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ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION:  
WORKFORCE EFFICIENCY/PRODUCTIVITY AND  
EMERGENCY PERMITTING CONSULTATION

TRANSCRIPT OF ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION

HELD ON

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

10:07 A.M.

4455 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
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1 ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION  
 2 HELD ON  
 3 TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025  
 4 10:07 A.M.  
 5  
 6 BEN DUNCAN: Good morning. Thank you. I  
 7 want to welcome everyone to today's Consultation  
 8 that's serving to seek input on two topics, but  
 9 first the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs  
 10 Reorganization Plan as part of Executive Order  
 11 14210, "Department of Government Efficiency"  
 12 Workforce Optimization Initiative. And second, the  
 13 Department of Interior Emergency Permitting  
 14 Procedures as part of Executive Order 14156,  
 15 declaration of a National Energy Emergency.  
 16 And as we go through today, I'm not going  
 17 to say those in their full title. We'll be  
 18 referencing those as Workforce Efficiency and  
 19 Productivity, and Emergency Permitting Procedures.  
 20 As a matter of introduction, my name's Ben  
 21 Duncan. My --  
 22 (Automated voice interruption.)  
 23 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, this meeting is being  
 24 recorded. As a matter of introduction, my name's  
 25 Ben Duncan. I'm part of a contractor team. Sam,

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1 I'm going to look to you to give a wave to the  
 2 group, and Elizabeth here who are part of my team.  
 3 We also have Derrick Beetso from Hayiilka, okay.  
 4 Thank you. He's part of the contractor team as  
 5 well.  
 6 So we're brought on by Department of  
 7 Interior. Our team is providing, in partial,  
 8 facilitation and a tech support, hopefully making  
 9 sure everything goes smooth today. Derrick and his  
 10 team is going to capture comments that are -- are  
 11 contributed during today, and I'll talk a little bit  
 12 more about some of the other infrastructure that we  
 13 have.  
 14 And then of course along with our  
 15 contractor team, we have leaders from -- from the  
 16 bureaus and department as well as other Department  
 17 of Interior representatives, again actively  
 18 listening to hear the contributions and -- and  
 19 comment from folks in the room.  
 20 See if I can -- can we go to the next  
 21 slide? Not responding, okay.  
 22 Just really quickly, some of the building  
 23 logistics. You came up the stairs. The restrooms  
 24 are downstairs. There's exits on each corner of the  
 25 room. In case of emergency, we'll orderly leave and

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1 get out of the building.  
 2 Next slide.  
 3 And so just a few pieces as I'm going  
 4 through some of this housekeeping, make sure  
 5 everyone's oriented to how we're going to spend our  
 6 time together. So this is a hybrid Consultation, so  
 7 we have a lot of beautiful faces in the room as well  
 8 as folks that are joining online.  
 9 For our virtual attendees that are  
 10 participating today, you will be muted throughout  
 11 the conversation until we open it up for public  
 12 comment, and then we'll do raise hand. We'll invite  
 13 you to, and I'll talk a little bit more about that  
 14 procedure, but folks will be muted and off camera  
 15 throughout the Consultation.  
 16 For those who are joining virtually, we're  
 17 going to ask you to re-name yourself with your name,  
 18 position title, and the Tribal organization that  
 19 you're attending on behalf of. If you haven't done  
 20 that before, you can hover over your -- your square  
 21 where your face is or name is, click the ellipses,  
 22 click re-name, and then put in that information.  
 23 We do have, as I said, technical support  
 24 here today so for folks online, you can either chat  
 25 or you can email Elizabeth, eherrera@kernswest.com.

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1 We'll put that in the chat as well so you have that  
 2 as a reference for any technical difficulties that  
 3 you might have.  
 4 I will note for those online, we are not  
 5 accepting comments via the chat. We will provide --  
 6 we will provide a link for written public comment  
 7 both now and throughout this time together.  
 8 As you heard loud and clear in the room,  
 9 this session is being recorded and it is closed to  
 10 the public and to the press.  
 11 A couple other notes, just for our online  
 12 folks. We do have closed-captioning available. So  
 13 if that's helpful for your participation, there  
 14 should be either a "more" button on the bottom of  
 15 your screen or some three dots or ellipses. You  
 16 click on that, show captions, and hopefully if  
 17 that's helpful for your participation you can  
 18 utilize that.  
 19 And then Zoom might ask about spoken  
 20 language. So of course if you see the language,  
 21 select what works best for you and then you can  
 22 click cancel, and go on.  
 23 Next slide.  
 24 So before I pass it on, just going to walk  
 25 through how we're going to spend our time in the

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1 room together. We will have an opening prayer, open  
2 and invite folks into the space.  
3 You'll get a briefing from Department and  
4 Bureau leaders on kind of the purpose of -- of  
5 today's Consultation. You'll get to meet leaders  
6 that are in the room, and then we will -- it's  
7 designed in kind of two parts. So I talked about  
8 both -- both executive orders, the emergency order.  
9 We will have a few hours of conversation  
10 on the Executive Order 14210. We will end up taking  
11 a break, and then coming back and adding  
12 Consultation around Executive Order 14156, so it  
13 will be kind of broken up into two. I'll just ask  
14 folks as we go through that process to be mindful of  
15 trying to stay in alignment with that agenda.  
16 Can you go to the next slide.  
17 Okay. And then finally, just a few notes  
18 on our comment period. We are really focused today  
19 on -- on hearing comments from leadership, so  
20 elected or designated leadership from federally  
21 recognized Tribes. We would like -- as you see, we  
22 have a lot of folks in the room.  
23 Just as a temperature check, could you  
24 raise your hand if you're planning to offer a public  
25 comment in the room? I'm trying to do my math

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1 quickly. Okay. And then I don't know if you can  
2 get a sense of how many people are online. And I  
3 say that, and obviously you're not committed if you  
4 raised your hand. You can come later.  
5 I say that because we are trying to hear  
6 from everyone, so I'm not going to ask folks to come  
7 up twice before we've heard from everyone. We also  
8 do want to -- want to open it up for folks that are  
9 either affiliated or just offering public comment  
10 not in that elected, designated, or appointed  
11 leadership.  
12 So I'm just going to ask, I'm not going to  
13 cut people off and I'm not going to put a time limit  
14 on comment, but as you saw the hands in the room, we  
15 have some strained time here and we have a number of  
16 people online, I'm just going to ask that you  
17 respect each other.  
18 If you go on and on, then I might gently  
19 try to encourage you to wrap up your comments, but  
20 we really don't want to get to a place -- I really  
21 don't want to get to a place where I'm interrupting  
22 anybody's contributions today, okay. So I'll just  
23 ask in advance that we operate with that agreement.  
24 And then finally we do have written  
25 comments that can be provided to

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1 Consultation@bia.gov. We will also throw that in  
2 the chat, or by mail to the Department of Interior.  
3 I'm not going to read off the whole address. It's  
4 online, it's on the screen. Those are all due  
5 before -- on or before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on  
6 July 7th, 2025.  
7 And last slide.  
8 As I said, this is closed to the public  
9 and to the press. It is recorded. We do have a  
10 court reporter that's going to be creating a  
11 transcript to make sure that we accurately capture  
12 the substance of the comments that are received, and  
13 to support that process, please, when you give  
14 comment if you could state your name, your title,  
15 and your Tribal affiliation.  
16 So I'm going to get out of the way.  
17 Appreciate folks being here. Appreciate Alaska  
18 Pacific University for hosting us in their space,  
19 and let's have a wonderful time together.  
20 With that, I'll pass it to Kelly Rael.  
21 KELLY RAEL: Thank you so much for being  
22 here. I know this is a difficult time of year with  
23 Breakup happening, and so I'm just grateful that you  
24 guys are all here to have this really important  
25 conversation.

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1 I'm going to open it up with Tlingit &  
2 Haida, Executive Counsel Rob Anderson (sic) to come  
3 and give the opening blessing.  
4 ROB SANDERSON: Good morning, everyone.  
5 It's good to see everybody here. Rob Sanderson,  
6 executive committee member, Tlingit & Haida Central  
7 Council.  
8 Please pray in your own way, so we'll go  
9 before you in prayer this morning. Salana  
10 (phonetic). Dear Heavenly Father, we come before  
11 you in prayer this morning. We ask that you bless  
12 this meeting. We ask that you bless the  
13 participants. We ask that you bless our Tribal  
14 leaders, our government officials. And Dear  
15 Heavenly Father, we ask that you be with our loved  
16 ones back home while we are on travel. And we ask  
17 for safe travel mercies for those who made it to  
18 Anchorage for this session. We ask that you bless  
19 each and every one of us. Thank you. Haa  
20 (phonetic).  
21 KELLY RAEL: Thank you so much for that.  
22 I'm going to open up with a message that Secretary  
23 Burgum's office has asked me to share before we get  
24 started.  
25 During his tenure as North Dakota

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1 governor, Secretary Burgum was recognized for  
 2 fostering positive relationships with the state's  
 3 native -- or Tribal Nations. The Department of  
 4 Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs remain  
 5 committed to our trust responsibilities of  
 6 protecting Tribal treaty rights, lands, assets,  
 7 resources.

8 In addition to its duty to carry out  
 9 mandates of federal law with respect to American  
 10 Indian Alaska Native Tribes and Villages.

11 Before proceeding with any potential  
 12 reduction in force actions, the department will work  
 13 through Tribal Consultation process to ensure that  
 14 any proposed actions are informed by meaningful  
 15 input from Tribal Nations and are fully considered  
 16 the delivery of services to Indian countries.

17 So I wanted to start off with that  
 18 message.

19 Next slide.

20 All right. So here, my name is Kelly  
 21 Rael. I am serving as a Special Advisor to the  
 22 Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. As many of  
 23 you guys know, we are still awaiting a confirmation  
 24 date for our Assistant Secretary Billy Kirkland. So  
 25 we are hoping within the next month or two we will

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1 have him in the AS-IA hallway.

2 So today we have Bureau of Indian Affairs.  
 3 We have Bryan Mercier. We have BTFA, Kevin  
 4 Bearquiver, and from DASM we have Jason Freihage,  
 5 and then from BIE we have Sharon Pinto.

6 Next slide.

7 We are -- so the Office of the Assistant  
 8 Secretary of Indian Affairs, BIA, the Bureau of  
 9 Education, BTFA collectively Indian Affairs, we seek  
 10 to have a direct conversation with you guys. I know  
 11 that there's a lot uncertainties in the air, and so  
 12 we are here. This is important to this  
 13 administration that we have this dialogue to go over  
 14 Executive Order 1420 (sic), Department of Government  
 15 Efficiency, Workforce Optimization Initiative, and  
 16 Secretary Order 3429, Consultation, unification, and  
 17 optimization of administrative functions.

18 We do want to hear your input, and we --  
 19 we want to hear from you what is going right, what  
 20 isn't going right, and how can we better streamline  
 21 or processes to ensure that we are delivering to  
 22 Indian country.

23 And then we'll also go over Executive  
 24 Order 14156, Emerging Permitting Procedures under  
 25 the National Energy Emergency Declaration.

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1 Next slide.

2 All right. We'll just kind of touch on  
 3 this. Executive Order 14210. With the purpose of  
 4 restoring accountability to the American public,  
 5 this executive order is intended to begin a critical  
 6 transformation of the federal bureaucracy by  
 7 eliminating waste, bloat, and abuse.

8 To be honest, there's -- there's been  
 9 quite a lot of things that have come out amongst  
 10 different agencies throughout the federal  
 11 government, and ultimately we want to ensure these  
 12 funds are being spent the way they are supposed to.  
 13 And if those funds need to get to Indian country, we  
 14 want to ensure that there's not a whole lot of  
 15 middle man getting those funds. We want it going  
 16 directly to Indian country.

17 Consistent with that task, Indian Affairs  
 18 seeks feedback for the following topics:  
 19 Restructuring of Indian Affairs to support more  
 20 efficient interactions with Tribes. Current funding  
 21 structures including identifying efficiency barriers  
 22 to expedite funding to Tribes and Tribal programs.  
 23 Increasing Indian Affairs' support for Tribal self-  
 24 governance and self-determination.

25 That is a big initiative of this

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1 administration. We believe in Tribal sovereignty  
 2 and self-governance.

3 Next slide.

4 All right. We'll just go over this, the  
 5 Secretarial Order, consolidation, unification, and  
 6 optimization of administrative functions.

7 The purpose is to take steps to  
 8 consolidate, unify within the Department of Interior  
 9 to achieve effectiveness, accountability, cost  
 10 savings for the American taxpayer. Functions to be  
 11 consolidate include Human Resources, information  
 12 technology, financial management, training and  
 13 development, international affairs, contracting,  
 14 communications, federal financial assistance, among  
 15 other administrative orders.

16 With the exception of international  
 17 affairs, training and development, these business  
 18 functions exist across DASM, BIA, BIE, and BTFA.

