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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD
RURAL DETERMINATION PROCESS PUBLIC COMMENT
BEFORE HEARING OFFICER
JACK LORRIGAN
Sitka, Alaska
September 27, 2013
4:00 o'clock p.m.

Presenter: David Jenkins, Facilitator
Office of Subsistence Management
Beth Pendleton, US Forest Service
Federal Subsistence Board Member

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2
3 (Sitka, Alaska - 9/27/2013)

4
5 (On record)

6
7 MR. LORRIGAN: Good evening, everybody.
8 I'd like to thank everybody for coming tonight. Mayor
9 and Harvey Kitka from the Regional Advisory Council,
10 Nels, an elder with the tribe. Thanks for coming. This
11 is an opportunity for the public to provide input to the
12 Federal Subsistence Board's rural determination process.
13 The Board is accepting comments until November 1st, 2013.
14 Tonight will be an opportunity for you to provide a
15 written or oral comments.

16
17 My name is Jack Lorrigan. I'm the Native
18 liaison for the Office of Subsistence Management in
19 Anchorage. Tonight I'm here to serve as the hearing
20 officer, so my job is to make sure everyone here who
21 would like to make oral or written comments on this
22 process is able to do so. This meeting has been
23 scheduled to last until 6:00 o'clock this evening. In
24 order to receive your comments, we'd like to have
25 everybody stick to the time limit so everybody behind you
26 can comment. Tonight we have a court reporter to take
27 the proceedings. Her name is Salena Hile, thank you, who
28 will then transcribe the comments for the record.

29
30 During the public comment portion of the
31 meeting we will not be answering any questions. This
32 will allow us time to hear your comments. Other
33 opportunities around Alaska will be at the Regional
34 Advisory Council meetings, the Federal Subsistence Board
35 meetings and the November 1st written comment timeline.

36
37 Because of the importance of your
38 comments, it's necessary we follow certain procedures
39 during the meeting. As you entered the room, you were
40 asked to sign in and if you wish to testify, there are
41 green testifier cards if you want to comment. Also if
42 you're attending this meeting or submitting comments on
43 behalf of a group or organization, please indicate the
44 name of the group organization that you represent.

45
46 Please let me emphasize that the
47 principal purpose of the public hearing part of this
48 meeting is to receive information and comments for the
49 record. Due to the volume of people coming in, we're
50 going to limit comments to six minutes. I anticipate

1 more people will join us after 5:00 o'clock as they get
2 off work, so we'll have to accommodate them too.

3

4 If you run out of time, please submit
5 your comments in writing prior to November 1, 2013.
6 Handouts and other information available on this process
7 are on the back table. I'd like to ask Federal
8 Subsistence Board member Beth Pendleton to add any
9 remarks that she wishes.

10

11 MS. PENDLETON: Thanks, Jack. Good
12 afternoon, almost evening to folks. It's good to see you
13 all here. My name is Beth Pendleton. I'm the Regional
14 Forester for the U.S. Forest Service and reside in Juneau
15 and provide leadership responsibilities across the
16 Chugach in Prince William Sound, the Kenai, as well as
17 the Tongass for Southeast Alaska. It's good to be here.

18

19 Also in my role as Regional Forester I
20 have the opportunity to serve on the Federal Subsistence
21 Board along with seven other members. There are four
22 other members that are from different Department of
23 Interior heads. Yes, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau
24 of Land Management, Park Service and Bureau of Indian
25 Affairs. Then there are also three additional members
26 from Southeast here. Anthony Christianson, who resides
27 in the community of Hydaburg, and also is the mayor of
28 Hydaburg, and Charlie Brower from the community of
29 Barrow, and then our Chair from the Federal Subsistence
30 Board is Tim Towarak and Tim resides in Unalakleet.

31

32 The Federal Subsistence Board has been
33 asked by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to
34 reconsider and to listen to the criteria and reconsider
35 the criteria for determinations associated with the rural
36 determination. So this is a very important opportunity
37 and I take this very seriously.

38

39 We had the opportunity earlier in the
40 week while we were in Ketchikan as part of the Regional
41 Advisory Council for Southeast Alaska to listen to
42 members of the communities of Ketchikan and Saxman and
43 that area relative to this very topic. I had the
44 pleasure to be there with Anthony Christianson to listen
45 to the testimonies of many, many individuals from both of
46 those communities.

47

48 This is important to me as a Federal
49 Subsistence Board meeting and as we proceed to again re-
50 look at those criteria and make recommendations back to

1 the Secretaries. So whether or not there s a warrant for
2 change and consideration in that. So, again, important
3 to be here. I'm looking forward to listening and gaining
4 a better understanding of your issues, your concerns with
5 regard to this process.

6
7 So, again, thank you for being here. I
8 also want to acknowledge the members of InterAgency
9 Committee and the Staff who support this program from the
10 Forest Service and also acknowledge that Gene Peltola is
11 here. Gene is the new director for the Office of
12 Subsistence Management. He's standing in the back of the
13 room. Welcome, Gene, here as well. You'll hear from
14 some of the other members of the Staff.

15
16 So, again, thank you and I look forward
17 to hearing your comments.

18
19 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you, Beth. For
20 tonight's meeting we have a PowerPoint presentation to be
21 given to explain how the criteria laid out. I'd like to
22 turn the floor over to David Jenkins from the Office of
23 Subsistence Management.

24
25 DR. JENKINS: Good afternoon. My name is
26 David Jenkins. I am an anthropologist and the policy
27 coordinator for the Office of Subsistence Management. As
28 Beth mentioned, the Federal Subsistence Program is made
29 up of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land
30 Management, the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife
31 Service and the U.S. Forest Service. The program is
32 responsible for managing subsistence on Federal public
33 lands and we're fortunate to have Beth here representing
34 the Federal Subsistence Board tonight to hear your
35 concerns.

36
37 I'm going to take about 10 minutes and
38 run through the current rural determination process and
39 give you a sense of how you can participate. So I want
40 to give you some background. I want to tell you how the
41 process works. I'm going to go through the questions
42 that the Federal Subsistence Board is looking for you to
43 address. I'll talk about the resources that you have
44 available to you, informational resources primarily, and
45 then give you some of the avenues by which you can
46 provide comments on this process.

47
48 So, as Beth mentioned, in 2010 the
49 Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture directed the
50 Federal Subsistence Board to look at the rural review

1 process and the Federal Subsistence Board elected to
2 start that review with public input, which is why we're
3 here and to ask the RACs for their input, the Regional
4 Advisory Councils for their input and also tribes and
5 ANCSA corporations. The goal is to develop
6 recommendations that the Board would then forward on to
7 the Secretaries for their action because it's in the
8 Secretaries's world to make changes to the process of
9 determining rural status.

10
11 So a bit of background, remind you of
12 this background. The Alaska National Interest Lands
13 Conservation Act, especially Title VIII, ANILCA was
14 passed in 1980, as you know, provided a subsistence
15 priority on Federal public lands to those folks who
16 reside in rural areas. So it's only residents of rural
17 areas that have this subsistence priority and you can see
18 in Alaska in green here the Federal public lands. It's
19 quite extensive. So folks who live in rural areas have
20 that subsistence priority.

21
22 The problem was that Congress did not
23 provide a definition of the term rural. It did, in a
24 Senate report, indicate what cities it thought should be
25 excluded from this definition and those cities were
26 Ketchikan and Juneau and Anchorage and Fairbanks and it
27 provided examples of communities that in 1980 Congress
28 considered to be rural, such as Dillingham, Bethel, Nome,
29 Kotzebue, Barrow and the Senate report goes on to say and
30 other Native and non-Native villages scattered throughout
31 the state.

32
33 So that's the statutory background, but
34 we also have a 1988 Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals
35 decision that was a decision ruling on the definition of
36 rural. At the time it was a State definition of rural.
37 The Ninth Circuit indicated what Congress meant by rural
38 was a sparsely populated area and that was the primary
39 indicator of a rural area and that hunting and fishing
40 resource use or what we call subsistence was only one
41 indicator and not the primary indicator of rural status.

42
43
44 I want to just give you a sentence from
45 that Circuit Court's opinion. The Circuit Court noted
46 that Congress did not limit the benefits of the statute,
47 that is ANILCA, to residents of areas dominated by a
48 subsistence economy. Instead, Congress wrote broadly
49 giving the statutory priority to all subsistence users
50 residing in rural areas. So this is how the Ninth

1 Circuit interpreted what rural meant because Congress
2 didn't give us a sense of what it intended by that terms.

3
4 Here's another map that indicates the
5 areas that are non-rural in black and essentially the
6 rest of Alaska as rural. This is as it stands at this
7 point. As you can see, some of these population figures,
8 these are the higher population figures of Anchorage and
9 Fairbanks and Wasilla, Palmer and the Kenai area. It's
10 from 2000. Ketchikan stands at just under 14,000. Sitka
11 here in 2000 was just under 9,000. So these population
12 figures turn out to be important because population size
13 is one of the criteria that the Federal Subsistence Board
14 looks at when it determines rural status.

15
16 So what I want to do briefly is go
17 through how the Federal Subsistence Board determines
18 rural status. What it does is it groups together
19 communities first that are socially and communally and
20 economically integrated and after it groups them together
21 it comes up with population thresholds for that grouping
22 of communities and then it has other rural
23 characteristics that it tends to. I'll go through those
24 as well. There's a timeline that the Federal Subsistence
25 Board uses. It does a review on a 10-year cycle. I'll
26 talk about that a little bit. Then finally some
27 information sources that the Board is required by
28 regulation to use in this process.

29
30 So what does it mean to group communities
31 together. What does it mean for communities to be
32 economically and socially and communally integrated.
33 Well, the Federal Subsistence Board uses three criteria
34 to make that determination of integration or grouping of
35 communities. The first criteria is do 30 percent or more
36 of working people commute from one community to another.
37 Do they share a common high school attendance area and
38 are the communities in proximity and road accessible to
39 one another.

