

Testimony March 15, 2023, in support of HB 83 Reauthorization of CACFA

My name is Tina Cunning. I am testifying in support of CACFA reauthorization. I worked in the State's ANILCA program from its beginning in 1981 for nearly 30 years in implementation of ANILCA. Since retiring in 2010, I am part of a team that conducts ANILCA training.

Recall the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 called for study of federal lands to set aside 80 million acres in special conservation status. For 9 years, there was considerable angst all across Alaska about what would be in the final "D-2" bill as it was called, e.g., how would the millions of acres in conservation units affect remote villages; access for hunting, fishing, and subsistence; development of private and state inholdings; need for utilities, etc.

When it became evident that Congress was going to pass a bill setting aside many more millions of acres in special conservation designations than originally envisioned in ANCSA, the Alaska Legislature and Governor worked with a broad representation of rural residents, businesses, communities, AFN, and industry to adopt a bottom line, a list of seven consensus points for Alaska. Negotiations in Congress led to bipartisan adoption of ANILCA in 1980 that included unique protections for the traditional way of life and uses of federal lands in that consensus list.

In 1981, the Alaska legislature established CACFA so that Alaskans could be kept informed as ANILCA was being implemented and to protect public uses of federal lands as Congress directed in ANILCA. CACFA was invaluable in helping individual Alaskans work through federal requirements—such as commercial permits for air taxis, sled dog tours, and hunting guides; access to inholdings; and for cabins needed for subsistence and trapping.

In the 40+ years since passage of ANILCA, most Alaskans and government employees have forgotten the special provisions for public uses that the Governor, legislature, ANCSA corporations, rural residents, and Senator Stevens and Congressman Young fought so hard for. Most Alaskans do not read the Federal Register every morning with their coffee, but that is exactly what the CACFA Executive Director did in order to watch for actions that impacted ANILCA's implementation. Without CACFA there is no one to help Alaskan's navigate red tape or appeal decisions if a federal manager simply says no.

In contrast, the State's ANILCA program cannot help individual Alaskans. It coordinates with federal agencies on behalf of ANILCA provisions of concern for the state agencies in federal management plans, regulations, and other actions. As an independent Commission, administration politics do not interfere with CACFA's defense of individual Alaskans' rights or other provisions adopted by Congress in ANILCA.

The Alaska legislature was wise in establishing this citizen forum to help Alaskans meet their social and economic needs promised in the final deal Congress adopted. Every passing year without CACFA results in lost opportunities for Alaskans, and conflicts over uses go unresolved. I strongly support reauthorization of this independent Commission for the benefit of all Alaskans in implementing ANILCA as Congress intended.

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