

King Cove: Myths vs. Facts

Myth: *The land exchange will provide no benefit to the federal government or the Izembek Refuge.*

Fact: Any refuge land involved in a land exchange will be replaced with land of equal value that is owned by the King Cove Native Corp, including privately owned critical waterfowl habitat at the entrance of Kinzaroff Lagoon.

Myth: *A road is unnecessary because there are alternative transportation options King Cove residents can use to reach the Cold Bay Airport.*

Fact: All other possible transportation options,¹ including water and air, between King Cove and Cold Bay have been studied or attempted and shown to be incapable of providing safe, reliable access to the Cold Bay Airport.

Despite limited improvements to the King Cove airstrip, it cannot be modified to become a 24-hour all-weather airport due to the surrounding rough terrain,² combined with frequent low ceilings and high winds funneling between Lenard Harbor and Belkofski Bay. It is only suitable for small aircraft, weather-permitting and only during daylight hours. At least 30 percent of the time, severe weather forces flight cancellations or delays.

A congressionally proposed hovercraft proved to be unreliable in the harsh Aleutian weather. Coast Guard regulations prevented the hovercraft from operating in winds above 30 miles per hour, a common occurrence in King Cove. Furthermore, the craft was too expensive to operate and was not sustainable, with an operating deficit exceeding \$1 million annually.

Myth: *King Cove has a health clinic paid for by U.S. taxpayers that provides adequate medical treatment*

Fact: King Cove's clinic is run by the regional Native health consortium, Eastern Aleutian Tribes. The clinic does not have a doctor, anesthesia or automated respirators. It cannot handle trauma injuries or life-threatening heart or respiratory problems, so patients with these conditions must be medevaced to Anchorage 600 miles away. The clinic also cannot deliver babies so expectant mothers must leave the community up to six weeks before their due date.

Myth: *Allowing a road through a designated wilderness would set a national precedent and destroy critical habitat.*

Fact: The location for a road has been carefully studied and designed to cause the least amount of environmental disturbance. The road corridor would be located at least a quarter mile away from Izembek Lagoon. It's estimated that about 10 cars per day could potentially travel the single-lane gravel road to the Cold Bay Airport, which is unconnected to the rest of Alaska or any other part of North America. Any impact would be minimal, especially when compared with the the fact that the Izembek Refuge actively promotes hunting of migratory waterfowl and brown bears and there are a number of guiding businesses based in Cold Bay. The Aleut have lived in the area for more than four thousand years. They have always been good stewards of the land, long before the existence of the United States and certainly long before parts of it were designated as the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in 1980.

¹ https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=D8EA08E9-75F1-4D79-A833-87EE91616819

² https://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=F5FAEBE2-BD70-4A7E-9814-131416D20098

There are more than 15,500 miles of existing roads within the nation's 562 national wildlife refuges and multiple examples of special exemptions being granted. See: [2015 Alaska Department of Law Report on Roads in Wildlife Refuges.](#)³

- There are nearly 170 miles of road within Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico, an important waterfowl refuge and home to a number of endangered species. One of those roads bisects the federally-designated wilderness within the refuge. Approximately 6,100 to 8,800 vehicles pass over it every day.
- The Kofa National Wildlife Refuge outside of Yuma, Arizona has more than 400 miles of road within its borders – the vast majority of which are located inside a federally-designated wilderness area.
- Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Montana has more than 75 miles of road, many of which are within, border or bisect federal wilderness lands in the refuge. Approximately 250,000 waterfowl stop there to feed during their annual migration.
- The wilderness area in the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri has nearly 80 miles of road surrounding and bisecting the wilderness portion of the refuge.
- St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge located on Florida's Gulf Coast contains more than 190 miles of road, including roads that bisect federally-designated wilderness, yet it still manages to serve as critical habitat for many threatened and endangered species.
- St. Croix River Wild and Scenic River Bridge – Amends the Wild and Scenic River Act to allow a bridge to be built near Stillwater, Minnesota over the St. Croix River.
- Jamaica Bay Refuge – As a result of the US Airways flight landing in the Hudson River, the USFWS and USDA [conducted a systematic slaughter of geese in the Jamaica Bay Refuge](#)⁴ to better protect aircraft taking off and landing at LaGuardia Airport. Safe flights are what we should strive for all across this country, not just in New York. What is the difference between New Yorkers and the Aleut people?
- New York City Natural Gas Supply Act – Allowed the Interior Secretary to permit the construction and operation of a natural gas pipeline and facilities through the Gateway National Recreation Area and the Floyd Bennett Field, both units of the National Park Service.
- Glacier National Park Gasline – This legislation allowed for the Secretary of the Interior to issue a right-of-way permit for a natural gas pipeline within Glacier National Park.
- Finally, the 12-mile Frosty Mountain Road inside the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge was specifically excluded from wilderness to allow it to be used by out-of-state visitors, hunters and fishermen. An exception was made to allow the road to continue to be used.

Myth: *Congress already gave the Aleutians East Borough (AEB) \$37.5 million to address King Cove's health and safety needs, allowing them to upgrade their medical facilities and purchase a state-of-the-art hovercraft.*

Fact: The residents of King Cove have [consistently explained that a hovercraft](#) could not be dependably operated in the rough seas of the North Pacific and that the only safe, reliable and affordable means of providing continuous access to health care was a single-lane, gravel road. The 1998 agreement on the hovercraft was imposed by Congress on the people of King Cove who were offered no other option.

³ http://aleutianseastborough.govoffice.com/vertical/sites/%7BEBDABE05-9D39-4ED4-98D4-908383A7714A%7D/uploads/National_Wildlife_Refuge_Road_Analysis.pdf?pri=0&tri=450

⁴ <https://www.metro.us/local/federal-agents-kill-750-geese-from-jamaica-bay-wildlife-refuge-near-jfk-airport/tmWlgi---a8YubET0lzUJg>

Myth: *The road would be impassable during the winter and wouldn't be safer than other alternatives.*

Fact: The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and the City of King Cove have extensive heavy equipment for any type of general road grading, plowing, blowing, shoveling and pot-hole repairing required to maintain the road. The idea that Alaskans can't deal with snowfall is ridiculous.

Myth: *The real reason for the road is so that Peter Pan Seafoods, the cannery located in the community, can haul and transport its product through the Cold Bay Airport*

Fact: Peter Pan Seafoods is [on the record as saying it has no interest in the road for commercial purposes](#). Furthermore, the language of the agreement strictly prohibits any such use. The red herring that the road is meant to benefit Peter Pan Seafood's was introduced by Gov. Tony Knowles in 1995 that included it in an economic policy speech. The residents of King Cove have always maintained that the road is necessary to access quality health care. Peter Pan Seafoods maintains its own tenders for hauling product and has never requested a road connection to Cold Bay.

Myth: *The road will disrupt the habitat of birds such as tundra swans and black brant geese.*

Fact: Migrating black brant geese stop to feed at Izembek Lagoon for six to eight weeks each year, between late September and the first week of November when they are heavily hunted by [out-of-state hunters](#)⁵ as well as local subsistence users. The majority then fly the length of West Coast to winter in Mexico. The brant population has actually increased since roads were introduced around the lagoon in the 1940s. The brant population grew from 60,885 in 1941 to 85,969 in 1946, despite construction of dozens of miles of roads by the U.S. Military during World War II.

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https://www.google.com/search?q=Izembek+hunting&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjMrdOVieLYAhVNMd8KHalyBK0Q_AUIDSgE&biw=1343&bih=687