directly with the public to identify possible problems with the plans, regulations and policies being adopted by the federal land management agencies. The Commission heard testimony from the public at its regular meetings and also sponsored public meetings on various issues throughout the state.

For example, when the National Park Service issued proposed regulations for the use and constructions of cabins within park and preserve units, the agency held public meetings in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. Determining that holding meetings only in urban areas was inadequate, the Commission held public meetings in Eagle, Glenallen, Kotzebue and Cold Foot to identify concerns of cabin owners and incorporated those concerns into comments submitted to the agency.

In 1990, the National Park Service indicated it was going to close Glacier Bay to commercial fishing. The Commission, in cooperation with the agency, held a series of public meetings to gather input from commercial fishermen and affected communities on the possible impacts of this closure. Later, Commission staff participated in a working group consisting of state and federal agencies, commercial fishermen, environmental organizations and regional residents in an effort to keep the bay open to commercial fishing.

Commission staff regularly provided assistance to individuals who were having problems or conflicts with federal land management agency policies and regulations or permitting requirements. In a number of instances staff helped individuals prepare and submit permit applications for cabin use or access to their inholdings. In other cases, staff was able to act as an intermediary or to facilitate meetings between members of the public and federal managers.

Another example of public outreach was the formation of an advisory group that helped identify management issues and concerns on the Tongass National Forest. The Southeast Advisory Group's (SAG) membership included representatives from the timber industry, commercial fishing industry, the regional Native Corporation, local government, sport fishing interests, the environmental community, the mining industry, and the general public. The group developed and submitted to the U.S. Forest Service, through the Commission, a series of resolutions addressing regional concerns about management of the Tongass.

More recently, the Commission formed the Alaska State Lands Advisory Group (ASLAG). That group was charged with exploring the viability of transferring management and/or ownership of federal public lands in Alaska to the State of Alaska. The group prepared a report to the Commission, which then drafted a petition encouraging the transfer of certain federal lands to the State of Alaska. The petition was transmitted to the Governor of Alaska and the Alaska State Legislature.

ANILCA became law just over 40 years ago. It has been amended numerous times. Also during those 40 years land management plans, regulations, policies intended to implement the statute have been adopted, revised, and rewritten - sometimes consistent with the letter and the spirit of the law and sometimes not. While ANILCA may be the primary statute affecting management of the federal lands in this state, others such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) also have significant effects. Because the State of Alaska and many of her citizens are directly impacted by the management of the federal lands, which comprise some 60% of the state, it is essential that these management activities be closely monitored, problems identified and solutions to those problems found. The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas has in the past and can continue in the future to be a useful organization to assist in that effort. I encourage the passage of SB101. Thank you.



Stan Leaphart
Fairbanks, AK