

Testimony of Della Trumble
Lifelong Aleut Resident of King Cove & Community Spokesperson

Testifying Before
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Regarding
The Need and for Reliable Emergency Medical Transportation for the Isolated
Community of King Cove, Alaska

April 14, 2016

Good Morning Senator and Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee. My name is Della Trumble. I am an Aleut and was born and raised and still live in King Cove, Alaska. The residents of King Cove love our community and we have a special place in our hearts for, you, Senator Murkowski.

Today I am speaking on behalf of all the shareholders of the King Cove Corporation and as a member of the Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove and for all other residents of King Cove. I am also speaking as a mother, an Alaskan, and citizen of the United States.

I am deeply connected to the land that you know as the Izembek Refuge through my ancestors, who lived and fed themselves on this wilderness for 4,000 years. Our culture and respect for our natural environment will never allow us to damage the refuge.

I have lived this road issue now for 35 years of my life and I will confess to being tired. This is at least my 25th trip to Washington to testify, lobby, and advocate for this road to allow for a safe, dependable, and affordable transportation access from King Cove to the all-weather Cold Bay Airport. Our need for this very modest road connection to the Cold Bay Airport is essential for our medical and health needs and for our sustainable future.

We sincerely thought the passage of the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands Act was the final decision needed to authorize the road. The community remains stunned by Secretary Jewell's decision to deny us the road. However, her decision did not totally surprise us because when she visited King Cove in August of 2013 she

informed us she was there to “speak on behalf of the Izembek birds and animals which have no voice.”

In response to that comment, our Police Chief and life-long resident, Robert Gould, politely told the Secretary it was his responsibility to “speak on behalf of all King Cove residents which have lost loved ones or must continue to endure medical and health challenges because of the community’s transportation access problem”.

How much more do we need to endure, particularly when there is such a reasonable, dependable and affordable solution to our transportation access problem to the Cold Bay Airport? We desperately need the 10-mile, one-lane gravel road connecting King Cove to the Cold Bay Airport. This road connection will drastically improve our ability for emergency and routine medical and health care and significantly upgrade our overall quality-of-life. Why is this simple concept so difficult for some people to accept?

Since December 23, 2013, when Secretary Jewell said NO to our road, we have had 42 medevacs out of King Cove to the Cold Bay Airport. And thank God, for the US Coast Guard being available to help out for 16 of those medevacs when no other option could work. But, we never take the help and availability of the Coast Guard for granted, because we know it is not their mission or responsibility to risk their lives to make these heroic rescues.

And, no mother should ever have to witness their own precious daughter crash land at the King Cove Airstrip due to our highly unpredictable turbulence and downdrafts from the volcanic mountainous terrain that surrounds the narrow valley where our 3,000’ gravel runway is located. It was the scariest few minutes of my life as I sat there watching the plane be pushed downward by the wind and crash landing on the runway without its landing gear down. Indeed, a very frightening moment in my life. Similar experiences, from both flying and on the water in the have been encountered by way too many King Cove Aleuts. It must stop. We know we are continuing to live on borrowed time with our transportation access problem.

Please know we will never quit until we are successful in our quest to achieve a safe, dependable, and affordable transportation solution for our residents. We know the only logical solution is a modest, non-evasive, one-lane gravel road.

Finally, we are so fortunate to have Senator Murkowski's commitment, common sense, and passion to help us achieve this solution. On behalf of all King Cove Aleuts and all other community residents we respectfully ask Congress to authorize the road and do so without the involvement of the Department of the Interior.

Thank you.