

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS

March 9, 2021
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Zack Fields

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Geran Tarr

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 10

"An Act relating to the Funter Bay marine park unit of the state park system; relating to protection of the social and historical significance of the Unangax cemetery located in Funter Bay; providing for the amendment of the management plan for the Funter Bay marine park unit; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 10

SHORT TITLE: FUNTER BAY MARINE PARK: UNANGAN CEMETERY

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) HANNAN

02/18/21	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
02/18/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/18/21	(H)	RES, FIN
02/24/21	(H)	TRB REPLACES FIN REFERRAL
02/24/21	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
03/01/21	(H)	RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
03/01/21	(H)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
03/03/21	(H)	RES REFERRAL MOVED TO AFTER TRB
03/03/21	(H)	BILL REPRINTED
03/09/21	(H)	TRB AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

TIMOTHY CLARK
Staff to Representative Sara Hannan
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Shared a PowerPoint and answered questions during the meeting.

RICKY GEASE
Director
Division of Parks & Recreation
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony and offered comments during the meeting.

PRESTON KROES
Southeast Region Superintendent
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks & Recreation
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony and offered comments during the meeting.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:41 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Cronk, Ortiz, Fields, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order.

HB 10-FUNTER BAY MARINE PARK: UNANGAN CEMETERY

[8:01:26 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 10, "An Act relating to the Funter Bay marine park unit of the state park system; relating to protection of the social and historical significance of the Unangax cemetery located in Funter Bay; providing for the amendment of the management plan for the Funter Bay marine park unit; and providing for an effective date."

[8:01:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN, as prime sponsor, introduced HB 10 regarding the protection of Unangan Cemetery on the Northern tip

of Admiralty Island. It may remind members of House Bill 122, the Funter Bay Protection Bill, which passed the House and Senate and had only been awaiting scheduling from Senate Finance in the spring of 2019 when committee recessed due to COVID-19. Similarly, the purpose of HB 10 was to transfer about 250 acres of state land from the Division of Mining, Land and Water into the purview of the Division of Parks & Recreation ("Parks"). Land would be transferred but management wouldn't change, as the land had already been managed for recreation for a long time, she put forth. Transferred land will become part of, and continue to be maintained, as part of the Funter Bay Marine Park.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN shared Unangan Cemetery was adjacent to what had been a relocation camp in World War II. After the bombing of Dutch Harbor in 1942, the US military relocated Alaska Native people from the Aleutian Peninsula and Pribilof Islands to six different relocation sites, two of which were in Funter Bay. One of these such sites (Funter Bay Cannery) was a former cannery that had been abandoned due to lack of water. Across the bay, at an abandoned mine, was another camp (Funter Bay Mine); another (Killisnoo) was located near Angoon; another (Ward Lake) near Ketchikan; one (Wrangell Institute) near Wrangell, and lastly, Burnett Inlet. Ungangan and Aleutic people, about 800 in total, had been relocated within days. It had been determined in as much time it was an inadequate place and wholly uninhabitable; furthermore, men were still forced during subsistence times to return to the Pribilofs to hunt for seals.

[8:06:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN shared the Ungangan people have always marked, maintained, and noted the graves were there at the cemetery. Though it is close to Juneau, only about 15 miles, it is a severe passage of water and not able to be served from Juneau. Burnett Island was able to be served by Wrangell, she added. The camp remained a horrible place to people to survive, she offered. Folks from the cities of St. Paul and St. George were not allowed to return to their homes for an additional 18 months post-war when other communities could be returned to, partly because their communities had been destroyed by the US military to prevent the Japanese, if they invaded, from being able to use village sites as reinforced compounds. In about 2011, the cemetery located on private property in Killisnoo changed hands, forbidding descendants from visiting family members who had been buried there. This is what activated

Unangans whose family members were in Funter Bay to seek secure and permanent access to their families' cemetery so that they always had access and could visit in peace.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN added Funter Bay was an undeveloped park; also, that there was a zero fiscal note and no additional cost to the state. The group Friends of Admiralty Island has been involved and would put some signage up explaining what the remains are, she stated. It did not impact any private property landowners and is supported by most of them, she added.

[8:10:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK asked for a more detailed map of Funter Bay.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN replied there was a map in members' packets, the added land an "island" between existing state parcels. When it came time to select the land, so that there were not two management overseers, a survey would have had to be done at a cost. It was put forth the sliver of bog land with a cliff behind it had never had commercial interest.

[8:13:06 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY added two individuals from Parks were ready and available to testify to this.

[8:13:59 AM](#)

TIMOTHY CLARK, Staff to Representative Sara Hannan, Alaska State Legislature, walked the committee through a PowerPoint including visuals from Unangan Cemetery. The image from 2017 in slide 2 was taken after an attempt at restoration had been made after decades of neglect and isolation, he said. He moved on to slide 3, a map showing where the cemetery in Funter Bay was located from Juneau, quite a bit more circuitous than its mere 15 miles when taken by boat. Different parcels in the existing Funter Bay Marine Park, and the areas to be added by HB 10, would join to noncontiguous parts of the marine park, was seen on slide 4. Transfer to park meant protections would not only be maintained but enhanced, he shared. Friends of Admiralty Island and the working group were also committed to enhancing and maintaining trails to the park, mainly from the beach head, he stated. As depicted in slide 5, infrastructure of cannery today was decayed; what those found in WWII was not dramatically better,

he pointed out. Funter Bay and other internment camps were depicted on slide 6, he said.

[8:18:35 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked regarding slide 4, if track A02 was currently not pursued for any commercial interests, so in addition to the island in the bay would be managed by DNR who also managed the other tracts.

MR. CLARK replied yes that the individuals from Parks could speak to it, that there was nothing to be sacrificed, and that the transfer required no additional surveying which kept the cost at zero.

[8:20:19 AM](#)

RICKY GEASE, Director, Division of Parks & Recreation, supported HB 10 and said Parks would be happy to manage it, as it was important to the culture and history of the state and Unangan people. He pointed out the Division of Mining, Land and Water was Parks' sister agency, and as such were able to form Interagency Land Management Agreements with the authority of going up to 640 acres to be managed as though it were state park land. The agreements were an easy way for agencies to coordinate land management at a reduced cost, he said. Considering the cultural and social significance, he stated Parks division was happy to permanently authorize the transfer.

[8:23:43 AM](#)

PRESTON KROES, Southeast Region Superintendent, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Recreation, shared he was approached by Citizens Advisory Board, Friends of Admiralty Island to find a way to protect the parcel of land and have it classified as a national landmark and had been asked to advise. The benefit of going through legislature is it will be outright part of state park and much more sufficient in terms of protection.

[HB 10 was held over.]

[8:26:35 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 8:26 a.m.