

Statement from Sealaska Executive Vice President Rick Harris:

Sealaska is disappointed with the conclusion of the letter by the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas (CACFA) regarding Sealaska's land legislation. S.730 and H.R. 1408 seek to finalize Sealaska's land entitlement under ANCSA passed in 1971.

Sealaska has continued to work with all interested groups to adjust boundaries to avoid many of the issues outlined by CACFA. We have concerns that the representation on CACFA is not current in regard to the issues affecting Southeast and the legislative adjustments.

The letter correctly recognizes that Sealaska has existing selection rights and that we could complete our selections from inside the withdrawals. However, the existing selection areas includes numerous sensitive areas:

1. Almost the entire Craig municipal watershed
2. Important fisheries habitat (the majority of the Situk River corridor, Eek Lake sockeye system that effects the Noyes Island seine fishery)
3. High value wildlife areas that were the subject to previous federal legislation
4. High use subsistence areas as a few examples

Due to the high value of these areas, its best that they are kept in public ownership. They can be managed for the unique attributes that they provide for the community and not to just meet the goals established in ANCSA. The letter ignores these considerations.

Sealaska can only surmise that the CACFA supports logging in the Craig municipal watershed or high fisheries habitat such as the Situk River, Eek Inlet and Yakutat forelands. CACFA chooses to ignore other federal legislation (Haida Exchange Act), which was implemented in part to provide protection of high value wildlife areas. All these areas constitute Sealaska's remaining selection areas from which CACFA is suggesting we should complete our selections. Sealaska is doing everything it can to avoid these areas.

We are particularly disappointed in the erroneous conclusions regarding ESA listings. We have supplemental reports that suggest that with the modified selection patterns we can avoid the issues suggested in the letter.

The Alaska Forest Association (AFA) fully supports the Sealaska legislation. This was overlooked in the letter. Further, Sealaska has a continuing micro sale program in which we sell wood to small mills. None of this was included in the CACFA findings.

Sealaska offers 400 logging related jobs, and logs about 45-50 mmbf annually. CACFA is truly interested in jobs protection; it should be supporting this legislation and not promoting logging in sensitive areas.

The CACFA statement regarding commercial guiding is inexcusable. CACFA claims that "...it is

“likely” (emphasis added) that these commercial operations ultimately will be displaced”. There is no factual evidence to support this conclusion. Sealaska has in fact been very accommodating to guiding and when a guide was denied access to USFS lands Sealaska entered into an agreement for the guide to operate on Sealaska lands.

It’s alarming and unbecoming of a professional organization to make “assumptions” without looking at the facts and conferring with Sealaska.