



National
Wildlife Refuge
Association

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House Committee Abandons Common Sense in Favor of the “Road To Nowhere”

Washington, DC - Members of the House Natural Resources Committee yesterday abandoned common sense, approving H.R. 2801, legislation sponsored by Rep. Don Young of Alaska that would allow construction of a \$30 million, U.S. taxpayer-funded road through the heart of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), AK, and its Congressionally-designated Wilderness.

“By paving the way for this \$30 million taxpayer-funded road, Congress will help King Cove scuttle the 98-foot hovercraft medevac that has a 100% success rate, and put citizens’ lives at risk” said Evan Hirsche, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, “The full Congress should torpedo this latest version of the Bridge to Nowhere.”

Road proponents argue they need a road for medical evacuations. Yet Congress in 1998 gave King Cove - a community of 800 - \$37.5 million to upgrade their clinic and purchase a state of the art hovercraft which to date has proven 100% successful. According to the Mayor of the Aleutians East Borough, a road supporter, the hovercraft is “a lifesaving machine,” and “it is doing what it is supposed to do.” In fact, it has completed at least 27 successful medevacs since entering service.

“The Alaska DOT struggles to keep the 2-mile Cold Bay runway open in the winter snow; how can they conceivably expect to keep open a 30-mile gravel road?” said David Raskin, President of the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. “Historical wind data shows that the already successful hovercraft should be operational 99% of the time; it’s time for King Cove to disclose the real reasons they are pushing for this unnecessary and costly road.”

Izembek National Wildlife Range was established in 1960 and was designated a NWR in 1980 to safeguard the extraordinary ecological values and to protect waterfowl, shorebirds, and wetlands of national and international significance. The Reagan Administration in 1987 recognized Izembek as the first site named by the United States under the Convention on Wetlands of International Significance, a RAMSAR site. Numerous migratory birds depend on the Refuge, including the Steller’s Eider, which is listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and Pacific black brant, emperor goose, and dunlin, all of which are listed as declining and vulnerable in Alaska on Audubon’s 2005 WatchList.

The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges educate the public and decision makers on local, national, and international levels about Alaska’s National Wildlife Refuges; assist the refuges in accomplishing their missions through wildlife management and habitat improvement projects; and fund refuge-oriented projects through grants, memberships, donations, and other activities. For more information, visit www.alaskarefugefriends.org.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association’s mission is to protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands and waters set aside by the American people to protect our country’s diverse wildlife heritage. For more information, visit www.refugeassociation.org. To download the report, visit www.refugenet.org/new-pdf-files/Izembek-report.pdf.

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