40
41 So after the Board makes the
42 determination of grouping communities together and using
43 these criteria, it comes up with population figures.
44 What the Board wants the public to do and wants you all
45 to help the Board with is whether these grouping criteria
46 are useful. Do they adequately express how communities
47 are thought about as integrated in Alaska for this rural
48 determination process. If not, can you think of other
49 more applicable useful criteria for linking communities
50 together.

1 So once that process happens, once the
2 aggregation or the grouping of communities happens, then
3 the Board comes up with population figures. At the
4 moment, communities with 2,500 people or fewer are
5 presumed to be rural. Those communities with populations
6 between 2,500 and 7,000 have no presumption of rural or
7 nonrural status. In other words, the Board hasn't
8 decided. Then above 7,000 the presumption is that those
9 communities are non-rural. These are guideline
10 population sizes. They are not absolute thresholds.
11 They're guidelines.

12
13 The Board would like to know are these
14 useful. Are they adequate population sizes for thinking
15 about rural status; 2,500, 7,000, above 7,000. Do they
16 indicate population sizes in Alaska that are rural. The
17 Board would like your opinions on this issue.

18
19 So once the Board has aggregated or
20 grouped communities and it's come up with population
21 figures for those grouping of communities, it also asks
22 the question, especially in those communities between
23 2,500 and 7,000, those are the ambiguous ones, it says
24 what other characteristics are there about rural
25 communities.

26
27 It looks at use of fish and wildlife, it
28 looks at economic development diversity, it looks at the
29 infrastructure of communities, at transportation networks
30 and about educational institutions and uses these
31 criteria to ascertain rural characteristics of
32 communities typically between 2,500 and 7,000, but it
33 could also be above 7,000 as that threshold is just a
34 guideline, and there could be communities with more than
35 7,000. If they retain rural characteristics, then the
36 Board will judge whether or not they are rural.

37
38 So are these useful. Are these
39 characteristics useful. Do they say much of anything
40 about Alaska and Alaska's rural communities and the Board
41 would like your opinion on these characteristics.

42
43 Finally the timeline and information
44 sources. The Board makes rural determinations on a 10-
45 year cycle based on a snapshot provided by the census.
46 So every 10 years, as you know, the U.S. census does a
47 population assessment as well as many other
48 characteristics of communities and the Board takes that
49 as a guideline and every 10 years reassesses rural status
50 in communities. To do that it uses the census, but it

1 also uses information from the Department of Labor to
2 augment any information that the Board can't get from the
3 U.S. census.

4

5 So the Board wants to know should it
6 continue to review rural status on a 10-year cycle and
7 are there other informational sources that are better at
8 informing the Board than the U.S. census information and
9 the Alaska Department of Labor information that we have
10 available to us. For example, local community
11 assessments may be more useful than these other sources
12 or at least that augment these sources.

13

14 The Board would like to know your opinion
15 on timelines and on other sources of information that
16 they could use to think about rural status. Finally, do
17 you have any other comments or questions or opinions that
18 would inform the Board as it struggles with this issue.

19

20 Here is how you can -- here's other
21 resources available to you. We've got a website. It has
22 a lot of the information, some of which is on the back
23 table here about rural status. It has a lot of
24 background documentation that you can find at this
25 website. If you just Google and type in Office of
26 Subsistence Management, it will bring you directly to
27 this website. You can email us, you can phone us. We're
28 fairly responsive or we try to be.

29

30 So you can provide testimony in a number
31 of ways. You can speak here and your words will be
32 recorded and that will become part of the official
33 record. You can testify at a Regional Advisory Council
34 meeting. In Ketchikan, over the last couple of days, we
35 had a number of people testify on this issue. You can
36 submit your comments electronically at this email
37 address, subsistence@fws.gov. You can give written
38 comments to me or any of the other staff in the room or
39 you can mail them to this address here.

40

41 So thanks. That's just a very brief
42 overview of what it is that we're trying to do today and
43 I'm going to leave these process questions up on the
44 board so that might help you as you clarify your
45 responses as you come up and testify for us all.

46

47 Thank you very much.

48

49 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you, David. Again,
50 I want to emphasize that we have a two-hour limit for

1 tonight's hearing and apparently more people are coming
2 in. So I'm going to take it down to five minutes, if you
3 can keep it there. If we get close, I'll tap the
4 microphone and I'll give you a chance to start
5 summarizing please.

6
7 When you come up, please begin your
8 presentation by stating your full name and please assist
9 the court reporter by spelling your name if you need to.
10 If you are affiliated with an organizational group,
11 please say so so your comments are accurately captured,
12 please speak clearly and into the microphone. If you're
13 called to speak and choose not to speak and provide
14 remarks, you may not cede your time to another speaker.
15 The time is now roughly 4:30. I'd like to begin the
16 public process of this.

17
18 The first speaker I will call, Linda
19 Wilson.

20
21 MS. WILSON: My name is Linda Wilson. I
22 work for the Sitka Economic Development Association.
23 However, I'm testifying on my own behalf this evening.
24 SEDA will provide its own comments in writing.

25
26 I am testifying from the perspective of
27 someone who works with a lot of data everyday in my job
28 and has looked at population data for the last several
29 years. My concern -- first of all, I'd like to support
30 the recommendations of the city and borough of Sitka that
31 they have provided or will be providing within their
32 resolution this evening. However, I'd like to add
33 regarding the population threshold, if it is going to be
34 changed or if there is going to be a threshold used,
35 11,000 seems to be a good one to start with.

36
37 However, populations tend to fluctuate
38 rapidly and I would like to see that due to these
39 fluctuations a threshold -- any threshold that's set
40 should not be considered to have been reached unless and
41 until a community's population has reached or exceeded
42 that threshold number for no less than six of the
43 previous 10 years.

44
45 For example, if the threshold were now
46 9,000, for the past two years Sitka would have exceeded
47 that threshold. However, over the past 10 years, any of
48 those 10 we would not. Population is not as important as
49 what's behind those numbers. The fact that our
50 population has risen over 9,000 is not necessarily an

1 indicator of economic health. We have actually lost 525
2 people overall to out-migration. That means more people
3 have moved out than have moved here.

4
5 The reason for the population increase,
6 according to the State of Alaska statistics is natural
7 increase; births and lower death rate. People are living
8 longer. So we didn't have a sudden change in our way of
9 life. We're not drawing people here due to some change
10 in our economic base or anything. It's simply that we
11 have people living longer and not moving away from the
12 community and a natural birth increase.

13
14 So my consideration would be that not
15 just look at setting a threshold but also some kind of
16 standard over time of how that threshold is maintained
17 for at least several years, not just one year. That
18 would be kind of a waste of time to have, say, our status
19 challenged because we exceeded the threshold for one year
20 and then, of course, it goes down again in a couple more
21 years. So that's one consideration.

22
23 If I have any further comments, I would
24 like to submit them in writing.

25
26 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

27
28 Jeff Feldpausch.

29
30 MR. FELDPAUSCH: Good evening. My name
31 is Jeff Feldpausch. The last name is spelled F-E-L-D-P-
32 A-U-S-C-H and I'm representing myself as a citizen of
33 Sitka.

34
35 The current threshold levels used by the
36 Federal Subsistence Board fail to accurately define rural
37 community in Alaska. The current thresholds are
38 outdated, inconsistent from one agency to another and are
39 ill-suited for defining rural and the complexities that
40 are offered in the vastness of Alaska, and are not
41 germane when defining rural for the purposes of Title
42 VIII of ANILCA.

43
44 The Census Bureau set the lower limit
45 that we're currently using at 2,500 back in 2010. Since
46 that time the Census Bureau has redefined -- I guess I
47 should go back. Below 2,500 was considered rural.
48 Anything above was considered urban. Since then the
49 Census Bureau has redefined urban multiple times, but
50 ironically the Census Bureau's definition of rural has

1 remained static and unrefined for over 100 years.

2

3 Currently Federal agencies use
4 approximately in the neighborhood of two dozen
5 definitions to define rural. Some agencies have multiple
6 definitions within the agency itself. The numerous
7 population thresholds used by the Federal agencies in
8 defining rural were established under administrative land
9 use and economic concepts of the contiguous Lower 48
10 states. Many of these population thresholds were
11 established with a set population density in mind.

12

13 Unfortunately, these populations
14 densities don't work well in Alaska. I know Wolfe and
15 Fisher in their 2003 report used a weighted average of 30
16 miles around a population center to determine population
17 density. It just doesn't fit for Alaska. As an example,
18 this last year I traveled 60 miles north to harvest
19 subsistence sockeye and over 100 miles south to harvest
20 subsistence sockeye. So the subsistence actually took
21 place outside of those established boundaries.

22

23 The criteria used for defining aggregate
24 communities for the purposes of rural and urban
25 delineation in many cases works against the intent of the
26 Act. In several instances, communities meet all the
27 population and land use criteria to be deemed rural, but
28 lose that status because of this biased methodology. The
29 use of aggregate communities is useless in defining rural
30 under the intent of the Act.

31

32 In my research -- I work for the Sitka
33 Tribe of Alaska, resource protection director. In my
34 research on rural determination process, I came across an
35 article called
36 Defining Rural in Rural America. It was published in the
37 USDA's Amber Waves, which is published from the USDA and
38 Economic Research Services in June of 2008. This article
39 basically talks about the multiple definitions that are
40 out there and describes how some of these population --
41 or the definitions came about.

42

43 The one most profound thing I walked away
44 from this article, it said in order for the definition to
45 be effective, it must fit the purpose or need of that
46 definition. To accurately define rural under ANILCA,
47 it's essential that the definition fit the purpose of the
48 Act, which is to protect and provide opportunity for
49 continued subsistence use on public lands.

50

1 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service back
2 in 2003 published an article by Wolfe and Fisher entitled
3 Methods for Rural and Nonrural Determination, a Federal
4 Subsistence Management in Alaska. This report identifies
5 two methods. My recommendation is using modified second
6 method or the criterion reference assessment approach
7 used by Wolfe and Fisher, using four equally rated
8 criteria.

9
10 The first one is use of fish and
11 wildlife. Basically, if you look at the intent of the
12 Act -- or subsistence use of fish and wildlife is the
13 crux of Title VIII of ANILCA. It's synonymous with the
14 definition of rural in Alaska. This land use criteria is
15 essential in defining the process or defining the rural
16 determination process.