19 Next slide. All right. Next slide.

20 Obviously we provide direction and the  
 21 leadership over AS-IA, BIA, BIE, BTFA. Oversee the  
 22 development of new and revised regulations to  
 23 address statutory requirements and the related  
 24 Consultation and listening with having these  
 25 listening sessions with Tribes, develop operational

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1 policies to support Indian Affairs functions,  
 2 oversees the White House Council of Native American  
 3 Affairs as well as congressional relationships and  
 4 public affairs.  
 5 Through the Deputy Assistant Secretary  
 6 policy and economic development, provides oversight  
 7 for management and operations regarding Indian  
 8 gaming, federal acknowledgement, self-governance,  
 9 and Tribal economic development.  
 10 Next slide.  
 11 All right. I'm going to turn it over to  
 12 Jason Freihage to go over DASM.  
 13 JASON FREIHAGE: Okay. Next slide. Okay,  
 14 thanks. So I'll just quickly walk through the  
 15 functions for Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
 16 Management. That's a mouthful of a name for an  
 17 acronym, but we really just are the business  
 18 operations for Indian Affairs.  
 19 So we have five main components. And  
 20 first is Office of Budget and Performance  
 21 Management. They lead budget formulation, execution  
 22 across Indian Affairs, are the lead for working with  
 23 Appropriations and O&B in the department. And then  
 24 they coordinate with the budget staff within BTFA,  
 25 BIE, and parts of BIA.

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1 Secondly Office of the Chief Financial  
 2 Officer. So that's kind of what the name says.  
 3 It's our finance shop. They also do acquisitions.  
 4 Leave been the lead on the Buy Indian Act where  
 5 we've taken about -- we used to do about \$200  
 6 million a year in acquisitions. Last year was about  
 7 \$600 million, and we got up to 75 percent of that  
 8 funding being awarded through Indian economic  
 9 enterprises. So they're really doing our classic  
 10 finance, acquisition activities, audit, those types  
 11 of things.  
 12 Next Office of Human Capital Management.  
 13 So they do the HR. They do direct service for HR,  
 14 providing the actual services within AS-IA, BIA, and  
 15 then they do policy coordination with BIE and BTFA.  
 16 They both have their own ways -- their own HR for  
 17 doing that.  
 18 Next is Office of Facilities Property and  
 19 Safety Management. So this is the team that does  
 20 oversight for safety activities across Indian  
 21 Affairs. They also lead construction overall. They  
 22 do the large projects which are now edging closer to  
 23 \$10 million or more, or up to \$200 million projects  
 24 for schools and detention centers. And then they  
 25 work with the Construction and Facilities Team and

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1 BIE to implement their projects. And the BIA  
 2 regions also do projects for smaller ones. About 5  
 3 to 10 million and below, and they do the daily  
 4 monitoring.  
 5 This team also, this might be a little  
 6 more familiar to some of you up here because we  
 7 don't have as many Indian Affairs facilities in  
 8 Alaska, but this team also runs the 105(1) Tribal  
 9 Lease Program, and it's a small but mighty team of  
 10 three federal employees. And then they -- we also  
 11 have a Public Health and Safety Team we stood up  
 12 during the pandemic.  
 13 And then finally we have our Office of  
 14 Information Technology. So they do all the core  
 15 enterprise IT across AS-IA, Office of the Assistant  
 16 Secretary for Indian Affairs, BIA, and BIE, all kind  
 17 of -- everything from just your, you know, security  
 18 of the email system to building out the learning  
 19 management system that work in BIE schools.  
 20 So, thank you.  
 21 KELLY RAEL: Next slide.  
 22 All right. I'm going to turn it over to  
 23 Bryan Mercier.  
 24 BRYAN MERCIER: Hi, I'm Bryan Mercier,  
 25 Naganiem (phonetic). Good morning, everyone. I'm

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1 Bryan Mercier. I'm the director of the BIA. I'm an  
 2 enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand  
 3 Ronde. I have Calapooia and Clackamas descent from  
 4 the Portland, Oregon, area.  
 5 I was appointed the director of the BIA  
 6 about seven or eight months ago after I served for  
 7 almost seven years as a regional director in the  
 8 Northwest region in Portland, Oregon.  
 9 And so next slide, please.  
 10 It's my honor to be here to talk a little  
 11 bit about our current state and current structure of  
 12 the BIA, and obviously we want to get through this  
 13 as quickly as possible because we're really here to  
 14 hear from you.  
 15 And I just noticed earlier that the  
 16 wonderful staff in the Alaska regional office is  
 17 passing out water, so if you ever need water, maybe  
 18 raise your hand, or we have a water bottle over here  
 19 for folks to grab that. So thank you to the team  
 20 from the regional office for doing that.  
 21 So obviously the major functions at the  
 22 BIA, its mission is largely to, and I'll paraphrase  
 23 here, enhance the lives of Tribes and Indian people,  
 24 Indigenous people across the United States. And to  
 25 me, it's one of the best missions the federal

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1 government has. It's -- it's an honored tradition  
 2 that we as the United States must uphold, that those  
 3 treaty and trust obligations to the Tribes.  
 4 Most of us that work at the BIA are  
 5 enrolled Tribal members of Tribes, and so we get to  
 6 serve the very communities that we come from. So  
 7 it's really a privilege to be here with you all  
 8 today and to hear from you all how we continue to do  
 9 that going forward.  
 10 We have, as you can see here, there's a  
 11 big land function to what we do, and Alaska is a  
 12 great example of that with over 55 million surface  
 13 acres and 57 million acres of subsurface minerals  
 14 that we're responsible for.  
 15 We're also the primary federal trustee  
 16 within the federal family. So Interior is often  
 17 meeting with other departments to represent Tribal  
 18 interests and Alaska Native interests in the  
 19 Villages here as well, in those meetings back in  
 20 Washington DC. And we do everything we can to  
 21 ensure that the government -- the government and  
 22 Nation to Nation relationship is maintained and  
 23 sustained going forward.  
 24 We administer the laws and programs that  
 25 are established. And as policy shifts with any new

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1 administration, we adapt. And we have a  
 2 professional workforce to ensure that those services  
 3 are not impacted, and we continue to provide those  
 4 services as we adjust and prioritize our policy with  
 5 any change in administration.  
 6 And then so the current structure we have  
 7 is I have four Deputy Bureau Directors, one of Field  
 8 Ops, Trust Services, Indian Services, and Justice  
 9 Services. And those Deputy Bureau Directors have  
 10 teams as well to manage the various functions that  
 11 we have across the 12 regions.  
 12 Alaska is very unique because of its  
 13 history, its geography, and obviously the regional  
 14 office is based out of -- here in Anchorage, and I  
 15 believe we have a field office in Fairbanks as well.  
 16 Next slide, please.  
 17 So I touched on this. So Justice  
 18 Services, that's our law enforcement function. Most  
 19 of the Tribes in the country have contracted the Law  
 20 Enforcement and Detention Services programs, but we  
 21 still do have a number of Tribes that receive direct  
 22 services from the Office of Justice Services.  
 23 We have just over 300 law enforcement  
 24 officers across the country, and a few hundred  
 25 administrative staff as well that support the 638,

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1 so the Indian Self-Determination Act contracting of  
 2 those functions that the vast majority of Tribes  
 3 have done over -- over the last few decades.  
 4 Indian Services. That includes a lot of  
 5 our Human Services, Self-Determination, Tribal  
 6 Government, Transportation. I think a big program  
 7 here in Alaska, and Workforce Development as well.  
 8 This is one of our smaller deputy bureaus, and with  
 9 only just over 150 staff I think in its central  
 10 office function, but plays a critical role.  
 11 Trust Services. This is a larger function  
 12 we have, one of our deputy bureaus, and they do much  
 13 of the realty, the forestry, the trust assets that  
 14 we work with across the country.  
 15 And then finally our Office of Field  
 16 Operations, the Deputy Bureau Director Bart Stevens  
 17 is here. I saw him earlier. Bart, do you want to  
 18 raise your hand real quick, wherever you're at. So  
 19 this is the Deputy Bureau Director Bart Stevens, and  
 20 he oversees the 12 regions across the country.  
 21 Next slide.  
 22 Okay. Sharon Pinto. I'm going to hand it  
 23 off to Sharon to talk to us a little bit about the  
 24 BIE's current state.  
 25 SAM LEVY: And Presenters, just make sure

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1 you're talking directly into the microphone so that  
 2 our Zoom folks can hear you loud and clear.  
 3 SHARON PINTO: Good morning, Yatayabina  
 4 (phonetic). My name is Sharon Pinto. I am a member  
 5 of the Navajo Nation. I am the Deputy Bureau  
 6 Director for School Operations with the BIE, and  
 7 I've been the Deputy Bureau Director for going on my  
 8 seventh year right now.  
 9 And previous to that I served eight years  
 10 as the regional director for the Navajo region under  
 11 BIA, so thank you again this morning for being here  
 12 with us and allowing us an opportunity to hear from  
 13 you directly on the Consultation topics that we have  
 14 brought before you today, so appreciate that. Thank  
 15 you for your time.  
 16 Next slide.  
 17 BIE doesn't necessarily have too heavy of  
 18 a presence in the Alaska region outside of the JOM  
 19 program that we deliver to a lot of your schools and  
 20 the funding that we provide through JOM.  
 21 Outside of that, nationwide BIE has -- we  
 22 have a capacity of 40,000 Indian students that we  
 23 serve across the country through 183 bureau operated  
 24 schools located on 64 reservations in -- in the  
 25 lower 48 and in 23 states. We serve approximately,

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1 as I said, K through 12 students.  
 2 We also have two colleges that we provide  
 3 direct services through, and that is Haskell Indian  
 4 University located in Kansas as well as the SIPI  
 5 Vocational Tech School located in Albuquerque, New  
 6 Mexico.  
 7 Also out of our 183 school locations, 55  
 8 of those are direct service bureau operated schools  
 9 that we provide, and in the rest, 128 locations are  
 10 Tribally controlled and managed schools through  
 11 public law 100-297 grant agreements that we have  
 12 entered into various Tribes at those locations.  
 13 Again, as part of the oversight that I  
 14 provide directly, we also provide direct services  
 15 through facility management, budget and finance, as  
 16 well as acquisitions control, and managing some  
 17 minimal environmental compliance across all of our  
 18 schools to ensure the safe environment for our  
 19 students that we serve and the staffing and the  
 20 community that we engage in.  
 21 And that's all we have for our update at  
 22 this point in time. Thank you so much.  
 23 KELLY RAEL: BTFA, we have Kevin  
 24 Bearquiver.  
 25 KEVIN BEARQUIVER: Good morning, everyone,

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1 so good to see so many familiar faces. It's been  
 2 seven years since I've been up here last. Beautiful  
 3 weather, so I couldn't ask for anything more.  
 4 I'm a member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and  
 5 Arikara Nation from the great state of North Dakota.  
 6 I also have some Northern Cheyenne blood in me, so a  
 7 little bit of a fighter, ayy.  
 8 I would be remiss if I didn't say that I'm  
 9 only up here representing Margaret Williams.  
 10 Margaret is online and she's our acting director.  
 11 She's under doctor's orders not to travel, so she  
 12 send her deepest regrets that she couldn't be here.  
 13 She really wanted to be here and get, you know,  
 14 direct feedback from everybody on how we can improve  
 15 and be -- be more efficient in serving the  
 16 beneficiaries, so, but she is online.  
 17 So with that being said, let's go ahead  
 18 and go to the next slide.  
 19 So BTFA's major functions, and I'm going  
 20 to try to paraphrase because I'm just like Bryan,  
 21 that's a lot to read, but our -- our mission is to  
 22 manage the trust beneficiaries' financial assets.  
 23 BIA manages the land assets and the forestry and all  
 24 the -- the other assets that are on the land.  
 25 We manage the financial assets. That's

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1 after you, you know, entered into a lease or  
 2 liquidated through a timber sale or oil and gas, we  
 3 manage the financial. We manage it on the financial  
 4 end for the -- for the secretary to fulfill the  
 5 secretary's fiduciary trust responsibilities.  
 6 You know, we, you know, we're also, you  
 7 know, we are charged to accurately account for in  
 8 receipt, invest, disburse, reconcile, and report all  
 9 the Indian trust funds across the -- across the  
 10 country. That includes all of the accounts up here  
 11 for Alaska Natives and Alaskan Tribes.  
 12 We were established by Secretarial Order,  
 13 what is that, 30 -- I can't read, I can't see that.  
 14 We were established by Secretarial Order 3384 in  
 15 2020, that's BTFA. We were renamed from OST to  
 16 BTFA, so in 2020 we were reestablished as BTFA. So  
 17 most of you know us as the Office of the Special  
 18 Trustee, but under Secretarial Order we were re-  
 19 organized as the Bureau of Trust Funds  
 20 Administration.  
 21 We manage over \$9 billion in active  
 22 investments on behalf of the Tribes and individual  
 23 beneficiaries across -- with about 4,300 total  
 24 accounts. And then for the beneficiaries we have  
 25 over 414,000 IIM accounts.

