

Testimony of Della Trumble
Business Manager of the King Cove Village Corporation

Testifying Before
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Regarding
Rural Alaska Infrastructure Needs

March 30, 2017

Good Afternoon Senator and Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee. My name is Della Trumble. I am an Aleut from King Cove, Alaska. I am the Business Manager of our village native corporation that was created from the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. I am also a member of the Agdaagux Tribe of King Cove.

My ancestors have lived in and around the Aleutians Islands and Alaska Peninsula for over 4,000 years. I am extremely proud of my heritage and my connection to this region of Alaska.

I am also pleased to be testifying here today since today marks the 150th anniversary of the Treaty between the United States and Russia to formally “purchase” what is now the State of Alaska from the Russian Empire. The residents of King Cove are proud Alaskans and even prouder Americans. We are also proud of our community and how we live in harmony with the rugged nature of the seas, land, and resources that surround us and improve our lives.

Together, the unique human and natural environment of rural Alaska brings many opportunities and challenges to improve our lives, particularly if creativity, determination, and persistence are used to address these needs. I also realize that the basic infrastructure needs for energy, water/sewer, municipal landfills, and transportation facilities have enormous costs that all levels of government funding are struggling to adequately respond to.

Renewable Energy in King Cove

I would like to provide some examples of our successful forward thinking in King Cove. My community has experienced the positive value of forming partnerships between the local government, the village native corporation, and the local tribes for

developing renewable energy facilities. Since 1994, an environmentally friendly, run-of-the-river hydro facility has been providing more than 50% of the community's annual energy supply. This hydro facility, Delta Creek, has been the most productive, single-site renewable energy facility anywhere in rural Alaska. At \$.30/kilowatt-hour, King Cove has the "cheapest" (a relative term) cost of an electricity anywhere in rural Alaska from the more than 150 single-site utility grid communities. In Cold Bay, the closest community to King Cove, the cost of a kilowatt-hour of electricity is \$.67 – more than twice the cost in King Cove.

Throughout rural Alaska's 150 communities, the average residential cost per kilowatt-hour is \$.45/kilowatt-hour. This is 50% more cost than in King Cove. Another interesting comparison is that the average, residential cost per kilowatt-hour in the Lower 48 is \$.12

Our Delta Creek hydro was built on land owned by the King Cove Corporation and partially funded by a U.S. Dept. of Energy Indian grant to the Agdaagux Tribe. The city also borrowed \$2.0 million, one-third of the total project, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Since 1994, Delta Creek has displaced over 3.5 million gallons of diesel fuel and has saved over \$5.5 million in electric utility operation costs. These reductions have translated into saving King Cove households about \$1,000/year in energy costs. There are simply no parallel comparisons in rural Alaska where a community has so drastically reduced its dependency on diesel fuel generation.

Now, we want more! I am excited to report that our second hydro facility, Waterfall Creek, will come online in next month (April 2017). This facility will also be a run-of-the-river hydro adjacent Delta Creek. Together, these two renewable energy facilities are expected to produce over 75% of King Cove's annual energy supply of 4.5 megawatt-hours (MW) demand. The annual energy production from these two hydro facilities will save King Cove more than 300,000 gallons of diesel fuel a year and significantly reduce the amount of carbon emissions in our community.

The Waterfall Creek hydro facility is costing \$7.0 million. It is also being built on land owned by my corporation. The city will be incurring debt for about 50% of this cost. This is considerable, additional debt for our community to incur, but our ongoing experience with our Delta Creek hydro facility has instilled in our thinking

that the “power of renewable energy” is a key component to our sustainable future. One minor frustration I would like to note on the funding of Waterfall Creek was our corporation’s expectation, in partnership with the City, that in 2014 we would be award another modest grant, less than \$1.0 million, from the U.S. Dept. of Energy Tribal Clean Energy Program. However, we were disappointed to learn that all those grants were awarded for solar energy projects to tribes in the Lower 48.

I would also like to note for Madame Chair and Ranking Member, Senator Cantwell, that approximately \$1.5 million of the costs for Waterfall Creek have incurred in Washington State with the fabrication of the turbine, generator, and penstock and the shipping of this material and construction from Seattle to King Cove. Giving our geographical location relative to the Pacific Northwest, and in particular Seattle, we depend on a strong relationship for major steel and equipment fabrication and transportation from our southern neighbors.

Our hope is that our renewable energy accomplishments in King Cove is spurring on our neighbor communities to move forward with proposed tidal wave energy in False Pass, additional wind generation in Sand Point, and geothermal energy in Akutan. The average cost of a kilowatt-hour of energy in these three neighboring communities is about 35% more than King Cove. We are also pleased to know that King Cove’s success with our hydro facilities are being used as examples for other communities that are now developing other small, run-of-the-river hydro facilities. Clearly, affordable energy is a key component of our future.

Transportation Infrastructure in King Cove

Madame Chair – this hearing is about infrastructure improvements needed to reduce the cost of living in Alaska. For those of us in King Cove, the key infrastructure to reduce our cost of living is the 11-mile road connecting King Cove to the Cold Bay Airport. How will this reduce our cost of living?

If you had witnessed a crash at the King Cove Airport with your daughter on board as I did a couple of years ago, you would understand that my cost of living, and that of every resident in King Cove is the emotional cost of living with potential danger to our lives and that of our loved ones almost every time we have to fly between King Cove and the Cold Bay Airport to access health and medical services in

Anchorage, which can not be provided at our fine, but very limited, health clinic in King Cove.

However, our clinic can provide one thing that many of us do not really want to have and that is a two-pill prescription of Valium. One pill for when we fly out of King Cove and one pill for the way back into King Cove.

This Committee is very familiar with the status of King Cove and its need for basic transportation infrastructure in the form of an 11-mile, one-lane, gravel road connecting our community to the Cold bay Airport.

Madame Chair – we really need this road now. It is the most vital element of missing infrastructure in King Cove to our well-being and will change our cost of living so that our residents can have a real, safe life and not always have to worry every time we risk our lives to travel for medical and health safety reasons – an activity that Lower 48 Americans take for granted every day of their lives.

Since the unfortunate decision by the Department of Interior on December 23, 2013, King Cove has experienced 58 medivacs to save lives, including 17 by the U.S. Coast Guard. We need this road now.

Thank you, again, Madame Chair, for continually championing our cause. We also thank the rest of the Alaska Delegation and Alaska Governor, Bill Walker, whose presence is felt particularly because of his vision and commitment to ask the Alaska State Legislature for \$10 million in State funding to help pay for this road. All we need is for the Congress to say YES one more time in legislation that will once and for allow for this lifesaving road to be built. The savings that the emotional and safety factors will contribute to our cost of living are absolutely priceless!

Finally, Madam Chair, I ask that you include my testimony and the testimonies from Mayor Stanley Mayor and President Dean Gould (King Cove Corporation). All of us were born and raised in King Cove. These testimonies were provided at this Committee’s hearing last September 21, 2016 on S. 3204 – “The Need for Reliable Emergency Medical Transportation for the Isolated Community of King Cove, Alaska.” These testimonies tell our story including the emotional cost of living that is at stake here and why this road is such a vital infrastructure need for our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee might have for me,