17
18 The second is transportation. Due to the
19 vast area Alaska covers and its topography, many of the
20 communities in the state are geographically isolated from
21 the central road system that links Alaskan communities to
22 the contiguous 48 states. The only way to access many of
23 these isolated communities is by air and water
24 transportation. This transportation can be intermittent,
25 weather dependent and expensive. The transportation
26 drawback for isolated communities creates a significant
27 dependence on the use of fish and wildlife.

28
29 Another method to be used would be the
30 structure of the economic base. I think Wolfe and Fisher
31 touched on this basically in the criterion reference
32 assessment. They talked about land use economy such as
33 fishing and forestry and I believe this was also related
34 to in the Ninth Circuit Court ruling that addresses land
35 use as far as agriculture and ranching. These kind of
36 land use economies are consistent with general
37 definitions of rural associated with agriculture and
38 local land use.

39
40 And then the scales of economies. If
41 communities have large retail chain stores and often have
42 large health care centers that can provide specialized
43 health, they should be determined urban.

44
45 I believe that the thresholds are not
46 necessary, but if the Board chooses to go with thresholds
47 that they use the 11,000 threshold they recommended to
48 the Secretaries back in 2009 or 2010.

49
50 I believe that the decennial review of

1 the rural status for all communities in Alaska is costly,
2 labor intensive and unnecessary. The urban or rural
3 status of a community should only be reviewed if criteria
4 used to establish that status has been challenged
5 significantly.

6
7 I guess in closing what I would like to
8 stress to the Board is when they sit down to review these
9 criteria, actually implore them to look back at the
10 intent of the Act when they look at these criteria and
11 establish criteria for rural determination and that
12 intent would be to protect and provide the opportunity
13 for continued -- and I stress continued -- subsistence
14 use on public lands.

15
16 Thank you.

17
18 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

19
20 Mim McConnell.

21
22 MS. MCCONNELL: Good afternoon. My name
23 is Mim McConnell. Mim is M-I-M and McConnell is M-C-C-O-
24 N-N-E-L-L. I have lived in Southeast Alaska for almost
25 40 years. In my past, I served eight years as the chair
26 of the Port Alexander Fish and Game Advisory Committee
27 and about seven years on the Southeast Federal
28 Subsistence Regional Advisory Council.

29
30 Today I'm speaking to you as the mayor of
31 the city and borough of Sitka. Thank you for holding
32 this important meeting in Sitka today. It's greatly
33 appreciated. I will be brief as more detailed comments
34 will be submitted by our city staff before the November
35 1st deadline and I'll be mentioning also later on, but
36 the assembly passed a resolution that will be coming to
37 you from the city clerk's office at some point if you
38 haven't already received it.

39
40 Sitka is an isolated rural subsistence
41 community unconnected to any road system and the vast
42 majority of Sitka residents, over 90 percent, harvest
43 large quantities of traditional, personal and subsistence
44 use fish and game year round for both themselves and for
45 others and consider this a basic part of their cultural,
46 economic and social identities. This use has been well
47 documented and has nothing to do with how many people
48 call Sitka home. Sitka has had to regularly defend its
49 rural subsistence status as required by current
50 regulations because its population exceeds the arbitrary

1 population ceiling of 7,000.

2

3 The rural determination process should be
4 modified as the Secretary of the Interior called for in
5 2009 to ensure that the Federal Subsistence Management
6 Program is best serving rural Alaskans and that the
7 letter and spirit of Title VIII of ANILCA are being met.

8

9 The assembly, the city and borough of
10 Sitka recently passed a resolution which recommends
11 several modifications to improve the rural determination
12 process. Modify the population threshold to delete the
13 arbitrary 7,000 beyond which a community will be presumed
14 nonrural and change the threshold to 11,000 as
15 recommended by the Secretaries of the Interior and
16 Agriculture in 2010 as a guideline only since the current
17 threshold levels fail to accurately define a rural Alaska
18 community.

19

20 They also recommended that the rural
21 determination process be modified to better permit rural
22 subsistence communities to identify their rural
23 characteristics, including widespread use of
24 fish, wildlife and other wild resources, through Alaska
25 Department of Fish and Game subsistence studies, coastal
26 management subsistence research and other information
27 sources, geographic isolation, lack of connection to a
28 regional road system and importance of fish and other
29 wild resources to the economic base as the basis for
30 retaining their continued rural designation.

31

32 Once a community has received its rural
33 designation, no timeline for reconsideration should be
34 triggered unless there is substantive change in the rural
35 community status sufficient to redesignate the community
36 as urban in order to meet the intent of Title VIII of
37 ANILCA, which is to protect and provide the opportunity
38 for continued subsistence uses on public lands.

39

40 While the various administrative land and
41 resource use and economic concepts that fit the Lower 48
42 states may meet Federal agency needs in the contiguous
43 states, these components of the determination process do
44 not meet the needs of vast, isolated, rural Alaska, which
45 within Southeast Alaska includes more than 17 million
46 acres of the Tongass National Forest.

47

48 Thank you for your time and careful
49 consideration of our recommendations.

50

1 Gunalcheesh.

2

3 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

4

5 Mr. Kitka.

6

7 MR. KITKA: My name is Harvey Kitka. I
8 reside here in Sitka, Alaska and I'm representing myself
9 at this time. I have some thoughts on this rural
10 determination. Sitka, as a community, has always had a
11 subsistence lifestyle that, as the community has grown,
12 we've always seemed like we've always had this type of
13 style where we harvested and shared as a community. The
14 non-Natives that have come to this community have learned
15 to do the same thing over the years.

16

17 The population over the last 10 years has
18 not changed a whole lot. If anything, the Native
19 characteristics of this population has changed to a
20 bigger extent. I believe now we have closer to half the
21 percentage of the population of Sitka is non-Native
22 because some of the smaller communities in Southeast
23 Alaska do not have jobs available and Sitka doesn't have
24 that many jobs available, but it seems like we have more
25 people coming from the smaller communities.

26

27 I also believe that public law 96-487
28 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act Title
29 VIII was intended to protect Natives and rural
30 communities and not to regulate them out of existence.
31 This is so important, that little word called intent.
32 It's very important because that is the heart of Title
33 VIII of ANILCA.

34

35 Also Sitka, by its very nature, we're an
36 island. Like I said before, transportation out of Sitka
37 or into Sitka is either by land or boat, boat, air. We
38 don't have roads that will connect us except for the
39 ferry system, which in the wintertime is very sporadic.

40

41 The city of Sitka does not have a
42 population base big enough to support some of the major
43 things like if we have appliances that fail us. Some of
44 the appliances we don't have the expertise to repair
45 this. When we go to the companies and ask them about it
46 and if it's still under warranty, they'll tell us to take
47 it back. In some cases, it will cost anywhere from 300
48 to 500 dollars just to get it back to the manufacturers.
49 We end up throwing them away because it's almost cheaper
50 to buy a new one. So there is an awful lot of that that

1 happens.

2

3 We don't have the specialized health care
4 that's needed for a lot of our people, the heart
5 patients. In my case, I have macular degeneration in my
6 eyes where I have to have a specialist take care of me
7 and the only specialist is either in Seattle or Anchorage
8 and I have to travel to do this. So we don't have
9 specialized health care in this community.

10

11 The cost of doing this rural
12 determination every 10 years, it probably not only costs
13 the government, but it costs the city of Sitka, the
14 tribal communities, Sitka Tribe. It's a heavy expense on
15 people who have very limited income and very limited ways
16 of getting money to finance this battle that we have to
17 wage every 10 years.

18

19 It would be nice to have the Federal
20 government change the population threshold. I'm not too
21 sure where it would be best to start, but it would be
22 nice to go above 11,000.

23

24 Thank you guys for coming and listening
25 to me.

26

27 Thank you.

28

29 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you. Is there
30 anybody online?

31

32

33 (No comments)

34

35 MR. LORRIGAN: No.

36

37 Mr. Lawson.

38

39 MR. LAWSON: I'd like to thank the
40 Federal Subsistence people for being here, the Forest
41 Service. My name is Nels Lawson, N-E-L-S L-A-W-S-O-N.
42 I'm here representing the Alaska Native Brotherhood Camp
43 No. 1. We don't think that the population threshold is
44 very valuable as written. We would like to see other
45 characteristics of the rural community be of more
46 importance than the population threshold.

47

48 The use of the resources surrounding this
49 community are very important. The fish use, harvest of
50 the fish, harvest of the animals, harvest of the birds

1 are critically important to this community at large, but
2 also to the Native community because this is very
3 important to our way of life. It provides the connection
4 of education between the elders and the young people,
5 teaching them how to use the resource, where to harvest,
6 when and how to harvest and how to treat your harvest
7 once you get it. It's very important. Teaching our
8 young people the respect for those resources is
9 critically important.

10
11 We are a geographically isolated
12 community. We don't have major road systems connecting
13 us to anywhere else in the United States. The only way
14 to access our community is by air or water. Both methods
15 of access are normally quite expensive. The
16 availability of goods and services in this community is
17 rather limited. We don't have the large retail chains.
18 We don't have Costco or any of the other stores other
19 communities enjoy. The
20 cost of goods in the store generally range from 50 to 100
21 percent markup from our nearest community Juneau.

22
23 The availability of hospital services or
24 health services is also limited. As my brother Harvey
25 said, for his eye care he needs to go to Seattle to take
26 care of that. We don't have eye specialists available.
27 We don't have audiologist specialists available. Any of
28 that specialized care we either need to go to Anchorage
29 or Seattle. Critical care is not available. If any of
30 our citizens need to take advantage of critical care,
31 that required medevac and medevac is very expensive. I
32 was told it's \$20,000 to be medevaced to Seattle.

33
34 Thank you.

35
36 MR. LORRIGAN: Gunalcheesh. Thank you.
37 Michelle Putz.

38
39 MS. PUTZ: Hello. I'm Michelle Putz,
40 spelled P-U-T-Z. I'm representing myself. It's
41 interesting to come here tonight directly from the Sitka
42 Health Summit. They've been having that here in town for
43 I believe the last five or so years -- seven years.
44 Several years. Every year that I've been participating,
45 at least one of the topics that a large group from the
46 community has chosen, anywhere from one of two to one of
47 four topics, has been food security.