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1 We disburse about 1.85 billion annually,  
 2 that -- and then additionally we also, you know,  
 3 have to account for all of funding and -- and then,  
 4 let's see.  
 5 We develop and implement an investment  
 6 strategy aimed for returns of total assets investing  
 7 in the U.S. Treasury Government Fixed Income  
 8 Securities, so which are called, you know, GFCs. So  
 9 we -- and then BTFA is the primary point of contact  
 10 for trust beneficiaries, delivering assistance and  
 11 information regarding their financial trust assets.  
 12 We also support beneficiaries who live in  
 13 all 50 states, three U.S. territories, 27 countries,  
 14 and we utilize direct outreach, education, and then  
 15 we also have the Trust Beneficiary Call Center.  
 16 And then we recently moved to more, what  
 17 do you want to say, access for individual  
 18 beneficiaries through 24-hour access using what's  
 19 called an IVR, interactive voice response.  
 20 And then since 2019, BTFA has earned the  
 21 designation of a High Impact Service Provider. And  
 22 really what that is, is we provide, is because we  
 23 have so much contact with -- with the beneficiaries,  
 24 that we have to -- and we've been doing this,  
 25 modernizing all of our systems in order to provide

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1 better access for the beneficiaries, improve our  
2 customer relationship.  
3         We've done relationship mapping two times  
4 now across the country, and look at -- and if you  
5 were to see the way our systems currently operate,  
6 it's almost like looking at a bowl of spaghetti.  
7 And really what we're trying to do is -- is to take  
8 it and -- and manage the systems in a more  
9 appropriate way that allows for not having to go  
10 through so many steps in order to process a  
11 transaction.  
12         Right now, you know, we're trying to  
13 streamline anyone wanting to access their funding,  
14 to eliminate and move and improve the systems.  
15         And then we -- we also have -- we support  
16 document production for litigation for settlements,  
17 FOIA. So any -- we also have the Office of  
18 Historical Accounting who goes through and does the  
19 historical trust accounting any time there's  
20 litigation for -- for a lot of these accounts, for a  
21 lot of these Tribes that -- that, you know, go back  
22 decades.  
23         And of course we also have the trust, the  
24 American Indian Records Repository. That's under  
25 our jurisdiction, and we manage all the trust

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1 records across the country. Help manage, help  
2 Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Assistant  
3 Secretary's office with records to the trust  
4 records.  
5         Next slide.  
6         Those are our major functions. I think  
7 the next slide is then back to you, I would imagine.  
8 Thank you, or I don't know.  
9         KELLY RAEL: All right. Next slide.  
10         Proposed Indian Affairs Workforce  
11 Efficiency Strategies. Up hold the trust  
12 responsibilities to the Tribe. I want to  
13 reemphasize that. It is to uphold the trust  
14 responsibilities that we owe it to Tribes.  
15         Indian Affairs will continue to prioritize  
16 subject matter expertise to ensure timely and  
17 effective fulfillment of federal trust  
18 responsibility to all Tribal Nations.  
19         Employees remain dedicated to advancing  
20 the mission and goals that are critical to the  
21 success and sovereignty of Tribes.  
22         Our core proposed approach, focus on  
23 continuity and improvement of federal services,  
24 expand Tribal self-determination and self-governance  
25 to reduce the federal bureaucracy and regulations.

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1 Implement collective and sustainable workforce  
2 strategies to support long term Tribal development  
3 and resilience.  
4         Number two, ensure alignment with  
5 Executive Orders. All workforce efficiency  
6 initiatives will be assigned with Executive Order  
7 14210 and related federal mandates, reaffirming  
8 Indian Affairs' commitments to fulfilling its  
9 obligations and honoring commitments to Tribes.  
10         Our core approach will be data driven  
11 decision making aligned with the priorities and  
12 needs of Tribal communities, invest in technology  
13 automation to utilize comprehensive data analysis  
14 and industry's best practices.  
15         Number three, efficient use of the  
16 Department of Interior resources. Indian Affairs  
17 will support and leverage the Department's efforts  
18 to streamline and unify core business and  
19 administrative services. This lead will enhance  
20 processes, reduce redundancies. And if we're all  
21 honest with ourselves, we know we've seen it.  
22         And improve delivery of service to Tribal  
23 Nations. Our core proposed approach, realign  
24 internal resources and mission objectives to better  
25 meet emerging Tribal priorities. Explore merging

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1 offices and removing management layers where  
2 efficiencies are possible. Build capacity in  
3 critical function areas to improve performance and  
4 service delivery.  
5         And when I say that, no, we're not  
6 referring to Reddit, because I know everyone have  
7 seen posts regarding alignments. That's not what  
8 we're talking about here.  
9         Next slide.  
10         All right. BIA -- did you guys want to go  
11 over BIE and BTFA, or I can continue. Just  
12 continue? Okay. All right.  
13         In addition to the proposed IA workforce  
14 strategies, BIE, BTFA goals include commitment to  
15 high quality education. BIE is committed to  
16 ensuring every Indian student has access to world  
17 class, culturally grounded education.  
18         Central to this effort is the  
19 prioritization of school level personnel whose  
20 direct impact on student outcomes make them  
21 essential to education success. Our approach will  
22 be invest in front line educators, empower and  
23 support teachers, counselors, student leaders  
24 through targeted professional development,  
25 recruitment, and retention efforts.

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1 Use data to access student needs, and  
 2 drive resource allocation decisions that support  
 3 academic achievement well-being to all students.  
 4 Strengthen Tribal Consultation in education policy  
 5 and program development to ensure culturally  
 6 responsive practices are embedded to every level.  
 7 And I want to make a note. I know we  
 8 recently had a Tribal Consultation regarding BIE,  
 9 and I -- and I -- we recognize that, no, the  
 10 timeline might not have been the best, but we were  
 11 following Executive Orders so we did have to push  
 12 that out. But we want to continue to have Tribal  
 13 Consultation in meaningful ways.  
 14 All right. Number two for BTFA.  
 15 Streamline and prioritize. BTFA plays a vital role  
 16 in safeguarding and managing financial trust sets  
 17 for Tribal and individual Indian beneficiaries.  
 18 Ensuring fiduciary responsibilities, operational  
 19 transparency, and beneficiary services essential to  
 20 building and maintaining trust with Native American  
 21 communities.  
 22 Our core proposed approach, focus on  
 23 statutory requirements, prioritize fiduciary trust  
 24 responsibilities of receipting, investing,  
 25 disbursing, reconciling, and reporting. Strengthen

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1 beneficiaries' understanding of their financial  
 2 trust assets. Utilize comprehensive data to  
 3 identify opportunities to modernize and update  
 4 existing systems and processes to increase  
 5 transparency, access, and efficiency.  
 6 Next slide.  
 7 All right. I'm going to turn it over to  
 8 -- oh, wait. All right. Yeah, I'll turn it over to  
 9 Ben.  
 10 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, I'm back on. So we're  
 11 going to -- we're going to transition into the  
 12 public comment -- or the comment section, sorry, for  
 13 the rest of our time together. So there's questions  
 14 around 14210 that would have been kind of placed in  
 15 your Tribal Leader letter, and we'll set a  
 16 foundation for what we're hoping to hear from folks  
 17 today.  
 18 So around the restructuring of Indian  
 19 Affairs, what recommendations would you make to  
 20 Indian Affairs to improve efficiency through  
 21 staffing changes, resource sharing, process  
 22 improvements, and potential consolidation of  
 23 programs and offices?  
 24 In terms of addressing current funding  
 25 structures, Indian Affairs is seeking input on how

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1 to better support Tribes by reducing the  
 2 administrative burden to access and administer  
 3 funding, improving communications with Tribes and  
 4 funding opportunities, and improving technical  
 5 assistance and direct support to Tribes to obtain  
 6 and administer funding.  
 7 And finally, increasing Indian Affairs  
 8 support for Tribal self-governance and self-  
 9 determination. How can Indian Affairs optimize its  
 10 functional and effectiveness to provide Tribes with  
 11 improved flexibility to foster economic growth,  
 12 address the specific local needs of their  
 13 communities, and increase pathways to self-  
 14 determination and self-governance.  
 15 We can go to the next slide.  
 16 So as we go through, I'm going to invite,  
 17 as a reminder, we have a number of folks in the room  
 18 that will be providing comment, and we have folks  
 19 online that are also going to do so.  
 20 We're going to do a little bit of back and  
 21 forth -- oh.  
 22 SAM LEVY: Ben, if you wouldn't mind using  
 23 the podium mic instead of the lapel mic, we'll be  
 24 able to hear you much better online.  
 25 BEN DUNCAN: I was all excited about my

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1 lapel mic. We don't get to have these very often.  
 2 SAM LEVY: Appreciate it.  
 3 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. Is this better?  
 4 Hopefully this is better.  
 5 So we're going to go back and forth.  
 6 We'll have some folks in the room. We're going to  
 7 ask you, if you see the microphone in front of me,  
 8 we brought a table up. I know a lot of folks are  
 9 either reading off laptops, papers. Hopefully  
 10 that's helpful. If you need me to hold something  
 11 for you, I'll do it too. Let's just make sure that  
 12 folks can give a comment effectively.  
 13 So we're going to ask folks in the room to  
 14 queue up, likely along the back line, and we'll kind  
 15 of go in order. If for any reason accessibility to  
 16 coming and standing is an issue, please raise your  
 17 hand. We've got some roaming mics. I'll run around  
 18 so you don't have to stand there if it's going to be  
 19 difficult.  
 20 For folks online, I'm going to ask you to  
 21 raise your hand, so there should be either a Raise  
 22 Hand button, hopefully. I got you, sir. For folks  
 23 online, you'll raise your hand and that will get you  
 24 in the queue for comment as well.  
 25 A couple other notes. Please speak into

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1 the microphone. As I said earlier, we have a court  
 2 reporter that's capturing as well as Derrick and his  
 3 team will be capturing the comments that are  
 4 received today. So please state your name, Tribal  
 5 affiliation, and really speak into the mic.  
 6 If there are folks on the phone, you can  
 7 press star 9 to raise your hand. Our team is -- for  
 8 online folks, you will get an invite to unmute. So  
 9 you have to -- you'll get an invite. It will pop up  
 10 on your screen. You have to click yes, accept that,  
 11 otherwise you'll stay muted, but we'll work with  
 12 you.  
 13 The last thing I'll say just before we go.  
 14 All of these slides are available online. Team, if  
 15 we have a link we'll put that in the chat, and then  
 16 make sure folks have that coming out of here. Okay.  
 17 And then just last, again, written  
 18 comments, reminder, you can see the queue already  
 19 lining up. I'll ask folks to be respectful of time  
 20 to the extent you can. We'll accept comments until  
 21 11:50 p.m. -- 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, July 7th,  
 22 2025.  
 23 Sir, we'll start with you, please.  
 24 PJ SIMON : Yeah, so, hello, can you hear  
 25 me?

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1 BEN DUNCAN: Just real quickly, those  
 2 slides are available on the BIA web page. So if you  
 3 go to the BIA web page, click Consultation, go to  
 4 the Consultation Schedule. Click "this session."  
 5 They are there for you to download. Thank you.  
 6 PJ SIMON: Thank you. My name is PJ  
 7 Simon, Chief of Allakaket Tribe up there in the  
 8 Brooks Range. We're a small Tribe, and we're  
 9 interested in practicing self-determination.  
 10 Since the '50s when the Interior  
 11 Department took over our funding years ago, to look  
 12 after us. In seventy-plus years we -- we're  
 13 smarter. We're more capable. We're accountable.  
 14 We want direct funding from the Interior Department.  
 15 Cut out the middle man. Department of Justice does  
 16 it. FEMA does it.  
 17 So if we cut out the middle man, it's more  
 18 effective to my people. We're practicing self-  
 19 determination. Allakaket Tribe, we're in support of  
 20 development. There's a bunch of rivers, mines  
 21 around us, gold mining. We're supported.  
 22 And we welcome the Secretary to Allakaket  
 23 to do a field visit any time. To practice self-  
 24 determination, we've been -- it's been a hurdle.  
 25 How much money do we have? Well, we -- we go

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1 through NGOs, which is okay at the start.  
 2 It was okay fifty years ago, but now in  
 3 2025 we can manage our own funding. And when we  
 4 manage our own funding, we have -- it's more direct.  
 5 You'll see it next week. You'll see it two weeks  
 6 from now. Not three months. Oh, how much money are  
 7 we going to get?  
 8 Plus IHS, they -- they tell Alaska how  
 9 much money coming to Alaska. BIA does not tell how  
 10 much money Alaska gets. So to level the playing  
 11 field, to -- to make it more efficient for my Tribe  
 12 to get our fair share of that federal trust dollar  
 13 that comes from DC, give us our money direct  
 14 funding.  
 15 I'm told that a dollar bill leaves DC and  
 16 it goes from one region, 8, region 10, to Anchorage,  
 17 to Fairbanks, to our NGO. But the time it gets to  
 18 Allakaket Village, it's about 12 cents. That's not  
 19 efficient in 2025.  
 20 I go home. We bury people with picks and  
 21 shovels and axes and whatever we can, just doing it,  
 22 you know. I want change. Direct fund our Tribes.  
 23 I hope this is not one of those run-of-  
 24 the-mill meetings where you guys just check it off,  
 25 oh, we talked to them. Nothing gets done. We're

