



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

AUG 13 2014

King Cove Group
P.O. Box 37
King Cove, Alaska 99612

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for your letters dated January 15 and April 15, 2014, requesting reconsideration of the December 23, 2013 Record of Decision on the Izembek Land Exchange Environmental Impact Statement.

During my visit to King Cove last year and through my numerous conversations with King Cove residents and their representatives in the months since the decision, I have heard passionate and forceful advocacy for approval of a road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. I am aware of and concerned about the public safety and emergency response rationales offered by advocates of the proposed road.

While the Department of the Interior stands by the decision and will not reopen the Record of Decision, I want to reiterate our commitment to continuing to work with you, as well as across the relevant Federal agencies, to evaluate and develop other transportation improvements for the residents of King Cove and Cold Bay. We have been actively working to explore other options that bolster the public safety and emergency response capabilities available to King Cove, as well as potentially provide economic benefits to the community. To that end, your submission, as well as other input I have received from Alaskans, will be made available by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to interested parties evaluating potential paths forward.

We have thoroughly reviewed both your letters. 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 Federal District Court challenging the December 2013 decision makes clear King Cove's position that there are no reasonable alternatives to a road through the refuge. Thus, we now find that the decision to deny the road is in litigation, and the United States is defending the decision in the District Court.

Because of the topography of King Cove and the region's unpredictable weather, it is clear that no single solution would provide the King Cove community with ready access to Cold Bay at all times. Nonetheless, I have tasked my Special Assistant for Alaska Affairs, Mr. Pat Pourchot, to work with other agencies and stakeholders to explore possibilities for improved transportation between King Cove and Cold Bay. For example, among the alternatives developed in this public process was one that considered using a ferry to travel to a substantially improved Cold Bay dock.

The decision of December 23, 2013, noted that this dock expansion would allow passengers and freight to be loaded and unloaded near water level. The Department is engaged in ongoing discussions with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding applicable authorities and funding opportunities to facilitate further development of this option and other transportation solutions. Moreover, potential improvements in aviation access should be on the table among the mix of options available to King Cove residents. For example, the road extension from King Cove to North Terminal may present additional opportunities for safer helicopter services from Cold Bay, including by public or private aviation.

I continue to be interested in discussing with you potential transportation alternatives to a road. Working with the State of Alaska, Congress, Alaska Natives, and key stakeholders to address the diverse and unique issues of Alaska and the Arctic environment will continue to be a top priority for the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,


Sally Jewell