48
49 Every single year, whether it was
50 starting as a farmer s market, whether it was doing a

1 food assessment or this year it was working on what we're
2 calling the Sitka Food Hub, which is something of a food
3 bank that deals with food security, making sure that we
4 have food if we run out because we have some sort of
5 major emergency. And also working on locally, sort of
6 the small emergencies, the family things come up, trying
7 to help people do that. So to realize just how important
8 food is to Sitka and how we're very concerned as a
9 community about the food security that we have.

10

11 So in determining what is rural for
12 subsistence purposes, I
13 ask that you include measures that include the existing
14 use of fish and wildlife, a measure that goes to the
15 level of dependency
16 on locally collected food, a measure that goes to the
17 cost of living, especially for those with high costs of
18 food, the high cost of living related to food, and one
19 about connectedness, especially by road to larger
20 communities.

21

22 We live on an island. We are far from
23 things. It's very expensive to live here. It's
24 expensive to eat. I think there are a lot of people that
25 if they couldn't get subsistence food here, they would be
26 eating a lot less or they wouldn't be living in Sitka.

27

28 Thank you.

29

30 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

31

32 John Sweeney.

33

34 MR. SWEENEY: My last name is spelled S-
35 W-E-E-N-E-Y. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen,
36 for giving me a chance to speak here today and for
37 traveling to Sitka. I'm speaking on behalf of the city
38 and borough of Sitka as its interim municipal
39 administrator.

40

41 I want to echo the comments that our
42 mayor had made earlier, but I want to do so in a slightly
43 different way. I want to start off by saying and
44 emphasizing that Sitka is a rural community and that
45 whatever determination is made, it needs to be made in
46 such a way that a community like Sitka is determined to
47 be rural.

48

49 As I sit here, I look out the window and
50 I'm looking essentially at a national forest and

1 wilderness as I'm making these comments, right out the
2 window as we speak. If I were to go 100 miles in any
3 direction from this particular point where I'm sitting,
4 I would essentially encounter nothing but wilderness in
5 every possible direction.

6
7 What is different about Alaska is the
8 fact that we simply cannot connect with the rest of our
9 state via vehicle in almost the entire state other than
10 if you're living in the major metropolitan area of
11 Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna, to Fairbanks. It's
12 impossible to do so. For someone who has lived in an
13 urban environment in the Lower 48 states, who is used to
14 the fact that you can get in a vehicle and drive
15 anywhere, essentially even in the most remote part of the
16 Lower 48, you can get in a vehicle and drive and be in a
17 major metropolitan area in two hours in some direction.
18 We simply can't do that here in Southeast Alaska.

19
20 So the lack of transportation
21 infrastructure is one of the key issues that makes us
22 rural because there simply is nowhere to go; no way to
23 get in, no way to get out, that is not incredibly
24 difficult, time consuming and expensive to do so. I
25 think that as the determination is made, consideration in
26 terms of transportation access to a locality is a really,
27 really critical issue, much more so than population in
28 determining whether or not it is rural.

29
30 One final comment that I want to echo
31 again that the major made is that we have a tradition of
32 subsistence in our community. It's been here since
33 before Caucasians ever came to Alaska. It dates back
34 thousands and thousands of years. I think that a
35 community's tradition for subsistence, for providing for
36 sustenance off of the land, out of the land, out of the
37 water, should be a critical aspect to consider.

38
39 Again, I may live in a town of 500, but
40 if I can get in my car and drive an hour to the Costco
41 and fill up my car, then I don't have to subsist off of
42 the land, but we can't do that here. The vast majority
43 of Sitkans do in some way subsist, whether it's via
44 hunting, fishing, growing their own food, harvesting
45 those resources that are available such as mushrooms and
46 berries. This is a subsistence community and it's a
47 rural community. I urge the rulemakers to take into
48 consideration that Alaska simply is different and a one-
49 size-fits-all policy just won't work when you have a
50 state as unique and diverse and rural as Alaska is.

1 Thank you very much for affording me the
2 time to speak to you today.

3
4 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

5
6 Mr. Littlefield.

7
8 MR. LITTLEFIELD: Thank you. My name is
9 John Littlefield with an H and L-I-T-T-L-E-F-I-E-L-D. My
10 Tlingit name is Nas.aax and that's how I'm known in the
11 community. My testimony is very short. Ditto.

12
13 The reason I say that is I have written
14 testimony I'm going to present. It's over five minutes
15 already, so I can't cover it. All the previous speakers
16 have covered many of the things that I'm covering in my
17 written testimony. I'd like to -- I disagree with some
18 of them, like the 11,000 number and I'll explain to you
19 how I come up with that.

20
21 What I wanted to bring out first was when
22 I first got involved in subsistence program itself, the
23 actual administration of the program as a former member
24 of the RAC, I had a mentor. His name was Bill Thomas.
25 Good friend of mine. Brother, clan brother. Our fathers
26 were (in Tlingit) and we hit it off and he told me, he
27 said -- when I asked him about how to do these things
28 that we were dealing with, he said just put your faith in
29 ANILCA and that's all you need to do. I used the advice
30 that he gave me over the years that I was in the program
31 and it served me well. It would also serve the Federal
32 Board as well as everybody else in it if they did the
33 same thing.

34
35 ANILCA language is about nine pages if
36 you were to type it out, so it depends on the font you
37 use, but it's not very long. It's important to note that
38 if you look at these process questions up here, about the
39 only thing that's in ANILCA up there is the word rural.
40 The standard that's in ANILCA is a rural resident of
41 Alaska and you're eligible for the priority and
42 protection of ANILCA.

43
44 All of this other stuff, the regulatory
45 language, which takes up hundreds of pages in the CFRs,
46 in my opinion is meant to be exclusive rather than
47 inclusive and doesn't meet the intent of the Act. Every
48 one of these are meant to exclude people. ANILCA has
49 language in it, Section .804, that talks about when the
50 resources are sparse this is how you get them and they

1 list three criteria that you use. I would fall back on
2 that number one.

3
4 I want to talk about this process
5 questions and I'd like to say none of them can be
6 separated. You can't really talk about one without
7 talking about the other, but I think the most important
8 one is the word rural.

9
10 Rural characteristics. There's a lot of
11 written data, information out there. State of Alaska has
12 sources on customary and traditional use determinations
13 as well as the Feds. They've got definitions of non-
14 subsistence areas used by the joint Boards. There's
15 about 20 different characteristics, some of them
16 overlying. They pretty much define a rural area and
17 that's what you should use.

18
19 You should fall back on what the court
20 said as far as I'm concerned for population. The court
21 said rural is a simple word. It's defined as a sparsely
22 populated area. If you look up sparsely in Black's Law
23 Dictionary, you don't find any definition, but I think
24 most of us understand what sparsely populated is. And
25 that the area be characterized by farming open areas and
26 vegetation. Now we're right in the middle of the Tongass
27 Forest. There's a lot of vegetation around here.

28
29 So these things are easy in my opinion if
30 you look at them and I think that in the past they were
31 made to be too exclusive. The timeline that you see up
32 there, the 10-year review cycle, there's nothing in
33 ANILCA that requires you to use the timeline or use the
34 census information. It doesn't say that. ANILCA says to
35 use the Regional Advisory Councils and the process is you
36 put in a proposal at the Regional Advisory Council, it
37 goes up the hill, it doesn't flow backwards like the
38 regulatory language flows downhill, you make a proposal,
39 you submit it to the Board and they rule on it and they
40 have specific criteria on which they can follow. So
41 you've got these resources out there, the Regional
42 Advisory Council, with their wisdom of the people that
43 make up the area, and if they make a recommendation that
44 a community should be nonrural, that carries a lot of
45 weight.

46
47 We should also use the court. They said
48 there was four communities that were examples of
49 nonrural, urban areas. That would be Ketchikan, Juneau,
50 Anchorage and Fairbanks. As one of the others testified,

1 the various programs were all over the place. You know,
2 economic development, every community in Alaska is
3 eligible for that and their definition is you can't be
4 in a metropolitan area. So you could make a case for
5 Juneau as well as you could for Ketchikan.

6
7 I would like to see one of the
8 characteristics added, several others have talked about
9 it, and that's simply an island community. If you live
10 on an island, you're rural. If you're not one of those
11 four communities, everybody is rural unless they're
12 determined by the Federal Board not to be rural and that
13 process comes up from the RACs. If you live on an island
14 and you're not connected by road to an urban area, you
15 live in a rural area.

16
17 As others talked about, medical. I go
18 every two weeks to Anchorage for chemotherapy that's not
19 available in this town. I think those are key indicators
20 of a rural community. The other is what you think about
21 yourself. I certainly don't think I'm an urban resident.
22 I don't think anybody in Sitka does either. And many of
23 these other communities. They don't think they're city
24 folk. They're country folk and that's the way we think.
25 All the use of fish and wildlife. Those are in those
26 information sources on C&T and non-subsistence areas.
27 Those are 90 percent of them.

28
29 I'd also like the Board to treat them
30 differently than State of Alaska. State of Alaska
31 requires you to meet all of them. I'd like the Federal
32 Board to continue their oversight on making a decision
33 based upon the evidence. The evidence is substantial
34 evidence. It's what a reasonable man would think.
35 Reasonably, you can't say Sitka is an urban area. I defy
36 you to do that. It doesn't make any sense. As well as
37 Kodiak and other communities. They're not urban areas.

38
39 So if you need a number, I would
40 recommend at least two times what you have and I could
41 say three times for the lower. If you go double, you get
42 real close to this 11,000 number. You're actually like
43 14,000, which includes those four communities that are
44 mentioned in the court case. I think I'd rather see a
45 higher number, like 14,000 or whatever the population of
46 Ketchikan is as the cutoff factor.

47
48 Once you're rural, you're rural. There
49 is no reason to review this every 10 years. If you're
50 rural, there's a process, involve the RACs. If somebody

1 believes a community is urban in nature and no longer
2 rural, they should submit a proposal to the RAC saying
3 this particular community needs review and we think it is
4 after the appropriate hearings, we think it is either
5 rural or nonrural, forward that up to the Board and the
6 Board will make their decision on it.

