



Good afternoon my name is Michelle Anderson. I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide comments to the committee. I am a tribal member of the Native Village of Gulkana, an Ahtna shareholder and the President of Ahtna, Inc.

Ahtna is the Alaska Regional Corporation established under ANCSA in 1971 and represents the interests of over 1,900 Ahtna Athabascan shareholders. The Ahtna region encompasses eight villages and holds title to 1.6 million acres of land in Southeast Central Alaska. All of our villages are connected by the road system. Raised in the Ahtna region, I am deeply committed to protecting my culture and our way of life, responsible land development and securing economic benefits for those I serve. I believe that these three goals can co-exist.

Ahtna's lands extend from the Denali Preserve to Chitina. They surround North America's tallest peak, Mt. Denali, to America's largest National Park, Wrangell St. Elias (WSE). Ahtna has 600,000 acres of land in the Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve, lands that our Elders selected prior to the creation of the Park. Ahtna is now one of the largest in-holders of private property of public lands in the United States. Our lands are of paramount importance to the Ahtna people who have lived there for thousands of years, and depend on hunting, fishing and other resources to sustain our way of life.

Ahtna's leaders made it possible for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) to be constructed from 1974-1977. A fifty-five mile corridor through Ahtna's fee-simple lands was set aside for the 48-inch diameter pipeline. TAPS Pump Station 11 and the Glennallen Response Base were built near my family home. TAPS has transported approximately 17 billion of barrels of oil through our lands in a safe and environmentally sound manner. My family, like so many others, directly benefitted from TAPS as both my mother and father worked on the pipeline. In fact, my father still works on TAPS today for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company.

Ahtna shareholders and many other Alaska regional and village corporations have benefitted from TAPS with employment, contracting and training opportunities. In 2015, 39% of Ahtna employees on TAPS were Alaska Native. These are highly-prized jobs in a great work environment.

Ahtna's concern is that TAPS is operating at approximately 25% of its capacity. The State of Alaska (SOA), with Prudhoe Bay and Kuparuk, have opened up their lands for safe and responsible resource development. Alaska Native Corporations, like ASRC and Kuukpik Corporation, made Alpine possible. ASRC shares 70% of the profits derived from Alpine with other regional corporations as a provision of 7(i) of ANCSA. Alaskans finally got our first North Slope oil from the federally-owned NPRA with CD5 in late 2015. Conoco Phillips and its predecessor companies have tried for a very long period of time to develop oil. Senator Murkowski has been a vocal advocate of cleaning up NPRA from damages inflicted by the federal government over the last sixty plus years and its finally happening.

It takes years, even decades, to drill just one exploratory well, when the federal government is involved in the process.

Our TAPS pipeline needs a lot more oil which needs to come from federal lands. Speaking as the mother of two sons in college, they will need work opportunities to remain living in Alaska. The federal government owns over 60% of Alaska's 365 million acres. Ahtna has proven that a major world-class pipeline, like TAPS, can safely transport oil through our own lands. TAPS just needs more oil, particularly from federal lands, to keep running for future generations.

In August 2015, I had the pleasure of meeting with President Obama along with other Alaska Native leaders. I stressed to the President the importance of AKLNG for Ahtna and all Alaskans. Approximately 35 miles of the proposed AKLNG pipeline would flow underneath our beautiful Ahtna lands. The Ahtna people will require this project to be constructed to the highest worldwide standards, including materials and personnel. We are confident that the SOA and its industry partners will be able to deliver.

For the benefit of Ahtna shareholders, and all Alaskans, we need the federal government to open up their lands in a timely manner. This must include efficient land leases, permitting, and a collaborative relationship with the SOA and industry for both oil and gas and mining. Ahtna owns some of the most pristine lands in the world and we have proven that development can occur safely and to the economic benefit of all Alaskans. The vast majority of Alaska's federally-owned resource rich lands, are seldom, if ever, viewed by Alaskans.

In 1971 (45 years ago), ANCSA was passed. Ahtna was to receive title to land of 1.77 million acres. All these years later we are still waiting for a quarter of a million acres to complete our land settlement. Alaskans are frustrated that the federal government does not move very fast when Alaska acreage is part of the equation.

We need the federal government to take a proactive approach with their vast acreage to provide economic benefits for Ahtna and all Alaskans. Several Alaska Regional Corporations, including Doyon and Ahtna, are attempting to develop our own lands for oil and gas development. We need major oil and gas and mining companies to continue making multi-billion dollar investments in Alaska to keep TAPS running for the next 40 years, to protect our Ahtna culture and to provide economic benefits to our shareholders. On behalf of all the Ahtna people, I sincerely appreciated the opportunity to speak today. Tsin'aen.