



December 19, 2023

Secretary Deb Haaland
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW Washington,
DC 20240

RE: Three Tribal Consortia Support for Retention of ANCSA Sect. 17(D)(1) Protections

Dear Secretary Haaland;

The three undersigned Alaska Indigenous tribal consortia organization leaders, representing 118 federally recognized Tribes, support the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) process to review and thoughtfully consider the impacts that lifting the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(d)(1) (hereafter "D-1 protection") withdrawals will have on fish and wildlife populations and subsistence resources that support our peoples' Indigenous Ways-of-Life. We write to urge BLM to maintain the existing D-1 protections and finalize this decision in a timely way.

A high percentage of Alaska Native peoples are impacted by Alaska BLM's land management planning decisions. BLM-managed lands support important subsistence resources and that underpin food sovereignty and security for thousands of Athabaskan, Aleut, Dena'ina, Inupiat, Yup'ik, and Tlingit peoples. For our Alaska Native communities off the road system, over 80% of our food comes directly from the surrounding lands and waters. A tribal member from the village of Anvik on the lower Yukon River said it well, "We don't own the land, but we belong to the land and whatever happens to the land happens to us."

The previous administration prepared five Public Land Orders (PLOs) without engaging with the people who are most impacted by potential PLO decisions . . . our Indigenous communities closest to this land. The flawed decision to advance and lift the PLO protections was also made without consideration of how lifting the D-1 protections and allowing extractive resource development could negatively affect our cultural use areas, fish and wildlife habitat, subsistence resources, hunting, fishing, and gathering rights, and food security for hundreds of communities.

Under ANCSA, the Secretary of the Interior must evaluate whether the D-1 protection should remain in place to protect the public interest. We believe it is in the public interest to protect our Indigenous way of life and retain the D-1 protections that limit extractive development.

Alaska is at the forefront of climate change. According to the Observer Resource Foundation, the Arctic is warming at four times the rate of other global regions and is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Widespread impacts in Alaska are already occurring including the first known Typhoon in Alaska, melting permafrost, coastal and river erosion, increasing air and water temperatures and habitat displacement of fish and wildlife populations across subarctic and arctic environments. In this rapidly changing environment with so many future unknowns, it is in the public interest to adopt a precautionary

approach that prioritizes the protection of the natural environment that underpins our subsistence resources, over the industrial exploitation of intact lands and pristine waters.

We are grateful for the Biden Administration's commitment to engage with our Indigenous leaders and conduct a thoughtful environmental review to evaluate the true impacts that lifting the D- 1 protections could have on us, our communities, and our culture. We urge you to take action to retain the D-1 withdrawals to protect our ancestral land so the land and watersheds can continue to support the diverse ways of life among our Peoples for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Melanie Bahnke

Melanie Bahnke, President and CEO, Kawerak

BR

Brian Ridley, Chief/Chairman, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Vivian Korthuis

Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Village Council Presidents

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