7
8 There is no need to do that. There is no
9 need to spend all this money every 10 years, put
10 everybody in a rural community through all this angst of
11 trying to defend what they want. Everybody says this is
12 a Native issue. It's not a Native issue, especially in
13 Sitka. People don't realize what they would lose if they
14 were a non-subsistence area. For instance, halibut.
15 Very important to us.

16
17 What they don't realize is that if Sitka
18 were not rural, they would lose the right to subsistence
19 fish for halibut. As an Alaska Native, I wouldn't.
20 That's something I'd like to see brought in is the
21 process that the halibut commission uses where they have
22 rural and Native communities. So if you're a Native,
23 you're allowed to get it. That's where subsistence came
24 from.

25
26 Rural plus I think is a great idea, but
27 I think I'd like to see it be as inclusive as possible.
28 I will submit written testimony later covering all these.
29 I think we're going to cover most of the topics. If you
30 ever determine Sitka to be nonrural, I think you'll have
31 5,000 people down here telling you -- they'll all be
32 testifying because we are a rural community.

33
34 Thank you for your time.

35
36 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you. Gunalcheesh.

37
38 Tracy Gagnon.

39
40 MS. GAGNON: Hello. I'm Tracy Gagnon.
41 That's spelled T-R-A-C-Y G-A-G-N-O-N. I'm
42 representing the 859 members of the Sitka Conservation
43 Society. Thank you for taking public comment and
44 involving local citizens in this determination process.

45
46 The Sitka Conservation Society believes
47 it is essential that Sitka retain its rural status
48 because subsistence harvest is our way of life. For
49 generations we've been living off the land, foraging,
50 hunting and fishing. This is fundamental to our

1 existence.

2

3 Rural status and, therefore, subsistence
4 harvest is our culture. It's connection to the land.
5 It s our way of life. Generation after generation skills
6 are being passed on and shared with young people to
7 continue and perpetuate living with the land. At SCS we
8 are teaching youth how to identify wild foods, how to
9 harvest. prepare and preserve them. These skills create
10 connection to place, community, responsibility and keep
11 us fed. We teach these skills so our youth can have the
12 same rich subsistence opportunities as us and generations
13 before us.

14

15 Subsistence food is what fills our
16 freezers, lines our shelves and is what gets us through
17 the winter. It is a primary source of food. Subsistence
18 is our way of life. It is what defines our home.

19

20 We encourage you to consider other
21 measures for rural status, not only population threshold.
22 Sitka is rural by nature. We agree to the rural status
23 indicators you have generated, use of fish and wildlife,
24 development and diversity of economy, community
25 infrastructure, transportation and education, but we also
26 urge you to consider the following: number of people
27 practicing subsistence, percentage of food obtained
28 through subsistence harvest, economy value of subsistence
29 harvest, remoteness and accessibility, food costs,
30 housing costs and
31 transportation.

32

33 The typical rural definition is an
34 economy centered on agriculture and ranching. For us in
35 Sitka, that is fish and our natural resources.

36

37 Thank you.

38

39 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

40

41 Marjorie Hennessy.

42

43 MS. HENNESSY: Hi. My name is Marjorie
44 Hennessy. It's H-E-N-N-E-S-S-Y. I'm speaking on
45 behalf of myself. First of all, thank you all for
46 hearing our community's story and testimony on this
47 subject. As a community, we are very obviously
48 intrinsically connected to the Tongass and rely on it in
49 a multitude of ways.

50

1 Our economy is built on natural resources
2 from the fishing industry, to tourism, to natural
3 resource extraction. Likewise, our homes and lifestyles
4 are also built on this relationship. As a resident of
5 this community, we are heavily reliant on barged in food
6 and subsistence use contributes substantially to the
7 local food security.

8
9 Subsistence is a key component to our
10 food system. Without it our community becomes
11 increasingly vulnerable to all of the socioeconomic
12 issues associated with a lack of food and food sources.
13 This is not just an issue of whether we are rural or not.
14 It is what I consider to be a social justice issue.

15
16 I do not believe that the current
17 population thresholds accurately reflect rural conditions
18 and characteristics of a community and, therefore, are no
19 longer useful in defining rural status.

20
21 As the nation's development patterns have
22 changed and increasing data becomes available, the Census
23 Bureau has routinely redefined urban and urban areas.
24 However, the definition for rural remains vague and
25 largely unchanged. We've heard multiple arguments for
26 that. So I do not believe that the current thresholds
27 are accurate and, at the very least, should be raised in
28 accordance with other models that have been generated by
29 the USDA and the Economic Research Service.

30
31 As far as rural characteristics go, I
32 agree with the current indicators, however I would argue
33 that to further evaluate rural character other
34 characteristics should be considered including local and
35 regional food costs, education and employment rates, year
36 round population, subsistence data, economic and cultural
37 value.

38
39 I also do not agree with the 10-year
40 review cycle. I feel that once a community has been
41 deemed rural, it should be considered rural until a
42 multitude of other factors are exceeded requiring further
43 evaluation.

44
45 In addition to the other characteristics,
46 I think other information sources should be considered
47 and that should include regionally specific information,
48 such as the Sitka Food Assessment, which will be released
49 later this year, transportation and infrastructure,
50 structure of the economic base, the economic scale of the

1 community and proximity to health care centers just to
2 name a few.

3
4 Subsistence usage in Sitka generates many
5 benefits to us and I appreciate your time for hearing our
6 testimony.

7
8 Thank you.

9
10 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you very much.

11
12 Michael Baines.

13
14 MR. BAINES: Good afternoon. I'm Michael
15 Baines, B-A-I-N-E-S. I'm the tribal chairman
16 for Sitka Tribe of Alaska. We have over 4,000 tribal
17 citizens enrolled with our tribe and I m speaking on
18 behalf of them today.

19
20 First of all, I'd like to welcome you to
21 our community and thank you for coming. Our staff and
22 some of our committees are preparing written testimony,
23 but it hasn't worked its way to our little bureaucracy
24 yet, but we'll provide that by November 1st.

25
26 Our staff has even been working with city
27 staff on these subsistence issues, so it s very important
28 for our community, our rural status. I think the most
29 important thing out there is that
30 people in this area have lived off the land for thousands
31 of years, thousands of years before the Russians came,
32 and we continue to do so. I, for instance, help keep
33 about half a dozen freezers full of fish and deer and
34 everything off the land. We
35 dry seaweed and dry fish. Hundreds, if not thousands, of
36 Sitkans continue to do that.

37
38 The State -- I want to talk about the
39 State because the State is against us on a lot of these
40 subsistence issues and they bash the Feds, the Federal
41 system. They would love nothing more than for us to lose
42 our rural status because they would use that as
43 ammunition to take away -- to turn us into a non-
44 subsistence zone, which would be crazy because, like I
45 said, people around here have lived off the land for
46 thousands of years and people continue to do that to this
47 day.

48
49 That's all I have for you today and thank
50 you.

1 MR. LORRIGAN: Gunalcheesh.

2

3 Kristen Green.

4

5 MS. GREEN: My name is Kristen Green, G-
6 R-E-E-N, and I'm representing myself. First of all I'd
7 like to thank you. I know the intricacies that go into
8 this sort of review and the complexity of the issue, so
9 I appreciate that your staff is here today.

10

11 Others who have been here for longer than
12 me have spoken eloquently on this issue and I agree with
13 what the previous comments have said. I am a Sitkan that
14 has been here for three years. I believe the day that I
15 moved here I had subsistence food that evening and I ate
16 venison last night and so I've been a subsistence user
17 since the day I arrived. I've learned subsistence
18 harvest from the community, from both Natives and
19 non-Natives. It is very much a way of life of the
20 community here.

21

22 In our household, all our animal protein
23 comes from Sitka. We don't purchase any of it from the
24 store. We get much higher quality food in that way. As
25 others have said, we don't have the access to some of the
26 markets that other communities on the road system do.
27 That's the nature of our isolated island community that
28 we live in and most of us wouldn't have it any other way.

29

30 In terms of the process, I think that the
31 existing population threshold is a number and it does not
32 necessarily relate to the proportion of people in Sitka
33 that rely on subsistence harvest. So I agree that number
34 needs to be raised and I also agree that once a community
35 has been labeled rural then that's the status that should
36 remain unless there are significant changes that can be
37 brought up at a later time.

38

39 The last thing I wanted to bring up is
40 that we don't have the same economic diversity of jobs
41 that there are in some of the bigger communities and, as
42 a result, most people here do rely heavily on subsistence
43 to supplement their diets on a daily, weekly, monthly
44 basis.

45

46 Thank you.

47

48 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you. I have a
49 second stack of cards for people who came in after the
50 presentation. I just want to reemphasize that the Board

1 is taking comment on the five criteria that are on the
2 screen and we won't be answering questions. We'd like to
3 keep the comments to five minutes, please, if you can.

4

5 Mr. Tjomsland.

6

7 MR. TJOMSLAND: Good afternoon. That's
8 David H. Tjomsland, spelled T-J-O-M-S-L-A-N-D. I
9 represent myself, a couple of people I run with and other
10 folks that share. I didn't work with any of these
11 people. I came up with a population of 12,000 and that's
12 through life experience. It seems like to me I've
13 watched communities grow. I've been in a couple three
14 smaller rural areas. Somewhere around 11-12,000 people
15 all of a sudden there s a change. You don't share, you
16 don't look people in the eye, you don't give. All of a
17 sudden it's me.

18

19 I like what these other folks said, their
20 studies. To determine rural, let s use a point system,
21 a metrics. You start with 100, 500, 1,000 points, it
22 doesn't matter, but you give these points -- this is just
23 my brainstorming -- a value. It's like if you have a
24 population over 12,000, you lose points. If you have an
25 airport that's capable of landing a 747 or larger, you
26 loose points because a 747 can carry cargo. If you're on
27 a rail system or if you have access to a rail system by
28 a highway, you lose points. If you have a ferry system
29 that services your community with more than one round
30 trip in three or four days, you lose points. If you have
31 highway access to box stores, you lose points. If you
32 have hospital services that can do major surgeries,
33 cataract removals, put a new joint in, you lose points.
34 If your fuel is not relayed -- if your fuel comes in on
35 one barge only, is not relayed, you lose points. If you
36 have access to natural gas and cooking in your house with
37 natural gas LP fuel, you lose points. It's a common
38 thing, it's not a novelty to have liquid gas. Your
39 general merchandise is not transferred from one barge to
40 another. It comes to you by one barge only, you lose
41 points.

42

43 That's pretty much it except for part of
44 this subsistence. When I first came here about 12 years
45 ago, I was going, yeah, this is going to be -- who needs
46 it. Well, I figured it out very shortly the cost of
47 living here. Myself, I m physically challenged and I
48 don t get to run up and down the hills anymore. In the
49 January hunt -- it's not a hunt for me, it s gathering.
50 The sport is shooting them in the head. Oftentimes we

1 take little ones because Fish and Game has advised us of
2 that because they're not going to make it through the
3 winter.

4
5 When I do go out, I have the opportunity
6 to maximize my cost of fuel. It's like when this year
7 the king salmon was down to one a day. I took people
8 with me when I got to go to help share with the fuel.
9 Last year when it was three a day, it was a little easier
10 to go with maybe just one person. I'm not knocking the
11 count on the fish because I understand how that works.
12 It's just a matter of spending money and gathering
13 something to offset that cost. I can only speak for
14 myself. I can't buy it in the store, not as often as
15 folks do in other places.

16
17 So anyway, I guess the population and
18 access to facilities. Thanks for being here tonight.

19
20 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

21
22 Charles Bingham.

23
24 MR. BINGHAM: Hello. My name is Charles
25 Bingham and I am representing myself. I have lived in
26 Alaska for.....

27
28 (Phone interruption)

29
30 MR. BINGHAM: Okay. So I'll start again.
31 My name is Charles Bingham, B-I-N-G-H-A-M, bing as in
32 cherry, ham as in sandwich. Keep it on a food reference.
33 Anyway, I am representing myself. I've lived in Alaska
34 for 44 years. The last eight in Sitka. I've lived all
35 over the state. I was a journalist for about 20 years
36 and I worked at SEARHC here in town for about seven years
37 and I've also worked with the university system. Other
38 places I've lived, Bethel, Barrow. You know, I've had
39 bylines in just about every newspaper in the state, so
40 I've been around.

41
42 (Phone interruption)

43
44 REPORTER: Don't start over.

45
46 MR. BINGHAM: Let me know when you're
47 okay to go.

48
49 REPORTER: Right now.

50

1 MR. BINGHAM: Okay. But anyway, having
2 lived and worked all over the state I've had a chance to
3 see the difference between rural communities on the road
4 system, rural communities that are more isolated, that
5 don't have the road system or the trains or any of that
6 kind of stuff.

7
8 I've also had a chance to see urban
9 systems and I really feel that we do fall within the
10 rural definition and I think the rural characteristics
11 actually should count more than population threshold. I
12 like the idea of a matrix system. Matter of fact, I
13 think on your slides that you presented I think you had
14 Kodiak listed as rural and it had 12,000 listed, so it's
15 actually higher.

16
17 Anyway, some of the reasons I think, you
18 know, we are rural here is we have the culture and
19 tradition of -- you know, long time culture and
20 tradition, everybody has spoken on that already. Because
21 of being in the Tongass National Forest and everything,
22 we have little land for farming. So we can't really grow
23 a lot of our own food on the island, so that really hurts
24 us as far as food security, so we have to do more hunting
25 and gathering and fishing.

26
27 As far as other elements of food
28 security, I believe the food stamp allotment is about
29 4.50 a day per person, about 31.50 per week. If you walk
30 into one of our stores right now, a decent size jar of
31 peanut butter is about nine, ten bucks. A loaf of bread
32 is about four to six bucks depending on how old it is or
33 if it's whole grain or not. So right there you've
34 already used half your week's allotment just for peanut
35 butter sandwiches, no jelly. So the cost of food should
36 definitely be a factor.

37
38 The Sitka Community Food Assessment
39 Project and the coordinator for that is Lisa Saddler-Hart
40 and you can reach her at Sitka Local Foods Network,
41 sitkalocalfoodsnetwork@gmail.com. She's the one who is
42 finalizing all the results on that. They'll have a Sitka
43 Foods Summit in mid November, but she might be able to
44 release some of the early findings on that so that you --
45 but it has some of the specifics as far as food costs,
46 who's using what kind of foods. I know they've been
47 doing like Fish and Game checks and stuff like that.

48
49 Since I've moved here eight years ago,
50 food costs have gone up at least 40 percent and it may

1 even be higher. I know that we're at least 35-40 percent
2 higher than Anchorage. We have no box stores. The only
3 -- we have one local grocer that has two stores that is
4 totally local. We have one small chain and we're the
5 biggest community that it has a chain -- a store in.
6 Most of the others are rural ACs. We also have about 90-
7 95 percent of our food is shipped in on the barge as far
8 as what shows up in the stores and everything.

9
10 Most of our grocery stores only have
11 about a three to five day supply of food on the shelves.
12 So if we have an emergency or any of that kind of -- you
13 know, like John Littlefield was talking about where in
14 times of shortage where rural communities get the
15 priority. You know, if we have -- like in January we had
16 an earthquake and a tsunami warning where everybody had
17 to go to high ground. If we would have actually had a
18 tsunami, we probably would have only had about three to
19 five days worth of food in the stores if we could have
20 even accessed it because a couple of our grocery stores
21 are real close to sea level.

22
23 We're also on an island. We're isolated,
24 you know, boat plane. Having been around the state, like
25 Nenana, which is a small population, 3-500 people, it is
26 still an hour drive from Fairbanks, so it's real easy for
27 them to go and fill up their car with Costco. For us,
28 with the way we -- during the winter our ferry schedule
29 is maybe one, if we're lucky two trips a week. So if we
30 want to go to Juneau to Costco or to Ketchikan, it's
31 definitely a week trip. If you're going to fly, it's,
32 you know, go on the 0-dark-thirty in the morning flight,
33 come back on the 11:00 o'clock at night flight and then
34 you're limited to three bags.

35
36 People here have been hunting, fishing,
37 gathering. They estimate about half of the people in
38 town eat subsistence food at least twice a week. Also in
39 our population stats, I don't know if they include Mt.
40 Edgecumbe High School in that. That's about 500 kids,
41 but those kids are really residents of other communities
42 that are just here for school. I don't know if they
43 counted those in the 9,000 for Sitka's population, so
44 that's about 500 that you may need to drop out of our
45 population to really get an accurate picture of who's
46 here year round.

47
48 Thank you.

49
50 I appreciate you having us here.

1 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

2

3 Paulette Moreno.

4

5 MS. MORENO: Thank you. Good afternoon.
6 It's my pleasure to be here amongst you today. I'm
7 speaking for myself. My name is Paulette Moreno, M-O-R-
8 E-N-O. I come before you at this time to support Sitka s
9 rural status for time immemorial. This is who we are as
10 a people and this is who the people that join us in the
11 community become and this is who we will always be.

12

13 Rural is a word. We are the living,
14 breathing people of this land. Because we have chosen
15 this as our home, our home should never be put a label
16 on. However, because I understand that there is this
17 population threshold, I believe that the population
18 threshold should not be considered. I believe that the
19 definition of rural is in the people's faces. We have
20 those that have been before us and those that will come
21 after us and those that are here now.

22

23 I also believe that there is -- I know
24 that there is 14 miles of road; seven miles one way and
25 seven miles another way. There are tens of thousands of
26 miles of waterway road here and the waterway road
27 provides salmon, halibut. It provides many different
28 foods and species for us and it also -- the tidelands
29 provide seaweed and different things of the sea, clams
30 and mussels and things like that. It's a choice that we
31 have to live here, so I believe that rural will never be
32 questioned on who we are as a people, as residents. I
33 would say that rural characteristics, we meet all of
34 these definitions.

35

36 The economic development here. We have
37 people here also that are homeless. We have people that
38 are not doing well and I believe that many of them come
39 here because even if they don t have a few dollars to go
40 in to the store to buy something, they, perhaps, if the
41 seasons are right would be able to pick berries.

42

43 I'm just going to speak from my heart
44 here. Some of my brothers and sisters and many of our
45 community members, some of them are just footsteps away
46 from you fishing right now for coho because the coho kind
47 of run into the harbor. And they re not just fishing for
48 subsistence, they're fishing for a meal tonight. And I
49 think that that is very, very important to keep in mind.

50

1 I also understand that the residential
2 status of co-communities, such as Saxman and Ketchikan,
3 that Saxman s status may be questioned right now. The
4 people who have chosen to live in Saxman too perhaps are
5 doing so because that's their ancestral homeland because
6 they carve a place of spirit, a place that is more gentle
7 and it s more calm. Even if they live close to a
8 community that has all of these other services, they
9 choose not to directly live in that community, so I
10 believe the people of Saxman should also be able to
11 retain their rural status.

12
13 As far as transportation, we spoke to
14 that. The infrastructure, such as health care, there are
15 many of the people here in Sitka who have had to travel,
16 as spoken earlier by a very respectful gentleman, to
17 Anchorage for treatment. To see your family or those you
18 love on a daily basis have to leave Sitka to go to
19 another place to get that treatment is very difficult,
20 but it does happen. Also there's a lot -- whenever
21 there's a brain injury or brain trauma that happens here,
22 sometimes the people walk into the forest. They are no
23 longer here on this earth. So we don t have those big
24 infrastructures.

25
26 As far as a timeline or a timeline
27 review, I don't believe that that's necessary because we
28 will always be rural. Perhaps, I guess, if you did have
29 to set a date, it should be 100 years from now because I
30 don't think that Sitka will attract the kind of people
31 that will overpopulate. I believe that there are more --
32 when there s more animals and spiritual beings than human
33 earthly beings here, even though we commingle we are
34 rural. We are who we are.

