

Alaska State Legislature

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SENATOR JAMES KAUFMAN

Sponsor Statement for SB 34 – Bill Version B

"An Act reestablishing the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

SB 34 reestablishes the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Management Areas in Alaska (CACFA) which sunset in 2021 and sets a new sunset date of June 30, 2031. The Commission is made up of 10 public members, one Senator, and one Representative who represent "the diversity of users and uses of federal land in the state" and are appointed by the Governor and Legislature.

CACFA was first established in 1981, shortly after Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)—comprehensive legislation governing all federal public lands in the state. Under the balanced compromise Congress crafted in ANILCA, 104+ million acres (nearly a quarter of the state) were set-aside in permanent federal ownership as conservation system units (e.g., parks, preserves, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas) while at the same time creating unique provisions enabling Alaskan's to maintain their traditions, accommodate the social and economic needs of the state, provide a range of land-use and land access rights, safeguard opportunities for responsible resource development, and facilitate continued improvements in transportation and utility infrastructure. Factoring in the provisions of the Alaska Statehood Act and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, most Alaskans are regulated under a unique and extremely complex regulatory web.

CACFA was an independent and impartial source of information and center for advocacy on Statehood, ANCSA, and ANILCA issues that impact all Alaskans. When active, CACFA helps Alaskans navigate complex regulations and to works with federal agencies to ensure Congressional intent is implemented with respect to Alaska's interests. Among many things, the Commission holds hearings to collect public comment on decisions that affect them; disseminates information about historical and new regulation to the public, the Executive branch, and the Legislature; regularly submits written comment in response to federal requests; and helps Alaskans navigate federal permitting processes. While the State's ANILCA program and CACFA both monitor federal actions, CACFA does so on behalf of individual Alaskans, whereas the State can only focus on issues with state-level impact.

As time passes, institutional memory and ANILCA expertise is lost at both the federal and state level. An active CACFA would ensure that this critical knowledge is preserved and remains accessible to Alaskans. Until CACFA is reestablished, individuals, organizations, and the Legislature have no independent source of ANILCA expertise. Furthermore, there is no organized center for through which individuals can channel their concerns to higher levels of government making decisions that impact them. CACFA is an essential tool to ensure that Alaskans have a strong and powerful voice in what happens across our state.