[INSERT ON ORGANIZATION’S LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

Re: Comments on Docket No. FWS-R7-NWRS-2023-0072

To Whom it May Concern at U.S Fish and Wildlife Service:

I am writing today to express my strong support for Alternative Solution #6, the proposed land swap agreement to construct a one-lane, gravel road connecting the community of King Cove to Cold Bay. This road is essential to providing safe and reliable access to medical care for the residents of King Cove, who have been isolated for far too long.

[INSERT PERSONAL DETAILS AND CONNECTION TO THE REGION OR COMMUNITY]

The reasons I support this project are detailed below:

**1. Improved Emergency Access:** Constructing the road would enhance emergency access for the residents of King Cove, who currently rely on limited and weather-dependent transportation options, such as small planes or boats. Previously explored alternative options, including procuring a hovercraft for King Cove to medevac residents over the water to Cold Bay, proved unfeasible and unreliable.

Unfortunately, extreme and unpredictable weather conditions do not allow for water-based alternatives. King Cove is often plagued by gale-force winds, snow squalls, or dense fog. These conditions can isolate the community from air traffic for days or weeks on end. The mountains surrounding King Cove are littered with aircraft that crashed and perished during attempts to fly in these conditions. Frequently, Cold Bay (the body of water between the City of King Cove and the City of Cold Bay) has 15 to 20-foot seas during the winter, making travel by boat extremely dangerous, if not impossible.

Docking in severe weather is hazardous enough, and then to require passengers to climb an icy ladder in high winds, rain, or snow—often while caring for a sick or injured loved one—is both unsafe and unreasonable. No person should have to face such perilous conditions to access essential medical care; it is a profound injustice to the residents of King Cove.

**2**. **Increased Public Safety**

This road would significantly improve public safety in the region. The remote location, challenging weather, and limited transportation options create unacceptable risks for King Cove residents. A road connection would allow faster response times from emergency services, law enforcement, and fire departments, improving overall safety.

It is important to note that the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge already allows limited vehicle access on five gravel or dirt roads totaling 40 miles. King Cove is asking only to connect two of these already-existing roads, which would provide a critical lifeline for the community.

**3**. **Environmental Mitigation**

This project can be carried out with minimal environmental impact. Modern construction techniques and mitigation measures can be employed to protect the sensitive ecosystem of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. Construction can be designed to avoid and mitigate significant environmental harm while preserving wetlands, critical habitats, and biodiversity.

Additionally, the road could reduce the need for frequent emergency air transportation or marine evacuations, which have their own environmental impacts, including emissions and risks to fragile ecosystems.

There are many examples of wildlife refuges across the United States that coexist with urbanized areas, airports, and ports. Many of these refuges include paved roadways to facilitate convenient passage for people. This project proposes only a one-lane, gravel road, designed with minimal environmental impact.

If these refuges can accommodate the needs of people and nature, why can’t a simple one-lane gravel road, designed to save human lives, coexist with conservation goals? Prioritizing human safety doesn’t have to come at the expense of environmental stewardship—it can reflect a thoughtful balance. Both can coexist.

**4. Tribal Soverenity and Trust Responsibility**

The United States has a trust relationship with Indigenous peoples, including the Aleut (Unangax) people of King Cove. This relationship is rooted in historical treaties, legislation, and court decisions, and it obligates the federal government to protect and uphold tribal sovereignty and the rights of Indigenous communities.

A land exchange enabling the construction of this road is crucial for the Unangax people to continue living in their ancestral lands. This decision would fulfill the federal government’s trust responsibilities and recognize the inherent rights of Alaska Native tribes to self-governance and control over their lands and resources.

ANILCA was designed to balance conservation and development while safeguarding the subsistence rights and cultural traditions of Alaska Natives. Yet, the benefits of ANILCA have seemingly bypassed the Unangax people of King Cove, who continue to fight for something as basic as safe and reliable access to medical care.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this critical issue. The community of King Cove has endured this battle for far too long. It is time to resolve this matter by constructing a one-lane, gravel road that will save lives and provide the residents of King Cove with the access they desperately need.

[SIGNATURE]

[NAME AND CONTACT INFO]