

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 19, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 7229
Washington, D.C. 20240-0002

Dear Madam Secretary:

The National Park Service's (NPS) concession contract with Aramark Sports and Entertainment Service, Inc. and Huna Concessions, LLC in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (Park) is set to expire at the end of the year. NPS submitted a prospectus on January 7th, but was unsuccessful in attaining even one bid. If action isn't taken, and soon, by NPS to resolve this concessioner situation, the Glacier Bay Lodge and accompanying Day Boat Tour operation will be shut down for 2014, which would dramatically and negatively impact the community of Gustavus, Alaska.

Both the Lodge and Day Boat Tour, which Aramark has operated as concessioner for the past decade, are integral to the Gustavus economy. The Lodge, with beds for 100 in 56 rooms, represents roughly 40 percent of the town's capacity for overnight visitors. It also provides restaurant, shower and laundry services, all of which are otherwise scarcely available in Gustavus. The Day Boat Tour, on the other hand, is a major attraction for tourists and a key selling point for local businesses that rely on visitors to the Park in order to remain viable. If the Lodge and Day Boat Tour are shut down, local businesses are going to suffer.

What troubles us is that NPS knows what the problem is. As currently constructed, the prospectus for concession contract proposals is in no way viable for the concessioner in the eyes of the private sector. The feedback NPS received from potential bidders was clear. Certainly, attracting *zero* bids should be an obvious enough statement. Yet, since the prospectus closed on March 30th, no additional steps have been taken to figure out a solution for 2014 and beyond.

NPS Alaska Regional Director Sue Masica has indicated that NPS is considering three options at this time. The first is issuing a revised prospectus in December, which would effectively take the Lodge and the Day Boat Tour out of commission until the 2016 tourism season. The second is pursuing an interim action to continue Day Boat Tour operations without the Lodge, at least for 2014. The third is looking into the feasibility of an extension of the existing concession contract, which Aramark has expressed interest in.

The first two options have obvious and significant downsides. Issuing a revised prospectus in December, assuming the revisions are enough to draw at least a single bid, does nothing for the 2014 or 2015 tourism seasons, which could very well doom several local Gustavus businesses. Securing Day Boat Tour operations for 2014, while better than nothing, does not address the

glaring issue of overnight visitor capacity that shutting down the Lodge creates. However, an extension of the current concession contract with Aramark, assuming NPS and Aramark can come up with terms agreeable to both parties, would provide an immediate and real solution to the problem. With that extension in place, NPS would then still be able to issue a revised prospectus with any potential new concessioner taking over in the Fall of 2015.

In the meantime, the community of Gustavus would still be able to plan for and work the 2014 and 2015 tourism seasons.

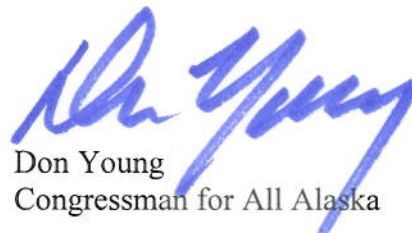
Doing nothing, however, is unacceptable. The consequences for NPS' inaction would be dire for the entire community of Gustavus and Southeast Alaska as a whole. This potential harm to the tourism industry is unfortunately a pattern by the Federal Government in Southeast Alaska. We are facing similar harms in Ketchikan with regards to air taxi permits to Misty Fjords National Monument. Alaskans simply want to work *with* the Federal Government to promote our great lands in the region. In Gustavus, at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, we need NPS to take steps to ensure the Lodge and Day Boat Tour don't disappear. The people of Gustavus can't afford that.

We hope you will work with us to find a solution to this situation – and quickly. In the meantime, please let us know if we could help you to schedule a visit to Gustavus and Glacier Bay during your summer trip to Alaska. It would be highly beneficial to see the community and hear from the residents directly on how this would impact their livelihoods. We know with your background in recreation and tourism that you will find this issue of great concern as well and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska