

# CITY OF TENAKEE SPRINGS

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Senator Lisa Murkowski  
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September 26, 2016

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Please make this letter part of the Energy Committee hearing record for September 22, 2016.

The City of Tenakee Springs and the Chichagof Conservation Council are jointly writing to convey our shared concerns over certain provisions in your bill, "Alaska Native Claims Settlement Improvement Act of 2016," S.B. 3004 or S. 3273. Our concern is primarily with Section 10 which is titled "Unrecognized Southeast Alaska Native Communities Recognition and Compensation." While we acknowledge with respect the connection of Alaska Native people with their Southeast Alaska home, it is not appropriate or desirable to establish a new corporation in Tenakee Springs or to withdraw substantial Tenakee Inlet acreage from the Tongass National Forest, whereupon much of it would be clearcut by the proposed new corporation. We have submitted letters, resolutions and hearing testimony on these and related matters in the past. While we remain opposed to establishment of a new corporation in Tenakee, and will continue to oppose strongly any attempt to privatize land currently part of the Tongass, we are interested in alternative ways to address the longstanding connections between Alaska Native people and specific places in Tenakee Inlet.

The City of Tenakee Springs, the Tenakee-based Chichagof Conservation Council, and many Tenakee residents have shared a consistent call to protect Tenakee's salmon-rich watersheds, and have worked to protect Tenakee Inlet for more than 40 years.

Our community's stability and health depends on the salmon that spawn and rear in Tongass watersheds. Tenakee Inlet is exceptionally well-endowed with intact and richly productive streams. Our freezers and canning jars are full, thanks to the coho that are just now entering the streams of upper Tenakee Inlet to spawn. Many of the young people living here are trollers whose cash income is supported by those same streams. Tourists and sport fishermen are drawn here by the abundant fishing, viewing and hunting opportunities.

The Tongass Timber Reform Act mandates minimum 100-foot no-cut buffers along all salmon streams and their large tributaries. The current Tongass Land Management Plan also requires careful management and development of forest lands in streamside, riparian zones that are important to salmon but lie beyond the one hundred foot minimums. We want to keep these salmon watershed protection and conservation measures in place. We will continue to oppose legislation that exposes the irreplaceable remaining intact watersheds of Tenakee Inlet to large scale, industrial-strength clearcutting by the Forest Service, private corporations, or any

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other entity. Those watersheds -- and the salmon they provide -- are the core of this community.

Two watersheds in Tenakee Inlet, Kadashan and Trap Bay, were protected as Legislated LUD II areas by Congress in the 1990 Tongass Timber Reform Act. Alaska's entire Congressional delegation agreed to the final bill and President George H.W. Bush signed the bill into law. We want to go on record supporting the continuing protection of these areas including strengthening of their legal conservation standing.

In addition, we would like to see long-term protection, by law, for the Tenakee Inlet watersheds identified by Trout Unlimited as most important to the Southeast Alaska's \$1 billion regional salmon fishery. The proposal, supported by many commercial and recreational salmon fishermen and organizations, includes the following Tenakee Inlet Watersheds: Crab Bay, Saltery Bay, Seal Bay, Long Bay, Goose Flats, Little Goose Flats, and the head of Tenakee Inlet. We hope that you will help us to ensure that all of these important watersheds remain intact, healthy and productive.

We have also long supported small-scale, locally based, value added use of forest products from the remnants of the many areas that were clear cut in the pulp mill days, for example on the scale of the current "Tenakee Logging Company" (TLC) operation in Corner Bay. TLC saws a wide variety of wood products for local residents and property owners including framing lumber, trim lumber, poles and pilings. They work with Sitka spruce, western hemlock and Alaska yellow cedar. Their footprint on the land is very modest. That kind of small, local timber business constitutes the limit of what the land can bear here in Tenakee Inlet. Such businesses also provide local jobs and materials that are important to our community.

We are grateful that, despite the impact of misguided land management practices of past decades, Tenakee Inlet remains largely intact, and we are committed to keeping it that way. This position does not in any way diminish our respect and admiration for traditional Native culture and values. We recognize that the resolution of Native claims through ANSCA did not address all the wounds of the past, and welcome with open arms efforts to reestablish a Native presence in Tenakee.

One suggested alternative is beginning to restore balance by offering the large and well-appointed USFS facility at Corner Bay to establish a Tlingit cultural center in Tenakee Inlet. There are also historical, cultural sites in Freshwater Bay and Tenakee Inlet that could benefit from collaborative research and stewardship. Adding Tlingit place names to the map of Tenakee Inlet might also be a worthy project. Such efforts would benefit from your support.

With regard to S.3004, we would be remiss without pointing out other troubling aspects of the bill, in addition to the fundamental problem with establishing a corporation in Tenakee Inlet. For example:

- Tenakee Springs is a rural community and is classified as "rural" for subsistence purposes. However, S.3004 proposes to establish an "urban" corporation. Tenakee cannot be rural and urban at the same time and we cannot support anything that might cloud or diminish our subsistence standing.
- There are no maps showing the lands potentially of interest.
- There is no specification of the group of people who would become shareholders of a new urban corporation. Since very few Alaska Native people live in Tenakee, presumably there is a group of people residing elsewhere who intend to become shareholders; who are they?
- The legislation does not allow for any public process in land selection. Rather, it puts forth a process that would involve only the Interior Secretary and the particular urban corporation that might be established, with no public review of or engagement in the land selection, thereby blocking Tenakee or other communities out of the process altogether.

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- The legislation does not acknowledge or protect the salmon watersheds and local wood products economy, as mentioned above.
- The legislation does not explicitly exclude Legislated LUD II lands protected by Congress in the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990, especially Kadashan and Trap Bay in Tenakee Inlet.

Senator, thank you very much for considering the interests and concerns that are so important to our community of Tenakee Springs. We would like to be included in your deliberations on S.3004 and certainly hope we can contribute to a constructive resolution.

Sincerely:



John Wisenbaugh, Mayor



Molly Kemp, Chichagof Conservation Council