35
36 Other information sources from the census
37 and other things that could measure these things would be
38 our elders, our Tlingit elders. Please go to our Tlingit
39 elders. Please continue to respect the dialogue with the
40 clan leaders from this area, with Sitka Tribe of Alaska,
41 with all the different entities. The answer will lie
42 therein because the people from this area resonate the
43 most with this land. And those that have come here to
44 make Sitka or Alaska or different communities their home,
45 they integrate within the community and they receive
46 these gifts also of knowledge and of spiritual balance.

47
48 So I'm just speaking from my heart today
49 and I would just really like to say that our rural status
50 should never be questioned and if there was a number on

1 it, I would put it a century out because I'm sure there
2 will be somebody in some form from each one of us, our
3 great grandchildren and so forth, that will speak many of
4 these same words. This is a spiritual connection we
5 have.

6

7 Thank you so much for your time.

8

9 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you. Gunalcheesh.

10

11 Ryan Kauffman.

12

13 MR. KAUFFMAN: Good evening. My name is
14 Ryan Kauffman, spelled K-A-U-F-F-M-A-N. I'm speaking on
15 behalf of myself and I wanted to voice my appreciation
16 for all the folks in the room who have spoken before me.
17 Very well said. I agree with essentially everything that
18 has been stated.

19

20 I just want to share some of my beliefs
21 and what I support. I believe that subsistence harvest
22 is a critical component of a healthy diet and a healthy
23 life and, therefore, it's critical for life in Sitka.
24 These activities are also very much life defining. I
25 support the maintaining of our current rural subsistence
26 status. I support the increase of a population threshold
27 from 7,000 to 11,000.

28

29 I also believe that the same rationale
30 that brought us to the decision of our current status
31 still exists. There aren't factors that have changed
32 significantly to change our rural subsistence status.
33 The factors that I do notice that have changed that would
34 enforce maintaining our current status is the cost of
35 groceries, the cost of food and the cost of fuel have
36 both increased significantly since our last review.

37

38 The job I currently started doing just
39 recently is working with students around the areas of
40 physical activity and nutrition. I see both the value in
41 eating these healthy subsistence foods, these real foods,
42 and the value of the physical activity required to
43 harvest them. These are both important parts of
44 maintaining a healthy life here in Sitka and I believe
45 that maintaining our status is going to be critical for
46 maintaining a healthy life and lifestyle for the people
47 in this room and the people in this community.

48

49 Thank you very much for your time this
50 evening.

1 MR. LORRIGAN: Mr. Pate.

2

3 MR. PATE: My name is Jude Pate, J-U-D-E
4 P-A-T-E. I'm here representing myself and my wife,
5 Christine, and my boys Will and Joe. I've lived in Sitka
6 for 20 years. I met my wife here, I've raised my boys
7 here. I have the honor of being adopted by the Coho
8 Clan. I'm wearing the Coho vest right now, which I'm
9 only able to do because I have been adopted. My Uncle
10 John testified earlier, John Littlefield.

11

12 My family depends upon subsistence. I
13 mean our freezer is full of halibut and venison and
14 salmon, but it's more important than that. I guess I'll
15 back up. I m a lawyer. For 12 years or so I represented
16 Sitka Tribe both as their in-house counsel, so I daily
17 interacted with tribal citizens, all their needs. I then
18 worked as a contract attorney and now I m the public
19 defender, so I routinely see hundreds of people a year
20 who are low income. I feel like I have a unique contact
21 with the lower income people in Sitka who, by and large,
22 are the Native communities I've represented or largely
23 represented.

24

25 Everybody else has been too polite to say
26 it and I'm so happy you guys are here. You guys are
27 wonderful for being here, thank you, but I m offended
28 that Sitka has to defend its rural status. I'm offended.
29 It offends my common sense. It offends my legal
30 training. I've litigated subsistence issues in State and
31 Federal court for nearly 20 years.

32

33 ANILCA is in place because of the trust
34 obligation that the Federal government owes to the Native
35 people. The trust obligation means that ANILCA is
36 designed to protect subsistence uses, yet this word rural
37 is being used to try to exclude. I agree with my Uncle
38 John Littlefield that it s turned on its head. We
39 shouldn t have to be here defending Sitka again. Sitka
40 is rural for all the reasons that people have testified.

41

42 It s a red herring. Somebody should have
43 to prove that we are not rural. Sitka has proved already
44 that it's rural 10 years ago. We've met the burden of
45 proof to use legal language. Now the burden is on
46 someone else to prove that we're not.

47

48 Sitka continues to be as rural as it was
49 10, 20 years ago. Part of the reason I wore my vest, my
50 Coho vest, was to represent that I'm a non-Native who has

1 the honor of being associated culturally with the Native
2 people who have been here for tens of thousands of years.
3 It's made me and my family stronger. It's made me and
4 other non-Native people like me stronger in Sitka. There
5 must be thousands of us.

6

7 I am so proud that my boys, when they go
8 down south to get a hamburger, somebody eats a hamburger
9 down south or in a nonrural community, more than half
10 those people are going to be repelled by the idea of
11 harvesting their own deer. It's unclean to them.
12 Touching a fish. They're divorced from their food base.
13 ANILCA is so important because it connects us. We
14 recognize where we come from from that ancient wisdom.

15

16 Why is rural in there? It s being used
17 to exclude, but it shouldn't be. It should just be --
18 rural is not actually defined in ANILCA. It's a word in
19 there that's being used to hammer down places like Sitka.
20 If a place can continue to be rural regardless of it s
21 population, regardless if it's got a Costco, it doesn't
22 matter. Those are all red herrings.

23

24 The people -- as I say, I represent
25 currently hundreds of people a year, thousands over the
26 last couple years. If Sitka loses its rural status and
27 those people are not given a priority, my people that I
28 represent, the low income people, they're going to go
29 hungry. They live -- I represent the people who are the
30 poorest and they need that dearly. They're not here
31 today. Like Paulette said, they're probably out fishing
32 right now or they're in jail waiting to get out or
33 they're out hunting with a bow because they've lost their
34 right to use a rifle because they've been convicted of a
35 felony.

36

37 I would do away with the timeline. That's
38 BS that goes against the trust responsibility the Federal
39 government owes. It s not in ANILCA. It shouldn't be
40 there. You have to prove that Sitka is not rural. I
41 think that Sitka has remained rural and that the -- okay,
42 I know what I was going to say about rural. Rural is
43 being used to exclude -- why is rural in there and being
44 used to exclude. I guess the concern would be that if
45 you re not rural, you're going to exploit the resource.
46 What other reason would you have -- why would rural be a
47 concern. Well, you've got too many people. They're
48 going to use up all the resources. That must be the
49 concern. What other concern could there be.

50

1 The people who are connected to the
2 resources, like all the people in this room, are going to
3 be the first ones to protect it. If that resource gets
4 low, they're not going to take it. It's who they are.
5 They're going to be the best protectors of those
6 resources.

7
8 So, again, I think that rural is a red
9 herring. I really do. I think it is another word in
10 ANILCA. Pay attention to protecting the spiritual,
11 cultural, economic, physical needs of the Native and non-
12 Native people. I don't care if they're in Anchorage.

13
14 Thank you.

15
16 MR. LORRIGAN: Thank you.

17
18 Mr. Tomkins.

19
20 MR. KREISS-TOMKINS: My name is Jonathan
21 Kreiss-Tomkins. The last name is a mouthful. K-R-E-I-S-
22 S - T-O-M-K-I-N-S. I'm here representing my legislative
23 office. I represent District 34 in the Alaska House of
24 Representatives, which includes the community of Sitka as
25 well as all Native villages in Southeast Alaska and most,
26 although not all, of rural Southeast Alaska.

27
28 Thank you for coming, first of all.

29
30 I was born in Sitka. I have lived in
31 Sitka all 24 of my years except in seven semesters that
32 I was eloping off at college. For all 24 years of my
33 life I've considered Sitka home. I will also be
34 submitting written comments, especially touching on the
35 process question.

36
37 I'd like to discuss four of the criteria
38 for ruralness and then a couple of observations on the
39 quality of being rural. First regarding the use of fish
40 and wildlife. First of all, when I grew up and was in
41 Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School, my dad would always
42 give me deer jerky for lunch, you know, as every parent
43 would. They'd pack lunch. I can tell you that deer
44 jerky would command a premium in the elementary cafeteria
45 bartering system. It was not uncommon that I would see
46 crab or shrimp and it was, in fact, quite common that my
47 friends and classmates would have salmon for lunch. I
48 don't think it was coincidental that now Sitka has
49 efficient schools program, much as Naknek does and as
50 much as Kake, the Kake Senior Center, has traditional

1 foods lunch every Thursday.

2

3 When I was a candidate for the office I
4 now hold, I knocked on nearly every door in Sitka. I
5 quickly learned and with much intentionality I would
6 start off those evenings with an empty stomach because
7 without fail I would always be offered food at various
8 stores and if I had a full stomach when I started, there
9 is a certain harm or risk in over consumption. And much
10 of the food I was offered in these households was
11 subsistence, was gathered by the members of the
12 household. I think it was offered to me as a form of
13 respect and this food had greater meaning than anything
14 you could buy in the store.

15

16 My observation from really conducting a
17 census of all the households in Sitka, I mean literally
18 almost every door, more than I think any census worker
19 could claim, is that the subsistence resources here and
20 our connection to the land is great and it's profound.
21 The subcommunities within Sitka, the Indian River
22 Subdivision, Back Street, Katlian Street, this is even
23 greater frequency and I think that's been touched on by
24 other comments and testimony today.

25

26 Number two, transportation. The suburbs
27 of Sitka are Galankin and the Kasianas, Little Marshall
28 Island. People commute in by skiff. That is our suburbs
29 and that is our mode of commuting. I live in the middle
30 of Marshall Island since I've moved back to Sitka from
31 adjournment from the legislative session. I commute in
32 and out by skiff every day.

