



Refuge Association Joins Lawsuit to Stop Illegal Land Exchange at Izembek Refuge

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Washington, D.C. Today the National Wildlife Refuge Association, represented by [Trustees for Alaska](#), joined the [Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges](#) and seven other organizations, in filing a lawsuit challenging Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's justification for giving away the biological heart of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, or ANILCA, in 1980. In doing so, they specifically stated how and why future public land exchanges could occur in Alaska, ensuring that the conservation goals of the Act would have to be adhered to.

“Secretary Zinke has bypassed Congress by entering into a land exchange that will not further the goals of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act,” said Geoffrey Haskett, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “Congress explicitly stated that any public land exchange *must* further ANILCA's purposes which are conservation, wildlife and habitat. A Congressionally directed Environmental Impact Statement three years in the making found that the road should not be built through the Izembek wilderness. This agreement ignores that finding was ever made.”

For decades, officials in King Cove, Alaska, have been pushing to build a gravel road across the narrow strip of land that separates their 989 residents from Cold Bay, where they say it is the only way for residents to safely reach Cold Bay's all-weather airport during emergency medical evacuations. They now say that a road is needed...*to save lives*. But a paper trail dating back more than 30 years suggests that the real motivation behind the road has always been...*to haul fish*.

From 1994, when the City of King Cove [passed a resolution](#) stating that such a road would link North America's largest salmon cannery in King Cove with one of Alaska's premier airports at Cold Bay, to 2011 when [Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski said](#), “The decades-old push to get the road built between King Cove and the Cold Bay Airport so that we can have greater access for transportation is going to be a critical ingredient in that thriving economic future going out for the next 100 years,” shows the real reason behind the road.

Exhaustive scientific studies for decades have all concluded that a road would irreparably harm one of the most significant wetlands and wildlife habitats on Earth. The Trump Administration's stealth efforts to push through this illegal and destructive land giveaway threatens not only the integrity of

the National Wildlife Refuge System, but the Wilderness Preservation System and all public lands in our great nation.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries that secure its ecological integrity. For more information, visit www.refugeassociation.org or contact [Desiree Sorenson-Groves](#).