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1 ready for direct funding.  
 2 That's my comment. Respect. Everybody  
 3 else, all the other Tribes in Alaska, but we want to  
 4 be strong. I'm a Koykondinna (phonetic). My Indian  
 5 name is Bucko-ou-dali-da (phonetic). That means,  
 6 His Arrow Doesn't Miss. And I represent people who  
 7 want to be strong, want to stand on their own feet.  
 8 Our vision is different than other Tribes'  
 9 vision, but respect our vision. And with all due  
 10 respect, that's my comments. Thank you.  
 11 VIVIAN KORTHUIS: Good morning. I do have  
 12 prepared comments. Good morning. My name -- my  
 13 name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as the Chief  
 14 Executive Officer for the Association of Village  
 15 Council Presidents.  
 16 AVCP is the regional Tribal consortium,  
 17 serving the 56 Tribes along the Yukon River,  
 18 Kuskokwim River, and Bering Sea coast in Western  
 19 Alaska. We are located -- located in 48 Villages  
 20 servicing approximately 30,000 people.  
 21 As the Chief Executive Officer for the  
 22 Association of Village Council Presidents, I am here  
 23 to advocate for the 56 federally recognized Tribes  
 24 that we serve. Our Tribes have identified  
 25 priorities and we provide services through our

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1 programs directly to our clients, families,  
2 communities, our region, and our Tribes.  
3 The key to our success is the flexibility  
4 and funding under our compact, reduced reporting and  
5 increased trust which has led the unique service  
6 delivery model that our Tribes have designed to  
7 provide services to our people efficiently and with  
8 incredible effectiveness.  
9 Tribes know how to best serve and provide  
10 services to our people. Through self-governance,  
11 this model works for us. Designed by us and fits  
12 our challenging environment in our very large  
13 region.  
14 Through the unique consortia modeled in  
15 Alaska, we are able to provide dozens of services  
16 by, for, and with our 56 Tribes. Self-governance  
17 works for us. We need the Bureau of Indian Affairs  
18 to continue to support Alaska Tribes and to support  
19 and understand our model. Like Ron Allen says all  
20 the time, self-governance works.  
21 Through this Consultation we hope to  
22 demonstrate that Tribes in Alaska are standing up  
23 for ourselves. Tribes have generations of  
24 experience in Alaska, this that the federal  
25 government can learn from. Tribes in Alaska have

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1 always worked together to provide services to make  
2 sense in Alaska with special care to be innovative,  
3 efficient, responsible, and united, considering the  
4 many, many challenges we face including extremely  
5 rural and no roads connecting us to the rest of the  
6 state.  
7 In the AVCP region alone, our Tribes are  
8 uniquely innovative and driven to serve Tribal  
9 members. There are so many examples of success, and  
10 Tribes cannot have the rug pulled out from under  
11 them.  
12 This Consultation's stated objective is to  
13 streamline operations while minimizing any potential  
14 impact on the quality of services provided to  
15 Tribes.  
16 Change is scary. In our region, when the  
17 first Executive Orders came out, we held a region-  
18 wide teleconference. Our Tribes shared that they  
19 were confused and lacked basic information.  
20 Here in Alaska we have the BIA offices in  
21 our state. Imagine how difficult it would be if the  
22 BIA offices were located in the lower 48, and we  
23 were continue to address all of the challenges our  
24 Tribes face, including specifically in our region,  
25 public safety and the salmon crash, and now the

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1 potential funding cuts.  
2 I want to speak to the issue of public  
3 safety. Our Tribes in our region gather annually.  
4 We have identified public safety as the number one  
5 issue in our region. We have asked the federal  
6 government for the past eight years that I've been  
7 in this position, to demonstrate to us a model in  
8 our region that we know that will work for our  
9 Tribes based on the health care model.  
10 In addition to identifying improvements  
11 with current services, I want to bring to the  
12 forefront those services, like public safety, we do  
13 not receive.  
14 Our Tribes are not asking for anything  
15 more or anything less than anyone else in Alaska or  
16 any place in the United States. It's a basic  
17 function that we're asking for, and we don't get it.  
18 Again, I am testifying going on nine years  
19 that a Tribal Consultation -- at a Tribal  
20 Consultation as CEO for AVCP on behalf of the 56  
21 Tribes, and I want to know if this Consultation is  
22 the one that will be listened to.  
23 I also want to speak to the salmon crash  
24 we are experiencing on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.  
25 For the past five years the Tribes all along the

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1 Yukon River and the Kuskokwim River have not met our  
2 subsistence needs to feed our families and  
3 communities.  
4 I am asking the Department of Interior to  
5 hear our Tribes when we describe these conditions as  
6 we are currently experiencing. The Yukon River has  
7 been put on a seven-year moratorium by the State of  
8 Alaska without any Consultation with Tribes.  
9 What I want to know is, if the Department  
10 of Efficiency is going to help our Tribes on the  
11 rivers so we can fill our freezers with salmon.  
12 In short, some specific recommendations  
13 include Tribes must be included in the decisions  
14 about reorganization or any cuts to the bureau.  
15 Alaska needs its BIA regional office.  
16 BIA needs to centralize decision making  
17 and increase staff for Alaska's regional office. We  
18 need BIA to staff -- BIA staff in the offices  
19 answering the phones, responding to emails, and  
20 sharing information.  
21 New reporting requirements are overly  
22 burdensome. Tribes must navigate half a dozen  
23 portals with limited internet across the Villages  
24 for compliance and reporting. Competitive grants  
25 disadvantage small Tribes in rural Alaska.

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1 Those communities are already stressed  
 2 with other challenges. Tribes need the support from  
 3 BIA to be stable, not unpredicted -- unpredictable.  
 4 We would like to see an expansion of self-governance  
 5 and compacting to other federal agencies.  
 6 The federal government needs to fulfill  
 7 its trust obligations fully in Alaska.  
 8 Lastly, Tribes know best how to meet the  
 9 needs of our Tribal members, and we feel -- and we  
 10 need to feel that we have been heard at this Tribal  
 11 Consultation.  
 12 Thank you.  
 13 BEN DUNCAN: Let's take one more. So  
 14 we're going to go one more at the mic. Then I'm  
 15 going to come to you, and then I'm going to go  
 16 online, and then we'll come back to the line.  
 17 CLINTON COOK: Good morning. Before I  
 18 speak, I'd like to offer up the land acknowledgement  
 19 to the peoples at Dena'ina for allowing me to  
 20 represent my Tribe and speak on your land. Ow-a  
 21 (phonetic).  
 22 My name is Clinton Cook and I serve as the  
 23 president of the Craig Tribal Association, which is  
 24 a federally recognized Tribe on the West Coast of  
 25 Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska.

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1 We serve over 500 Tribal members and  
 2 operate a full service Tribal government. Like many  
 3 small Tribes, rural Tribes, we do a lot with our  
 4 limited resources, but what we have built is  
 5 working. And it's working because we pushed through  
 6 the bureaucracy and asserted our rights to govern  
 7 ourselves.  
 8 If this administration wants to improve  
 9 efficiency, let's start with the basics, the 105(1)  
 10 lease. Three strong is not okay. Leases are  
 11 backlogged by years.  
 12 That's not just paperwork. Those are  
 13 stalled services and broken promises. When Tribes  
 14 miss deadlines, we risk losing funding, but when the  
 15 federal government misses deadlines and obligations,  
 16 we're just simply told to wait.  
 17 That's not efficiency. That's a double  
 18 standard. Don't cut services. Don't close field  
 19 offices. Fix what's broken. Staff up the Alaska  
 20 region and hold your agencies accountable for the  
 21 same standard Tribes are held to.  
 22 And a reminder, Alaska holds over 40  
 23 percent of federally recognized Tribes across the  
 24 U.S.  
 25 The small Tribe supplement is supposed to

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1 be a foundation, not an afterthought. Right now  
 2 it's underfunded and unreliable. That's not  
 3 equitable, and it's not sustainable.  
 4 The same goes for indirect cost  
 5 reimbursement. Tribes like Craig are running  
 6 programs that used to be federal responsibilities,  
 7 and we're not even fully reimbursed for the  
 8 administrative burden.  
 9 And competitive grants, they don't work  
 10 for small Tribes. We shouldn't have to hire  
 11 consultants to access basic funding while larger  
 12 entities dominate regional impact metrics. We need  
 13 direct, advanced, and fair funding.  
 14 Craig Tribal Association in 2017 put land  
 15 into trusts successfully. That's not okay. That is  
 16 simply not okay. Tribes need land in a trust for  
 17 self-determination accesses. And we have used that  
 18 as a vehicle for real economic sovereignty. We  
 19 built housing, created jobs, increased local  
 20 revenue. Not with hand-outs, but with true self-  
 21 determination.  
 22 That's what trust lands allowed us to do,  
 23 but the process is too slow, too expensive, too  
 24 bureaucratic. Tribes shouldn't have to spend tens  
 25 of thousands of dollars on lawyers to reclaim what

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1 was taken from us.  
 2 If this administration is serious about  
 3 efficiency and economic growth, then land in the  
 4 trust must be streamlined and supported,  
 5 specifically in Alaska.  
 6 In closing, the Craig Tribal Association  
 7 has done what the federal government says it wants  
 8 Tribes to do; govern ourselves, build local  
 9 economies, and reduce dependency. We're doing it in  
 10 spite of federal systems, not because of them.  
 11 That's the real issue.  
 12 Honor the trust responsibility. Remove  
 13 these barriers. Invest in all these people in this  
 14 room who are Tribal people, and let us be the  
 15 leaders in our communities.  
 16 Thank you.  
 17 BEN DUNCAN: So we're going to -- we're  
 18 going to come over here. We're going to come over  
 19 here, and then we'll take Jones and Brian, and then  
 20 we'll come back into the room.  
 21 JOEL JACKSON: Good morning. My name is  
 22 Joel Jackson. I'm the president of the Organized  
 23 Village of Kake. We're a small community in  
 24 Southeast Alaska located in central Southeast  
 25 Alaska. We've got less than 500 people that live

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1 there.

2 Our Tribal government is a federally

3 recognized Tribe. We're a compact Tribe, and we do

4 a lot, just like President Cook said that -- with

5 the little money that we do get, because we're used

6 to working with that, but we can't sustain ourself

7 with that amount of money, with that amount of

8 funds.

9 But I want to back up and acknowledge the

10 land we're on, the Dena'ina people and the

11 Athabascan people. It's an honor to be on your land

12 and allowed to speak.

13 But I've got a prepared testimony here

14 where we're grateful that our right to Tribal count

15 station has been recognized here today. However, we

16 also know that decisions were already made and

17 implemented before this Consultation occurred.

18 This isn't government-to-government

19 Consultation. There are a lot of BIA, Dear Tribal,

20 letters, subsequent addendums. This is a big

21 undertaking by Tribal staff and Tribal leaders to

22 respond only within a few weeks.

23 We request more time. There is no

24 emergency that we know of. We were not consulted on

25 any, if there are any emergency in Kake, or any

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1 other Village or Tribe in Alaska to declare this.

2 BIA is already underfunded, understaffed.

3 There will be more delays in trust realty,

4 engineered time, human services, leases, land into

5 trust. How is that efficient?

6 Efficiencies cannot be achieved by, if

7 there aren't enough people to do the work. So the

8 government needs to maintain staffing at appropriate

9 levels. Does that mean less oversight and Tribes

10 making their own important decisions without a heavy

11 hand from the BIA?

12 Self-government trust. Self-governance

13 Tribes should be exempt from just identifying any --

14 any drawdowns. Energy emergency. We cannot cut

15 departments that declare -- then declare an

16 emergency on energy development.

17 There were already programs in place where

18 affordable, sustainable energy development, created

19 and passed by Congress. Tribes have deep concerns

20 about the use of National Historic Preservation Act

21 in emergency procedures. The United States is not

22 in the midst of an emergency, energy emergency, as

23 declared by Executive Order that was signed January

24 20, 2025.

25 The established Tribal Consultation to now

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1 be a seven-day notification will not do anything to

2 rapidly create more energy in the United States.

3 Growing up in my little Village, I

4 attended meetings with my father when I was in high

5 school with the Forest Service. After I attended

6 one or two or three of them and listened to them, I

7 asked my father, why do you go there? He said, what

8 do you mean?

9 I said, they come here, they talk. They

10 tell us what they're going to do. They have already

11 decided. By coming to our Village, they are merely

12 checking a box that they did come and talk to us.

13 I have seen this all my life. I'm 69

14 years old. We're still talking about true

15 Consultation. Meaningful Consultation. And what is

16 happening today with these Executive Orders about

17 emergency, energy, or whatever it's called, is

18 nonsense.