33

34 Sitka has, as far as transportation goes,
35 lesser service than the communities of Hoonah, Haines,
36 Skagway, Angoon, Wrangell, Petersburg, Ketchikan, Juneau.
37 It has equal service, ferry service, and this is now, on
38 the winter schedule, to Kake and Gustavus. The only
39 community -- the only community in Southeast Alaska in
40 the winter that exceeds the level of ferry service --
41 that Sitka has a superior level of ferry service to is
42 Pelican.

43

44 I think it's also important to say that
45 Sitka is on the outer coast. It is on an island and
46 being on the outer coast I think has almost a
47 psychological role in this or remoteness that is
48 important to consider. The rest of Southeast Alaska I
49 think has a greater sort of sense of interconnectivity.
50 If you live in Wrangell, if you live in Petersburg, you

1 can commute to the other community. You can take a boat
2 there. In Sitka, this is not the case. We are very much
3 alone out here. If you look out, it's like at Sitka
4 Sound, especially on a stormy wintery day, I think this
5 is very evident.

6
7 Number three, infrastructure. Sitka, of
8 course, is on an island. We aren't connected to larger
9 urban communities. We aren't connected to Anchorage.
10 You can't drive there. As far as infrastructure goes, I
11 think the most profound form of infrastructure in Alaska
12 are roads. Roadlessness is profound. It absolutely
13 shapes a community. But even if a community is roadless,
14 the amount of roads that community has I think also is
15 highly significant.

16
17 I represent Prince of Wales Island. I
18 drive around Prince of Wales Island when I'm down there.
19 Sitka has seven miles of road in each direction and
20 beyond that is unpeopled wilderness. Sitka is hemmed in
21 by oceans and mountain and forest. Beyond that is
22 wildness and that is, I think, what this community loves
23 about Sitka, is that it feels wild and it is remote and
24 it is rural. The degree of infrastructure we have and
25 specifically the degree to which we are roaded is unique
26 and lesser than many -- in fact, almost all communities
27 in Alaska.

28
29 Finally, educational institutions. Sitka
30 has a Class III school as far as the basketball teams
31 that we play, which is an important fact to a lot of
32 people in this community. For context, other schools
33 that share the 3A classification, Nome, Bethel, Kotzebue,
34 Dillingham. These are other regional hubs, rural
35 regional hubs in Alaska.

36
37 Finally, I'd like to share some thoughts
38 that I have about the quality of ruralness in Alaska.
39 The entire state of Alaska right now is going through
40 reapportionment. All legislative districts are being
41 redrawn and this happened two years ago because the State
42 Supreme Court found the current map unconstitutional and
43 is being done again.

44
45 Alaska constitution dictates that
46 legislative districts have to be drawn with socioeconomic
47 integration in mind. Sitka is in
48 District 34 and District 34 is the rural Southeast Alaska
49 district. All villages, all Native villages, all non-
50 Native villages are grouped in with Sitka. This is not

1 coincidental.

2

3 There is actually a record with the
4 Redistricting Board as to other communities in Southeast,
5 other rural communities, declaring their preference for
6 being grouped in with Sitka. Haines expressed a
7 preference for being grouped in with Sitka because it
8 felt that Sitka shared a socioeconomic commonality with
9 Haines, as has Petersburg. Right now, with this new
10 reapportionment process, Hydaburg is doing the same. I
11 think these are important facts to consider.

12

13 I m a member of the Bush Caucus. As a
14 representative of Sitka, I feel that this is the most
15 important affiliation politically for me to state. I
16 feel I best represent my constituents by being a member
17 of the Bush Caucus. In fact, it is the caucus to which
18 I most identify.

19

20 Finally, I m a college student. I have
21 not yet graduated. I need to complete my senior thesis
22 before my mom celebrates. My senior thesis is a cultural
23 geography of Alaska and it's a project I've been working
24 on for two and a half years. I've spent hundreds,
25 perhaps much more hours researching the subject. It
26 considers effectively the central character of
27 communities and what makes certain regions in Alaska feel
28 alike. Why is it that Sitka and other rural communities
29 in Southeast Alaska share, what qualities do they share,
30 what is it that speaks to this region and the way of life
31 that I think is unique in northern and rural Southeast
32 Alaska and other parts of the state. I traveled the
33 state, I visited many, many communities. I was a
34 freelance reporter for the Alaska Public Radio Network
35 reporting on the scene.

36

37 I would agree with previous testimony
38 that ultimately
39 population thresholds are arbitrary, but there is a
40 warmth of community in Sitka that I find here that I did
41 not find, for instance, in Juneau when I lived there a
42 quarter of the year or even in Ketchikan, where people
43 look you in the eye, they give -- they say hello on the
44 street. These aren't empirical facts, but they're
45 qualitative facts and to me they're important and they
46 dictate why many in Sitka call this community home.

47

48 For instance, I just got home to Sitka
49 after six days in Anchorage for meetings last night on
50 the late night flight and my brother picked me up at the

1 airport. However, normally, when I come home to Sitka
2 from travel -- and I'm going to Angoon tomorrow and I'll
3 be coming back from Angoon after that -- I don't normally
4 have my brother or my parents pick me up at the airport
5 or the ferry terminal unless I really want to see them,
6 as I did last night. My brother just came home after
7 many months away from Sitka. Because I know, I'm
8 confident, that there are other people on that flight,
9 other people on that ferry that will give me a ride to my
10 house. It's just banked, it's assumed, it's guaranteed.

11

12

13 However you express these qualitative
14 facts of the ruralness of Sitka, the community that Sitka
15 is, I think there is no other conclusion that Sitka has
16 all the qualities of a rural community and I hope the
17 Federal Subsistence Board comes to a similar conclusion.

18

19 MR. LORRIGAN: Mr. Bob Sam.

20

21 MR. SAM: Thank you for allowing me some
22 time here today. My name is Bob Sam. I was born into a
23 subsistence life and being born into a subsistence life
24 is something that is inherent. I have lived here in
25 Sitka most of my life and most all of my food comes from
26 the ocean and in the land. When I was a young man, I ate
27 too much hamburger, too many french fries, too many
28 hotdogs, potato chips. Ruffles was my favorite.

29

30 I got very sick and I gained weight and
31 I ended up in the hospital. There was an elderly lady
32 there who became my friend and she said you must go back
33 to your own food. If you go back to your own food, you
34 will be healthy. The doctor there did not know what was
35 going on with me, so I lost faith in Western medicine and
36 I went back to eating my own food. This food is
37 medicine. It keeps me healthy. My weight is strong. I
38 am Tlingit. It's my food is what makes me what I am
39 today.

40

41 I have a concern. I just returned from
42 Japan this year. I was in Japan on March 11. I
43 witnessed Fukushima. I witnessed a nuclear power plant
44 blow off. I felt it and I saw that radiation go into the
45 ocean. That is still going into the ocean. And I also
46 witnessed the tsunami and I saw the damage and I saw what
47 was going into the ocean. That debris is here today and
48 more is coming. So our way of life, both commercial and
49 subsistence, it may come to an end.

50

1 I went to Fukushima before that and I saw
2 some very proud fishermen there and I saw some people
3 living a very proud life. Now they get a monthly check
4 and they drink every single night and they have no life
5 left. That very same thing can happen here because a
6 warm ocean current comes from Fukushima right straight to
7 Sitka. So we have a serious situation here for our way
8 of life.

9
10 With my experience of eating Western
11 food, if I go back to all that Western food, I will die
12 and my people will die. Having returned to Sitka, I have
13 never seen so many people going hungry. Never. Sitka
14 has always been a place that has fed the world. Why are
15 people that I grew up with, people I've worked with,
16 laborers, construction workers, blue collar workers and
17 white collar workers are going hungry today? Why? We
18 really need access to our food.

19
20 I don t like Western food. I don t like
21 what it does to my body. I have seen other tribes.
22 Other tribes used to be as skinny and strong as me. I
23 have traveled and I have seen other tribes get bigger and
24 bigger and bigger from eating hamburgers, french fries,
25 potato chips. I don't want that to happen here, here in
26 Sitka. Look how healthy the people are. If you go to
27 Seattle, New York, it is there you will see obesity.
28 Here in Sitka healthy people.

29
30 And that's all I have to say.

31
32 Thank you.

33
34 MR. LORRIGAN: Gunalcheesh. I'd like to
35 reemphasize that public comments are due November 1,
36 2013. I want to thank everybody for coming out tonight
37 and providing your input.

38
39 Are there anymore comments.

40
41 (No comments)

42
43 MR. LORRIGAN: Seeing none, I'll go ahead
44 and close the hearing process of this meeting down. All
45 the addresses and instructions for comments are included
46 in the handouts at the back of the room on the table.

47
48 The Federal Subsistence Board is looking
49 forward to the comments on this issue from the Regional
50 Advisory Councils, tribes, ANCSA corporations and the

1 general public. After all comments are received and
2 evaluated, then the process moves into phase two where
3 the Board may craft recommendations on the rural
4 determination criteria to forward to the Secretaries of
5 the Interior and Agriculture.

6

7 If the Secretaries take those
8 recommendations and consider making changes, then there
9 will be another public comment period on those proposed
10 changes to the rural determination process.

11

12 I'd like to let the Federal Subsistence
13 Board member, Beth Pendleton, close the meeting.

14

15 MS. PENDLETON: I will be brief as you're
16 putting your coats on and heading out the door, but,
17 again, thank you very much on behalf of the Board. For
18 me, personally, and as a Board member, listening to your
19 testimonies this evening was very valuable, has given me
20 some new insights and things to reflect upon as it
21 relates to the importance of subsistence as a way of
22 life, the importance for cultural, spiritual, economic,
23 social values that you have shared in your testimonies
24 and your passion around the importance of these foods.

25

26 As well as listening to your comments
27 too, some of the social and economic and some of the
28 uniqueness of this community and the traditional reliance
29 upon these foods has been very important to me as I think
30 through the next several months and as we continue to
31 focus on this real important issue.

32

33 So thank you and thank you for coming and
34 sharing those comments. For those of you that did not
35 get a chance to share, as Mr. Lorrigan has shared and as
36 you've seen in the presentation, there's plenty of
37 opportunity and would encourage you to do that. So thank
38 you and have a very good evening and a good weekend
39 ahead.

40

41 (Off record)

42

43

44

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)

