

King Cove Group
Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove & Belkofski Tribal Council
King Cove Corporation
City of King Cove & Aleutians East Borough

August 27, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

Thank you for your letter of August 13, 2014 in which you say:

“It was my hope, and my invitation, that the King Cove residents would participate in the development of other transportation improvement options. Unfortunately, your submission and subsequent lawsuit in the federal district court challenging the December 23 decision makes clear King Cove’s position that there are no reasonable alternatives to a road through the refuge.”

Respectfully, your invitation and assertions that the current litigation prevents you from resolving the transportation problem at King Cove (*the resolution of which could be achieved by a decision from you that meets the criteria identified in the Purpose and Need statement of the FEIS prepared by an agency within your department*) are difficult to take seriously given:

1. the failure of your agency’s lengthy EIS process to adequately evaluate the health and safety needs of residents of King Cove and the benefits of a road to address these needs;
2. the failure of your agency to meaningfully work with the King Cove Group (KCG), State of Alaska, and other cooperating agencies who supported a road;
3. the failure to recognize the increased value to wildlife and wilderness of the land trade that would have placed 61,000 acres of State and private land into the Refuge, along with the placement of State land in Kinzarof Lagoon into a State refuge in exchange for 200 acres;
4. by your own admission you have taken seven months to answer the KCG’s January 15, 2014 request for reconsideration of your December 23, 2013 decision;
5. at a meeting with KCG in Senator Mark Begich’s office on March 25, 2014 you said you would respond to KCG’s January 15, 2014 letter requesting reconsideration by you “soon,” but have failed to do so until now;
6. at the March 25, 2014 meeting in Senator Mark Begich’s office you said that prior to the delivery of KCG’s attached April 15, 2014 letter to your office you would provide an answer as to what kind of response you would give it, but have not done so until now;
7. at the March 26, 2014 Senate Interior Appropriations Committee hearing you refused to answer Senator Lisa Murkowski’s questions about the impact of your decision (*not to allow construction of a road to the Cold Bay Airport*) upon the citizens of King Cove;
8. by your own admission you have taken four months to respond to KCG’s April 15, 2014 letter; and

9. you have yet to address or attempt to rebut the reasons given by KCG in its April 15, 2014 letter explaining why there is no reasonable alternative to a road through the Refuge to protect the health and well-being of the residents of King Cove.

But these are not the worst or most troubling of your actions regarding King Cove.

We are shocked by the claim made in your litigation with KCG and the State that the department owes no specific trust responsibility for the health and well-being of Alaska Natives. This is contrary to the position taken by former Secretary Ken Salazar in his March 21, 2013 letter to Assistant Secretary Washburn and by Yvette Roubideaux in her June 12, 2013 nomination hearing to be the Director of Indian Health Service in which she said: "IHS has the solemn responsibility to honor the federal trust responsibility to provide health care." (Page 4, last paragraph).

Finally, your determination in the Record of Decision that a landing craft carrying an ambulance and traversing 14 miles of Cold Bay and the open Pacific Ocean in high winds and waves is an adequate substitute for a road for evacuating medevac and seriously ill patients from King Cove to Cold Bay Airport is insensitive and ludicrous on its face.

For these reasons KCG and the State have determined that we have no option but to litigate the matter with the department.

Sincerely,



Etta Kuzakin, President
Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove



Lynn Mack, President
Belkofski Tribal Council



Dean Gould, President
King Cove Corporation
& Agdaagux Tribe Member



Stanley Mack, Mayor
Aleutians East Borough
& Qagan Tayagunin Tribe Member



Henry Mack, Mayor
City of King Cove
& Agdaagux Tribe Member

CC: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Mark Begich
Representative Don Young
Governor Sean Parnell

Attachment: Yvette Roubideaux Statement Before Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (June 12, 2013)