19 But I speak for my heart. I very rarely

20 read from a script, because what I believe in is for

21 our native people to have the right as being one of

22 the first peoples of the land everywhere across the

23 United States.

24 We should be allowed to conduct our

25 business without any oversight. The United States

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1 has a trust responsibility to all Tribes, but I do

2 appreciate you guys coming here today and listening

3 to everything we have to say, because it is

4 important.

5 And I know a lot of people, they traveled

6 from a long ways. I'm here for one day. I leave

7 right after the meeting. It cost me almost \$4,000.

8 Well, not me. My Tribe. So it's spendy. It's

9 spendy to come to these meetings. And I'm glad

10 you're not limiting us to three to five minutes.

11 That is important that you hear from every

12 one of these people that want to talk. And I

13 appreciate your time, and I hope more people get up

14 and say what they have to say.

15 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.

16 So couple reminders. So we're not going

17 to -- please, I just recognize there's two sessions,

18 so good blending. You blended, but there will be

19 time specifically on the emergency permitting

20 procedures after a break.

21 So let's go Jones and Bryan, and then

22 let's come back into the room, and then Nathan,

23 Justina, and Kevin, we'll come to you.

24 SAM LEVY: All right, Jones. I'm going to

25 go ahead and ask you to unmute. You can turn your

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1 camera on if you'd like, and you are welcome to  
 2 provide your comment.  
 3 Brian, you will be up next, so get ready  
 4 to unmute in just a few minutes here.  
 5 Jones, it looks like you're unmuted, but  
 6 we're not hearing you in the room. I want to make  
 7 sure that we have your correct microphone.  
 8 BEN DUNCAN: Try saying something, Jones.  
 9 Let's see if we can hear you.  
 10 SAM LEVY: So we can't hear you in the  
 11 room. If you click the little up arrow next to the  
 12 audio button in the lower left corner, you should be  
 13 able to adjust your microphone. You can also do a  
 14 microphone test.  
 15 And we're going to move to Brian while we  
 16 do that, and I can chat you directly.  
 17 BEN DUNCAN: Okay. So look out for a  
 18 chat, Jones.  
 19 Brian?  
 20 SAM LEVY: Brian, you can go ahead and  
 21 unmute and turn your camera on if you'd like, as  
 22 well.  
 23 BEN DUNCAN: Brian, you're unmuted.  
 24 Camera's on.  
 25 BRIAN RIDLEY: Okay. Can you hear me?

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1 BEN DUNCAN: Loud and clear.  
 2 BRIAN RIDLEY: Oh, good, because I'm  
 3 having trouble hearing you guys.  
 4 I'm Brian Ridley. I'm the Chief Chairman  
 5 of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, and I'm from the  
 6 Native Village of Eagle. TCC is a consortium  
 7 representing 42 communities and 37 federally  
 8 recognized Tribes across interior Alaska with an  
 9 area about 37 percent of Alaska and nearly the size  
 10 of the State of Texas.  
 11 The majority of TCC Tribes are remote  
 12 communities that can only be accessed by air or  
 13 boat. On behalf of TCC, I offer the following  
 14 recommendations to assist the Department of Interior  
 15 in delivering effective services under self-  
 16 governance authority.  
 17 Our first priority is to maintain the  
 18 Alaska regional office and its related functions.  
 19 The Villages, Tribes, and Tribal  
 20 Organizations in Alaska are unique from those in the  
 21 lower 48. As such, any change to the regional  
 22 office structure or significant reduction in staff,  
 23 would require additional training and education  
 24 about uniquely Alaskan issues.  
 25 Should DOI explore a regional level

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1 restructure? TCC would request additional Tribal  
 2 Consultation.  
 3 Keep the Alaska BIA office open, as we  
 4 have almost half the Tribes in the country. One of  
 5 the key duties DOI must maintain in self-governance  
 6 compacting and contracting are financial  
 7 transactions. However, the BIA's investment in  
 8 tracking and payment processes lags far behind.  
 9 Some of the systems remain in place from  
 10 nearly two decades ago. TCC believes a modern  
 11 approach to recording funding allocations is needed  
 12 to drive timely payments. Similarly, we recommend  
 13 that as the internal tracking process is modernized,  
 14 the payment process for Tribal organizations and  
 15 Tribes also be improved.  
 16 The BIA's payment process is  
 17 administratively burdensome, and often delays  
 18 because the system is neither centralized nor  
 19 streamlined.  
 20 Second, efficiencies should prevent  
 21 increasing administrative burdens that eliminate  
 22 small Tribes from opportunities. It is essential to  
 23 avoid centralizing grant programs, as this makes it  
 24 difficult for Alaska Tribes to compete in national  
 25 or regionally scoped applications.

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1 We need direct allocations and equitable  
 2 funding mechanisms to ensure fair access for all  
 3 Tribes. The small Tribe supplement is a critical  
 4 source of base funding, and making it a permanent  
 5 Tribal priority allocation would provide stability  
 6 and predictability.  
 7 Third, expand successful self-governance  
 8 mechanisms. The success of PL 102-477 in  
 9 consolidating employment, training, and related  
 10 programs into a single plan has demonstrated  
 11 significant reductions in administrative burdens for  
 12 both the federal government and Tribes, and this  
 13 model should be expanded.  
 14 Finally, improve efficiency for realty  
 15 functions performed under self-governance  
 16 agreements. TCC currently operates realty functions  
 17 including probate on behalf of BIA. Our case load  
 18 has exponentially increased along with significant  
 19 increases in trespassing complaints and demands in  
 20 program oversight.  
 21 Audits are challenges because BIA does not  
 22 share or does not possess a centralized system to  
 23 accommodate file sharing, nor a tracking system that  
 24 could efficiently close probates. As a result, TCC  
 25 has probates that have been open for more than two

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1 decades due to fractionization of native allotments.  
 2 TCC recommends that the realty related  
 3 regulations be updated to streamline information  
 4 sharing, and centralization of data to allow for  
 5 more timely probate closures.  
 6 We encourage the federal government to  
 7 host additional Consultations and bring specific  
 8 questions when considering changes to Indian  
 9 programs.  
 10 We look forward to working with you to  
 11 balance the demands of the trust responsibility and  
 12 the operational needs of Tribal Organizations and  
 13 Tribes. We reiterate that reductions in force and  
 14 consolidation of offices will only serve to further  
 15 confound the services required to be provided  
 16 without a hard look at updating and modernizing  
 17 systems.  
 18 Thank you. Mos-i-cho (phonetic).  
 19 BEN DUNCAN: So let's come -- we're going  
 20 to come back in the room. I think we're going to --  
 21 still working on Jones' technology.  
 22 We're also -- we're going to get a  
 23 numbering system like the DMV so folks don't have to  
 24 stand up. And then we'll call you back up so y'all  
 25 don't have to stand the whole time.

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1 RICHARD PETERSON: Thank you. Can you  
 2 hear me?  
 3 Good morning, and thank you for being  
 4 here. My name is Chu-ya-aish (phonetic). My  
 5 English name is Richard Peterson, and I serve as the  
 6 President of Central Council, Tlingit & Haida Indian  
 7 Tribes of Alaska.  
 8 We are a sovereign, federally recognized  
 9 Tribe serving over 38,000 Tribal citizens here in  
 10 Alaska.  
 11 As Tribal Nations, we share your goal of  
 12 efficient and effective government. For us, that  
 13 means ensuring resources and decisions are as close  
 14 to our communities as possible, not tied up in  
 15 federal bottlenecks.  
 16 For far too long, federal policy has been  
 17 developed without the full participation of Tribal  
 18 governments. The result: Systems that don't  
 19 reflect our realities, that delay services, and that  
 20 treat Tribal Nations as afterthoughts instead of  
 21 your governing partners.  
 22 Tribes should no longer be subject -- be  
 23 the subject of failed social experiments. It's time  
 24 for a new chapter, one where Tribal sovereignty is  
 25 honored not only in words, but in practice.

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1 Alaska is home to 229 federally recognized  
 2 Tribes, nearly half of all of the U.S., spread  
 3 across more than 663,000 square miles. Southeast  
 4 Alaska spans roughly the same area as the State of  
 5 Indiana, but unlike Indiana, most of our communities  
 6 are only accessible by plane or boat.  
 7 A centralized approach to efficiency  
 8 simply doesn't work in our region. True efficiency  
 9 means investing in field offices, retaining  
 10 experienced regional staff, and delegating decision  
 11 making authority where it's needed most: In our  
 12 communities.  
 13 Tribes must be the co-designers, not  
 14 passive consultees, in any restructuring effort.  
 15 Our local knowledge is a resource, not a roadblock.  
 16 And let's talk about accountability.  
 17 Critical functions like 105(1) leases and probate  
 18 are backlogged by more than a year. If Tribes were  
 19 this late on our reporting, we'd be facing strict  
 20 consequences.  
 21 We're asking the federal government to  
 22 meet the same standard of accountability we're held  
 23 to every day. Tlingit & Haida was the first 477  
 24 Tribe in the Nation. We have shown that self-  
 25 governance leads to better results, faster service,

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1 and culturally grounded solutions.  
 2 We need to treat compacting as the norm,  
 3 not the exception, and we ask DOI to work with other  
 4 agencies like the USDA, EPA, and FEMA to expand  
 5 these pathways across the federal government.  
 6 Land into trust must be made accessible to  
 7 all Alaska Tribes. The current process is too slow,  
 8 too costly, and creates barriers to economic  
 9 development and sovereignty. And if we're serious  
 10 about reducing bureaucracy, then invest in Tribal  
 11 capacity.  
 12 Give us direct, flexible funding, just  
 13 like the territories receive. And reduce the need  
 14 for burdensome grant applications and duplicative  
 15 reporting.  
 16 At the end of the day, Tribes aren't  
 17 asking for special treatment. We're asking for  
 18 respect for our governments, our communities, and  
 19 our ability to lead. If the goal is a more  
 20 efficient government, then we're ready to help you  
 21 get there, but we expect to be treated as equals in  
 22 that effort.  
 23 We urge you to honor the trust  
 24 responsibility by advancing real co-governments with  
 25 Tribal Nations.

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1 Two things I'll leave you with. This  
 2 administration has staked a claim on bringing the  
 3 things local. Nothing is more local than Tribal  
 4 government. And the last piece, I have been saying  
 5 this for years, healthy Tribes make healthy  
 6 communities.

7 How-a gon-as-chish (phonetic) to the  
 8 Dena'ina people for allowing us to be here on their  
 9 land to share these words, and I hope that you carry  
 10 them back with the good intention that we give them.

11 Thank you.

12 BEN DUNCAN: I think we're at number one  
 13 on the --

14 JACQUELINE PATA: Gon-as-chish (phonetic).  
 15 (Speaking Native American language.) My name is  
 16 Jacqueline Pata, and I serve as the First Vice  
 17 President for the Central Council of Tlingit &  
 18 Haida, and I want to build upon President Peterson's  
 19 remarks by offering some specific recommendations  
 20 rooted in our experience as the Tribal government.

21 On the first point on addressing federal  
 22 inefficiency, first of all I want to say that  
 23 consolidated government should not create  
 24 inefficiencies for those that we are serving.

25 So for example, the Tribes -- the federal

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1 agencies that they consolidate shouldn't shift the  
 2 burden to the Tribes that they are providing  
 3 services to, and be able to make sure that we have  
 4 access. Backlogs in probate, Tribal probate in  
 5 105(1) leasing agreements reflects some of the  
 6 systematic inefficiencies.

7 And yet, Tribes are delayed with, you  
 8 know, as was stated, delayed with federal reporting  
 9 over by a year, we would face undue consequences,  
 10 but yet we are expected to just accept those delays  
 11 without any recourse.

12 The Alaska field offices are not  
 13 redundant. They are essential. What may look like  
 14 an inefficient in a spreadsheet, reflects logistical  
 15 realities of serving remote communities.

16 I have this little picture here, 8-1/2 by  
 17 11, with a postage stamp. The postage stamp  
 18 represents Alaska's communities that are on the road  
 19 system. The rest of us are not. And so I think  
 20 it's really important, particularly in Alaska when  
 21 you look at the number of Tribes, you look at the  
 22 geographic.

23 And we're not the only ones in the Nation  
 24 that have systems that are outside in rural and  
 25 remote parts of America. Access on that system is

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1 important, but also access to address other -- the  
 2 partnerships is important.

3 So for example, the backlog in the 106  
 4 approvals sometimes is just -- is short of staffing.  
 5 We only have one staff in the Anchorage office that  
 6 would be able to do that on any given time, and  
 7 maybe sometimes two, but you can't address those if  
 8 you don't have appropriate staffing levels.

9 And of course, if you don't have the  
 10 agreements and partnerships with other federal  
 11 agencies or other agencies, so Alaska -- we lack the  
 12 MOA agreement with SHPO which leads to substantially  
 13 long delays in getting approvals.

14 On funding a bureaucracy, Tribes are  
 15 called self-determination Tribes, yet we're made to  
 16 account for every penny despite clean annual audits.  
 17 The Single Audit Act should be sufficient. Even if  
 18 you look at territories across that the United  
 19 States gives money to, they do it in block grant  
 20 kind of components.

21 They don't make them have to have the same  
 22 reporting requirements, and we are Nations within a  
 23 Nation. Reporting has become overly burdensome,  
 24 especially past COVID with Tribes navigating  
 25 multiple federal portals, wasting time and resources

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1 better spent actually implementing the programs, and  
 2 spent servicing our citizens.

3 Competitive grants focus on regional  
 4 impact, disproportionately harms small Tribes and  
 5 Villages. We need direct allocation, substantial  
 6 increases to TPA, the small Tribe supplement, and  
 7 aid to Tribal government.

8 Advanced funding does not route through  
 9 the state. I want to say that again. Advanced  
 10 funding doesn't route through the state, and nor  
 11 should Tribes have to go to the state to get their  
 12 programs, resources.

13 On self-governance and cross-agency  
 14 support, Tlingit & Haida Support 77 program proves  
 15 that streamlined Tribally led service delivery  
 16 works, but we need the federal government to align  
 17 behind that success, and that means the other  
 18 federal agencies.

19 Working through the inner governmental  
 20 council is a good way for getting cross-agencies to  
 21 have similar streamlining efforts and reporting  
 22 consolidation.

23 Land into trust is a critical tool for  
 24 Tribal sovereignty and economic development. In  
 25 Alaska we have demonstrated we need a streamlined

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1 approach, and not the legal maze that's cost us  
 2 50,000 in legal fees.  
 3 Agencies that we partner with, like USDA,  
 4 EPA, and FEMA must join DOI in supporting,  
 5 compacting, and contracting. Co-stewardship  
 6 agreements are a good thing, and Central Council's  
 7 good example is with USDA, our co-management  
 8 agreement that we have.  
 9 By the way, was upheld only because we  
 10 upheld it, even as the federal agency exited by not  
 11 staffing or letting key staff go, that the Tribe  
 12 staffing levels remained in place, and that's one of  
 13 the reasons why the Mendenhall Glacier is still open  
 14 for visitors right now.  
 15 I want to make sure that we ensure that  
 16 the DSM, the Office of Budget and Management,  
 17 continues to work with TBAC, the Tribal Budget  
 18 Advisory Committee. Let's not get rid of the things  
 19 that are working as we're looking at consolidation.  
 20 Making sure that we're streamlining our  
 21 efforts, as I said, with the inner governmental  
 22 agency, and to ensure that the staff has a viable  
 23 voice directly with the secretary and policymakers  
 24 within Department of Interior.  
 25 And then lastly, I just want to be able to

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1 say that I was disappointed to see in your core  
 2 systems, the core programs that you're providing,  
 3 that BIA HIP wasn't there, because housing is a  
 4 number one critical issue in many of our  
 5 communities.  
 6 And even though the funding levels are low  
 7 in BIA HIP, it's an essential product that is  
 8 helpful to our communities. In Southeast Alaska we,  
 9 as a region, decided housing is our number one  
 10 priority, and we need every resource there to be  
 11 able to help us deliver it.  
 12 We appreciate that based upon our Tribal  
 13 resolution that it was honored at BIA and that we  
 14 were able to get those exemptions in place, and we  
 15 hope those exemptions continue. Those are ways of  
 16 streamlining when policies don't work, make  
 17 decisions to make exemptions work.  
 18 Thank you so much. This goal to optimize  
 19 services and support true Tribal self-governance is  
 20 something that we want to be a partner with.  
 21 Gon-as-chish (phonetic).  
 22 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 23 So let's go numbers 2, 3, 4, and then  
 24 we'll go online starting with Jones, we're going to  
 25 try you again, and we'll take a couple online

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1 comments.  
 2 GAYLA HOSETH: Thank you. Hi, good  
 3 morning everybody. Good to see you guys again. My  
 4 name is Gayla Hoseth. I'm the First Chief of  
 5 Curyung Tribal Council that's located in Southwest  
 6 Alaska.  
 7 We represent about 3,200 Tribal members in  
 8 our region, and then for my day job I'm the Director  
 9 of Natural Resources for Bristol Bay Native  
 10 Association, serving 31 Tribes in the Bristol Bay  
 11 region. Also on the Alaska Federation of Natives,  
 12 I'm board of directors and currently the subsistence  
 13 chair.  
 14 And I just wanted to think the people  
 15 speaking before me and the people speaking after me,  
 16 as we are on Dena'ina land, but I just wanted to  
 17 give a note of the room. As you see the artwork and  
 18 it kind of displays the people, and then at the end  
 19 over here to the right, my sister Bayou (phonetic)  
 20 is the artist that painted the salmonberries, and  
 21 those are a lot of the berries that are valued and a  
 22 prize possession of Alaska Natives for our  
 23 subsistence foods.  
 24 I'm currently the Department of Interior  
 25 Secretary of Tribal Advisory Committee primary rep,

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1 as I had just seen you guys a couple weeks ago, and  
 2 Walter Jim is our alternate. And so being in this  
 3 space with other fellow Alaska leaders is really  
 4 important, but important for you guys to kind of  
 5 hear the highlighted speech of what we have to talk  
 6 about that have so many integrated little bunny  
 7 trails that we could hop down as to how all of this  
 8 effects all of us.  
 9 With that, you know, we talked about  
 10 federal trust responsibility and true meaningful  
 11 Consultation, and this is more of a public comment  
 12 period than anything. And how we're going to engage  
 13 in Consultation today and moving into the future  
 14 concerns me as a Tribal leader, because we're  
 15 supposed to be having meaningful Consultation with  
 16 you guys commenting back and having a dialogue of  
 17 conversation. But we all already know that.  
 18 So for Alaska, it was stated, you know,  
 19 we're a huge state. We have 229 Tribes. We have  
 20 about 740,000 people that live here. Of the 740,000  
 21 people, 180,000 people are Tribal members, so just  
 22 to kind of give you guys a perspective of our size  
 23 mass, but then we have kind of a low population mass  
 24 for the area that we represent.  
 25 Anchorage is the hub of Alaska. Everybody

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1 flies through here mainly to go to where they're  
 2 going outside of the State of Alaska, and the more  
 3 far you go into the remote Villages, I know I've  
 4 seen some people here from smaller Villages around  
 5 the state, the more our cost of living gets, the  
 6 more air fare costs, and the more of these services  
 7 that are provided under the Department of Interior  
 8 impact us whereas your dollar here in Anchorage goes  
 9 a lot farther than a dollar in the smaller  
 10 communities.

11       Currently the BIA and the funds that we do  
 12 receive under Department of Interior are already not  
 13 enough. We've been flat funded for a long time, and  
 14 having cuts to these funds is going to -- how are we  
 15 going to survive and -- and be in this time and  
 16 space.

17       And we already know that decisions are  
 18 being made without having input from us. It's  
 19 really important for us to be at the table when  
 20 decisions are being made, and hearing things from  
 21 our perspective instead of reading things on it in  
 22 transcripts, reading things on public comments,  
 23 testimonies, and such and such.

24       When you're hearing and engaging with us,  
 25 it means a lot different than to actually see things

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1 with your own eyes.

2       So I just really wanted to really focus on  
 3 the importance of subsistence, because a lot of us  
 4 value our subsistence way of life. Anything that  
 5 has to do with fur, fins, feathers, flippers,  
 6 animals of the land, the air, and the water are what  
 7 we harvest. That has fed our people for generations  
 8 and generations, and since time immemorial.

9       That is who we are. And so when we have  
 10 -- when ANCSA was implemented, we had to extinguish  
 11 our Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. And it  
 12 was a Secretary Interior in the State of Alaska had  
 13 to protect our subsistence needs.

14       That didn't happen, and so in 1989 the  
 15 Alaska Supreme Court ruled that the Alaska couldn't  
 16 have a rural preference, which violated the state  
 17 constitution. Therefore the Federal Subsistence  
 18 Board was formed of the six federal agencies and  
 19 then the three public seats.

20       We live in a dual management system with  
 21 the state and the feds on our fish and wildlife  
 22 management, and having to navigate those regulations  
 23 and to how, when you're standing on a land of what  
 24 you can harvest and what you can't harvest, am I on  
 25 state land, federal land, and how does that work,

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1 really impacts us as we're trying to fill our  
 2 freezers as Vivian stated prior to that, to make  
 3 sure that we have enough food to feed our families  
 4 with the high cost of living.

5       Most recently the three Tribal additional  
 6 public Tribal seats got added to the Federal  
 7 Subsistence Board. It is a must that we keep those  
 8 three Tribal designated seats on the Federal  
 9 Subsistence Board. We have heard that there is  
 10 possibly people are, I guess, petitioning to change  
 11 the structure of the Federal Subsistence Board and  
 12 how that is going to be working.

13       Those have very -- those impact us a lot  
 14 here in Alaska, and we need to be at the table for  
 15 those decisions. And I think that we need to see  
 16 how is it going to work first before we make any  
 17 changes with those three Tribally designated seats  
 18 on the Federal Subsistence Board.

19       Also the OSM recently got moved under U.S.  
 20 Fish and Wildlife Service under the Office of  
 21 Assistant Secretary. It's important that we keep  
 22 OSM and doesn't put it back under U.S. Fish and  
 23 Wildlife Service.

24       A lot of times, and I just want to -- I  
 25 cannot emphasize enough of how important subsistence

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1 is. Having OSM under the secretary's office is a  
 2 lot better than under U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
 3 Service. They have the freedom to actually go into  
 4 the anthropologists' reviews of the proposals that  
 5 are being presented before them to weigh in on how  
 6 this is going to affect us. It has helped us  
 7 greatly because we've had some challenges with that.

8       In Alaska, our subsistence needs are still  
 9 not being met. Where I live, I live in Bristol Bay,  
 10 and we have an abundance of wild sockeye salmon;  
 11 however, with that abundance of wild sockeye salmon,  
 12 we're also seeing a decline of our Chinook and our  
 13 Chum. We're also seeing decline of our caribou.

14       We're also having limited access of  
 15 gathering some moose at different times of the year,  
 16 and having to make sure that we can have those  
 17 resources. So I just wanted to say that our  
 18 subsistence needs are still not being met.

19       All of the programs under DOI have huge  
 20 impacts on how we continue our way of life. And  
 21 navigating through this world of change, navigating  
 22 through all of the things that are moving at a very  
 23 fast pace and trying to keep on top of everything is  
 24 challenging, I'm sure not only for you guys but for  
 25 all of us, and we don't have the resources that you

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1 guys have to keep up on all of this information that  
2 we're having.

3       So everything is connected. Public  
4 safety, education, MMIP, wellness, all of these  
5 things impact our wellness and who we are as people.

6       I really want to emphasize a lot too on  
7 the PL 93-638 compacting, it's important for this to  
8 be easier to be implemented in the State of Alaska,  
9 but as I sit around this stock table I hear how easy  
10 it is for the lower 48 Tribes to get this  
11 compacting, but we run into hurdles up here in  
12 Alaska.

13       And a good example of that is the Alaskan  
14 Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. We've been  
15 trying to get that compacted for a long time to get  
16 it out of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and as an  
17 organization in itself, because none of that --  
18 whatever the percentage they receive right off the  
19 top, as our funding gets decreased for AMBCC for  
20 Migratory Birds, that could be worked with the  
21 groups of the 10 regions that are currently involved  
22 in AMBCC.

23       Probates. As stated before, there's -- I  
24 found out at the last meeting there was 48,000  
25 probates that are needing to be processed with the

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1 Probate Strike Team task force that was formed. I  
2 think that's going to be helpful.

3       But also my dad has been doing land  
4 management for a long time under Bristol Bay Native  
5 Association, and has worked with BIA, has things to  
6 be implemented to where things could be contracted  
7 or compacted to the organizations to streamline that  
8 process, to basically we could just send the  
9 documents to you guys and sign those off. So that  
10 there shouldn't be any reason why we have the  
11 probate backlogs.

12       Tribal liaisons are very, very important  
13 within the DOI. I know that a lot of Tribal  
14 liaisons' positions got cut maybe within the first  
15 probationary period that we're in, but it's very  
16 important that we have those Tribal liaison  
17 positions within DOI because they understand the  
18 needs that we have, and then we also build  
19 relationships with those Tribal liaisons.

20       I don't want to take up too much more of  
21 your time. We will follow up with written comments,  
22 but I just want to emphasize enough of the federal  
23 trust responsibility, and how are we going to go and  
24 engage into true government-to-government  
25 Consultation during these times? Because this isn't

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1 Consultation, but I'm really happy to see everybody  
2 here.

3       And I was trying to think before coming  
4 here is, when was the last time outside of Alaska  
5 Federation of Natives that Tribes are coming  
6 together to really advocate of how these programs  
7 under DOI are impacting us, and they're impacting us  
8 greatly.

9       So thank you.

10       MIKE JONES: Thank you for allowing me to  
11 speak today. (Speaking Native American language.)  
12 My Haida name is Sa-ju-ju (phonetic). My name is  
13 Mike Jones. I'm the Tribal President in Kasaan. We  
14 are a Haida Village way down by Ketchikan on the  
15 very southern point.

16       And I want to read a statement here. The  
17 United States government must fundamentally  
18 transform its approach to Tribal Nations by  
19 recognizing and fully implementing its trust and  
20 treaty responsibilities.

21       This requires a paradigm shift from  
22 paternalistic oversight to genuine government-to-  
23 government Consultation that respects Tribal  
24 sovereignty. Meaningful Consultation is not a  
25 bureaucratic check box, but a constitutional and

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1 moral obligation that demands comprehensive, timely,  
2 and substantive engagement.

3       Tribes must be equal partners in decision  
4 making process affecting their lands, resources,  
5 communities with sufficient time, resources, and  
6 platforms to provide informed input.

7       The federal government must move beyond  
8 superficial interactions such as 7 to 10-day comment  
9 periods. That can't be emphasized enough. What a  
10 joke, 7 to 14 days to comment. Half of us can't  
11 even get notified within that time to get it to our  
12 councils, to talk about it.

13       It's got to, you know, if we don't have a  
14 council meeting right then, then we have to have a  
15 special council meeting and get everybody together  
16 to talk about these things.

17       And create robust mechanisms that  
18 integrate Indigenous knowledge, support Tribal self-  
19 determination, and provide direct, predictable  
20 funding. By honoring these principles, the United  
21 States can begin to repair historical injustices and  
22 create a collaborative framework that truly reflects  
23 the Nation to Nation relationship promised in  
24 treaties and affirmed by federal law.

25       Key policy objectives and concrete

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1 examples.

2 1. Direct funding.

3 The objective: Provide direct allocations

4 to Tribes bypassing state intermediaries.

5 Examples: Guarantee a \$300,000 base

6 allocation directly to small Tribes instead of a

7 competitive \$50,000 grants. Eliminate state level

8 intermediaries for USDA or HUD grants. Provide

9 advanced predictable funding mechanisms.

10 2. Land and economic sovereignty.

11 Objective: Streamline land into trust

12 processes, and support Tribal economic development.

13 Examples: Expedite all Tribes' land into

14 trust application within reasonable time frame.

15 Reduce land transfer legal costs from \$250,000 to

16 under 25,000. Allow Tribes to develop economic

17 projects on trust lands without additional state

18 approvals.

19 3. Self-governance expansion.

20 Objective: Expand Tribal contracting and

21 self-determination opportunities.

22 Examples: Allow Tribes to contract

23 directly with National Park Service for Visitor

24 Center management. Expand Tribal contracts with EPA

25 for environmental monitoring. Allow Tribes to

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1 manage their own health care administration across

2 federal agencies.

3 4. Reduce administrative burdens.

4 Objective: Simplify reporting

5 requirements and recognize Tribal governance.

6 Example: Accept single-audit reports as

7 sufficient documentation. Reduce monthly reporting

8 to quarterly. Eliminate Davis-Bacon wage

9 requirements for small Tribal infrastructure

10 projects.

11 5. Meaningful Consultation.

12 Objective: Provide genuine comprehensive

13 Consultation process.

14 Example: Provide draft NEPA environmental

15 assessment 60 days before comment period. Include

16 Tribal elders in environmental review panels. Allow

17 sufficient time for Tribal input, not 7 to 14-day

18 window.

19 6. Funding equity.

20 Objective: Increase funding for Tribal

21 administrative capacity.

22 Examples: Increase Tribal priority

23 allocation from 500,000 to 1 million.

24 These recommendations aim to transform the

25 relationship between Tribal governments and the U.S.

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1 federal government, moving from paternalistic model

2 to a true government-to-government partnership.

3 In closing, I just want to reflect a

4 little bit on the people that I'm here representing

5 today. We are a small Village. We have only about

6 80 people in our Village. In our bay, I live in

7 Kasaan. It's in Kasaan Bay. We live underneath of

8 Kasaan Mountain. Kasaan Island is right out front.

9 That is our bay. Generational wealth came out of

10 our bay, and I am here representing single mothers

11 that have to make a choice between internet and

12 feeding their kids, and that's not okay.

13 We have elders that can't afford to build

14 a wheelchair ramp into their house as they're aging.

15 We have mental health. We've spent a lot of our own

16 money out of our general fund to help our citizens

17 with mental health, and finding avenues for them to

18 get the treatment that they need to get off of the

19 drugs that have been funneled into our communities,

20 in my opinion, intentionally.

21 This is not organic, and I don't think

22 it's by accident that all these drugs are

23 devastating and decimating our communities, and so

24 it's up to us to find avenues for them to get the

25 help that they need to get.

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1 We've made great progress with that, but

2 we need -- we need help. We shouldn't be using our

3 own funds out of general -- out of our general fund

4 when so much generational wealth has come out of

5 Alaska.

6 And it's probably the same for everybody

7 here, but the owners of these canneries and cold

8 storages, they're descendants are living off of our

9 resources today, while our people are struggling to

10 get by, and that's not okay.

11 (Speaking Native American language.)

12 Thank you very much.

13 BEN DUNCAN: We're going to go, you're

14 number four, and then five through eight, but we're

15 going to jump online after you're comment. Thank

16 you.

17 GERRY HOPE: Currently I'm known as number

18 four, but I'd like to to introduce myself as Ja-ake

19 (phonetic). I am Tlingit. I am of the Sitna-utti

20 (phonetic) clan in Wrangell, born and raised in

21 Sitka, however, and I'm here on behalf of our Tribal

22 chairwoman, Gaida-ku-kah (phonetic) who authorized

23 me to speak on behalf of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.

24 I do want to say a little bit of history.

25 I was first elected to the Tribal Council in 1979.

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1 I was around when the Sitka, at that time called the  
 2 Sitka Community Association, was in the pilot  
 3 program with Tlingit Central Council and Haida  
 4 Tribes of Alaska, and that was in the '70s.  
 5 I recall the kind of thing that we went  
 6 through, which was a great act of Congress supported  
 7 by the president, at that time Nixon, who  
 8 transitioned all the programs from the Bureau of  
 9 Indian Affairs to the Tribes.  
 10 However, in the Indian Self-Determination  
 11 Act, there was a little bit of a transition that we  
 12 all went through to identify how we need to manage  
 13 the programs. And in the Self-Determination Act,  
 14 you were required to go by the code of federal  
 15 regulations. So what did that mean? Practically it  
 16 was awkward, because we ended up operating like a  
 17 little BIA.  
 18 Can we do this? Oh, go to the code of  
 19 federal regulations and we'll find out if we could  
 20 do that. Can we spend money here, or there, or what  
 21 about pens? Which program? I'm in the social  
 22 services program, so where do I spend money to get  
 23 pens and paper? Go to the CFR.  
 24 Whoever knew the code of federal  
 25 regulations were primary people. They were highly

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1 regarded, because then you could just go to them  
 2 instead of having to look it up yourself.  
 3 Self-governance was a major step because  
 4 we ended up doing away with having to do that acting  
 5 like the boss-Indians-around thing. And I recall  
 6 going to a self-governance advisory committee  
 7 meeting in DC in March, and there was somebody from  
 8 the Office of Indian Affairs that was speaking, and  
 9 she was talking about how we needed to do some re-  
 10 branding.  
 11 I was teasing with her, but then too, I  
 12 wasn't, saying okay, so let's change boss-Indians-  
 13 around to believe-Indians-already. Let's hear a  
 14 clap of hands.  
 15 Believe-Indians-already. We need to do  
 16 that, and I'm hoping that as we go through these  
 17 Tribal Consultations, these series of Tribal  
 18 Consultations, that that's a message, bottom line,  
 19 that will be listened to and lived.  
 20 A little more introduction before I get  
 21 into my copious notes. I was appointed by our  
 22 Tribal Council to represent them in the Department  
 23 of Transportation's self-governance negotiations,  
 24 Tribal Consultation, but the negotiations, the Neg-  
 25 Reg Committee.

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1 There was a 20-year effort just to get to  
 2 that through the FAST Act, and then it took another  
 3 five years to go through the negotiation process to  
 4 establish self-governance in the DOT.  
 5 After that, the Progress Act was enacted  
 6 by Congress which meant that we needed to do another  
 7 generation of self-governance in the Department of  
 8 Interior. Again, Tribal Council appointed me to be  
 9 on the Neg-Reg Committee on their behalf.  
 10 I was the alternative, the alternate to  
 11 President Richard Peterson representing, and that  
 12 was a two-year process. So self-governance works.  
 13 Yeah, we need to tweak it, we need to upgrade it.  
 14 We need to negotiate what that means with the  
 15 Department of Interior, but we do that. We did  
 16 that. We are now in that. So I do appreciate that.  
 17 I did want to say one final thing about  
 18 the introduction piece. Our Tribal Vice Chairman,  
 19 in 1990 when we were going through the revision of  
 20 our constitution, said, if you are saying you are a  
 21 government, act like a government. Refer to those  
 22 -- again, Bill Brady was his name. He's also the  
 23 Tribal judge.  
 24 He said, if you're going to act like a  
 25 government, refer to those who are in your Tribal

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1 government as Tribal citizens. Members are a  
 2 colonial term that did not want to recognize a  
 3 sovereign within a sovereign.  
 4 So I wanted to represent his words. He  
 5 passed along a number of years ago, but the Tribe  
 6 listened to him, heard him, and now I have an  
 7 enrolled citizen of over 4,200 enrolled Tribal  
 8 citizens of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska.  
 9 Here are some comments that are important,  
 10 pertinent, I believe, to the efficiency that you're  
 11 talking about and that you're here to listen.  
 12 The federal government should increase  
 13 technical assistance and prioritize streamlined  
 14 technology to support it. The Department of  
 15 Interior should increase investment and technical  
 16 assistance to Tribes and Tribal organizations to  
 17 support grant writing, financial management,  
 18 procurement systems, and data collecting.  
 19 These investments should prioritize  
 20 Tribally led training and peer-to-peer models, not  
 21 only outside contractors unfamiliar with Indian  
 22 country, Alaska Tribes are often forced to rely on  
 23 third party consultants to apply for and implement  
 24 federal funding opportunities and perform required  
 25 reporting.

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1 To create in-house technical expertise  
 2 will maximize Tribal resources and improve outcomes  
 3 for Tribes and their citizens. Many federal  
 4 tracking and reporting systems are outdated and lack  
 5 transparency. Updated programs which are consistent  
 6 across agencies, user friendly, and easy to train  
 7 would support consistency and oversight that Tribes  
 8 and Tribal organizations can use to ensure every  
 9 dollar goes where it is intended.  
 10 Payment platforms should be easy to use,  
 11 easy to access, and allow Tribes to track every  
 12 dollar they've owed and where payments are in  
 13 realtime. Awards should be easy to process without  
 14 burdensome layers of review and approvals, and  
 15 should occur as soon as Indian Affairs has the funds  
 16 available. No gatekeeping mechanism should control  
 17 Tribes across their federal funds.  
 18 There are a couple of more points, but I'm  
 19 going to email those to you, and I do appreciate  
 20 that.  
 21 I did want to say thank you to the  
 22 Dena'ina for allowing me to speak here, and I did  
 23 want to honor you by asking you who are Dena'ina to  
 24 stand so we could appreciate you. Dena'ina, would  
 25 you please stand, those of you who are Dena'ina.

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1 Thank you.  
 2 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So we're going to  
 3 move to our online folks. It's going to go Jones,  
 4 Nathan, Justina, Evelyn, Dean. So we're going to  
 5 try to get through our online hands, and then we'll  
 6 start back in the room with five.  
 7 So let's go Jones, can we try?  
 8 SAM LEVY: And Jones, I see you're  
 9 unmuted. You can turn your camera on if you'd like.  
 10 Please go ahead with your comment.  
 11 BEN DUNCAN: Let's try again, Jones. You  
 12 broke up a little bit.  
 13 JONES HOTCH, JR.: Can you hear me yet?  
 14 Hello.  
 15 BEN DUNCAN: We can barely hear you. Keep  
 16 talking, Jones, let's see if we can get you. I can  
 17 see you leaning in. Keep trying to talk, and let's  
 18 see if we can hear you.  
 19 JONES HOTCH, JR.: My name is Jones Hotch,  
 20 Jr. Can you hear me now?  
 21 BEN DUNCAN: We can hear you loud and  
 22 clear now, Jones.  
 23 JONES HOTCH, JR.: Okay. President of  
 24 Chilkat Village. We are a federally recognized  
 25 Tribe, and I'd like to recognize the Indigenous

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1 people's land we are talking on.  
 2 What is happening here, it's two topics on  
 3 one call and it's not doing justice to either topic.  
 4 Both of them are very serious and it's really hard  
 5 to, I mean, they need to be separate talks, and  
 6 Chilkat Village, we are inviting you folks for a  
 7 one-on-one Consultation.  
 8 And we can't see the critical emergency  
 9 is. The emergency that we see is our way of life is  
 10 at risk with the so-called critical emergency.  
 11 We have been living this life since time  
 12 immemorial, and we will continue to do this to the  
 13 seventh generation. That has always been our goal,  
 14 and it will always be our goal. And we echo the  
 15 thoughts that one gentleman was speaking on, direct  
 16 funding.  
 17 We like that Tribal Nations have long  
 18 requested the ability to determine for themselves the  
 19 extent to which NEPA compliance should apply on  
 20 Tribal lands. And any expedited process must not  
 21 sacrifice Tribal co-stewardship in the name of  
 22 expediency.  
 23 Tribal historic preservation is essential  
 24 for the integrity of federal review process, and  
 25 more importantly it is critical to the protection

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1 and preservation of our religious freedom, our  
 2 cultural heritage.  
 3 Tribal Consultation is most effective for  
 4 the federal government and most effective for Tribal  
 5 Nations when there is transparency and clear purpose  
 6 of scope.  
 7 We look forward to the day when we will  
 8 have a one-on-one Consultation with you folks on  
 9 these very important matters, and it's very hard to  
 10 cover both topics in one day and in the hours that  
 11 are set for it today.  
 12 I appreciate the time, and I thank  
 13 everyone that's there in person, and those that are  
 14 on Zoom. I will just close with this. (Speaking  
 15 Native American language.) Be strong, have courage.  
 16 Thank you.  
 17 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 18 SAM LEVY: All right. Nathan, you can go  
 19 ahead and unmute. You can turn your video on if  
 20 you'd like, and please go ahead with your comment.  
 21 NATHAN ELSWICK: Can you guys hear me all  
 22 right?  
 23 BEN DUNCAN: Got you Nathan, thank you.  
 24 NATHAN ELSWICK: Thank you. Nathan  
 25 Elswick, I'm the First Chief of The Native Village

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1 of Anvik located on the Yukon River. Just got a  
 2 couple of comments on the talking points, and then  
 3 also a statement on the main reason that I'm  
 4 attending today.

5 First off, I'd like to say, as we all  
 6 know, effective Consultation strengthens the  
 7 government-to-government relationship. Tribal  
 8 Consultation is a right, and we come here today as  
 9 rights holders, not as mere stakeholders, to work  
 10 together to find consensus on issues that impact us  
 11 all.

12 We are grateful that our right to Tribal  
 13 Consultation has been recognized here today,  
 14 although we all know it seems more like a public  
 15 comment process. We hope to work closely with this  
 16 administration on any future meaningful dialogue  
 17 that relates to any of these topics in the future  
 18 and beyond.

19 As we all know, Tribal Consultation is  
 20 most efficient for the federal government and most  
 21 effective for Tribal Nations when there's  
 22 transparency and a clear purpose of the scope.

23 Tribal Consultation must take place before  
 24 decisions are made. The second addendum to the  
 25 Tribal Leaders letter that went out tells us that

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1 DOI has already decided to adopt an alternative NEPA  
 2 compliance process with expedited ESA Section 7  
 3 process, and the National Historic Preservation Act  
 4 alternative procedures.

5 We were not consulted before these  
 6 decisions were made. The administration must  
 7 prioritize the delivery of services and funding to  
 8 Indian country as mandated by the trust and treaty  
 9 obligations, and any efforts to restructure Indian  
 10 Affairs.

11 Indian Affairs programs are already  
 12 operating with inadequate staffing and support,  
 13 including in key areas like trust resources  
 14 associated with land, natural resources, water and  
 15 timber, education, public safety, social services,  
 16 and trust fund management.

17 So any reductions in cuts to be BIA and  
 18 even thinking about cutting the Alaska office would  
 19 have drastic effects on the Tribes in Alaska, and  
 20 really doesn't make any sense on, when you talk  
 21 about workforce efficiency and productivity, how  
 22 that's supposed to work when you guys are planning  
 23 to have all these cuts within the BIA and possibly  
 24 closing down the Alaska office. It really doesn't  
 25 make any sense on what that workforce efficiency and

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1 productivity.

2 So actually I wanted to make a statement.  
 3 We're 40-member Tribes which formed back in 2014, we  
 4 formed the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission.

5 I am here today representing the 40-member  
 6 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission.  
 7 Tribal Commission staff are attending in person, and  
 8 will present a document as I am speaking.

9 Five Tribal Commission member Tribes have  
 10 signed this cooperative agreement we are submitting  
 11 today to ask the Department of Interior to  
 12 collaborate with us. Disagreement would commit to  
 13 the department to consult and communicate with  
 14 Tribal Commission Tribes concerning the D-D-1 lands  
 15 and its intent to strengthen land management  
 16 effectiveness and increase cooperation with Tribes'  
 17 management of natural and cultural resources on D-1  
 18 lands for 40-member Tribes.

19 In 2014 the Tribal Commission member  
 20 Tribes nominated salmon producing local watersheds  
 21 for protection from extraction, development in areas  
 22 of critical environmental concern. And Tribes were  
 23 continually active as cooperating agency  
 24 participants throughout the 10 years of BLM's  
 25 resource management planning processes.

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1 And to finalize the Bering Sea Western  
 2 Interior plan, the Bureau of Land Management  
 3 rejected all Tribes' dominations and designated no  
 4 protections. Instead they opened up 99 percent of  
 5 BLM managed land in the planning area to mineral  
 6 entry and development.

7 Land was finalized with no protections the  
 8 Tribes asked for. The proposed review and changes  
 9 to the NEPA and National Historic Preservation Act  
 10 under the emergency permitting procedures, our  
 11 member Tribes will be virtually cut out of the  
 12 process when changes are considered to ANCSA 17 D-1  
 13 withdrawals.

14 Our development is proposed on these lands  
 15 that sustain our Tribal communities. The 40-member  
 16 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission  
 17 are voicing solid opposition to the use of emergency  
 18 permitting procedures under the supposed national  
 19 emergency energy emergency.

20 And we are formally asking for a  
 21 Consultation from the Department of Interior,  
 22 proposed actions relating to the D-1 lands.

23 It is not efficient to get rid of people  
 24 whose jobs it is to reach out and ensure  
 25 Consultation with Tribes in the remote places like

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1 Alaska when that is already hard enough. Workforce  
 2 reductions will make it harder for people to meet  
 3 their legal obligation and to do their jobs.  
 4         Communication in Alaska, because of its  
 5 distance and remote access, often influenced by  
 6 weather, communication infrastructure, and other  
 7 challenges, reducing time for review and input  
 8 regarding impacts to proposed energy development --  
 9 (call dropped).  
 10         SAM LEVY: Might have been a Wi-Fi issue.  
 11 Looks like he dropped from the meeting.  
 12         BEN DUNCAN: Oh, okay.  
 13         SAM LEVY: But if he re-joins, we can make  
 14 sure he gets added back into the queue.  
 15         BEN DUNCAN: In the queue, will you call  
 16 on who is next?  
 17         SAM LEVY: Yes. Justina, you will be next  
 18 to provide comment. I will go ahead and ask you to  
 19 unmute, and you can feel free to provide your  
 20 comment.  
 21         JUSTINA: Good afternoon. My name is  
 22 Justina Wilhelm. I am the president here at  
 23 Ilisagvik College located in Utqiagvik, Alaska,  
 24 formerly known as Barrow.  
 25         I'm here today to represent our Tribal

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1 colleges and universities. Ilisagvik College is  
 2 also sanctioned by the Inupiat Community of the  
 3 Arctic Slope.  
 4         Regarding the overall message for our  
 5 Tribal colleges and universities, we are chartered  
 6 but our respective Tribal Nations and act as  
 7 extensions of the Tribal Nation. Tribal higher  
 8 education is rooted in the trust and treaty  
 9 responsibility, and TCU's programs and funding are  
 10 essential to the economic success of our rural  
 11 communities through higher education opportunities,  
 12 workforce development, and agriculture development.  
 13         Regarding the question of what  
 14 recommendations would you make to Indian Affairs to  
 15 improve efficiencies through staffing changes --  
 16 sharing improvements and potential consolidations.  
 17         The BIE staff who provide vital technical  
 18 assistance to Tribal colleges were already limited  
 19 before the Trump administration took office. Higher  
 20 education, specifically TCUs, have been overlooked  
 21 in agency representation as there is only one  
 22 program analyst to provide support for all 35  
 23 accredited and three developing Tribal colleges and  
 24 universities.  
 25         The institutional knowledge that has been

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1 acquired throughout the years from BIE staff by  
 2 building trusting relationships with communities,  
 3 school staff is vital for program development and  
 4 efficiency.  
 5         Should one individual be terminated or  
 6 moved, essential knowledge will be lost and new  
 7 relationships will have to be built. The TCU system  
 8 urges protection for Haskell Indian Nations  
 9 University and Southwestern Indian Polytech  
 10 Institute from future RIFs.  
 11         These federally operated institutions were  
 12 likely unintentionally targeted during February's  
 13 probationary employee terminations which affected 24  
 14 to 27 percent of staff, and disrupted essential  
 15 services.  
 16         Although faculty and staff have since been  
 17 reinstated, there is on going concern about future  
 18 cuts impacting those who support American Indian and  
 19 Alaska Native students. AIHEC is respectively  
 20 requesting that DOI exempt all Haskell and SIPI  
 21 employees, recognizing their vital roles.  
 22         In the 2022 GAO report, GAO found that the  
 23 BIE had an overall staff vacancy rate of 33 percent,  
 24 and that high staff vacancy rate significantly  
 25 inhibits BIE's ability to support and oversee

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1 schools.  
 2         Regarding topic two, addressing current  
 3 funding structures including identifying  
 4 efficiencies and barriers, and what program  
 5 recommendations would you make to Indian Affairs to  
 6 improve access to federal programs. For the TCUs,  
 7 operational funding is forward funding. However,  
 8 TCUs often wait months to receive funding.  
 9         The delay of these critical resources can  
 10 interrupt TCU's operations and impede TCU's efforts  
 11 to provide the department with accurate accounting  
 12 and timely reporting. A more streamlined process  
 13 for transferring funds to TCUs would be greatly  
 14 beneficial.  
 15         Delay ranges from a combination of issues  
 16 that occur during the budget process or within the  
 17 agency. Reporting requirements for TCUs are often  
 18 burdensome, as most reporting documents are not  
 19 listed within the regulations, or requests more  
 20 detail than what is listed in the regulations.  
 21         The 1978 Tribally controlled Colleges and  
 22 Universities Assistance Act, TCU Act, called for  
 23 facility needs to study for Tribal colleges and  
 24 universities, but it has never been completed. To  
 25 effectively advocate for infrastructure needs, a

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1 comprehensive study is essential.  
 2 Funding for this study should not reduce  
 3 existing TCU funding. While TCU construction  
 4 funding began in 2021, the BIE has not requested an  
 5 increase since 2022. When they added the funding  
 6 line to their budgets, a funding increase could  
 7 support the long overdue study.  
 8 There needs to be increased communication  
 9 between the different agencies within the DOI,  
 10 specifically between BIA and BIE. This increased  
 11 communication could increase transparency and  
 12 overall efficiency within the department.  
 13 Lastly, how can the Indian Affairs  
 14 optimize its functionality and effectiveness to  
 15 Tribes? The TCU Act includes an endowment for TCUs  
 16 from the BIE. AIHEC, which is the American Indian  
 17 Higher Education Consortium, recommends  
 18 administrative improvements to the endowment that  
 19 the department can make, as well as amendments to  
 20 the endowment that the department can support.  
 21 For administrative recommendations, we are  
 22 requesting to de-link the TCCUAA endowment funds  
 23 from operating funds; allow construction and  
 24 renovation as an allowable use; recommend a formula  
 25 for endowment distribution not based on TCU's

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1 financial status, and examine opportunities to  
 2 develop a system of stable BIE endowment funding for  
 3 recipients that create a degree of financial  
 4 certainty.  
 5 And for the congressional recommendations  
 6 that BIE can support, eliminate the match  
 7 requirement for the BIE TCCUAA endowment by allowing  
 8 payment from sources other than private and Tribal  
 9 funds, provide the Separate of Interior with  
 10 authority to grant a waiver if a college  
 11 accidentally spends the corpus or waiver to allow  
 12 TCUs to use corpus in case of emergencies, and  
 13 provide expiration dates similar to the Department  
 14 of Education endowment, at which time Tribal  
 15 colleges would not have to repay the federal  
 16 contribution and could use their endowment funding  
 17 as needed.  
 18 Again, my name is Justina Wilhelm. I'm  
 19 with Ilisagvik College, and I thank you for this  
 20 time. Kwee-nup-a (phonetic).  
 21 BEN DUNCAN: So let's go Evelyn, and then  
 22 I'll ask 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 to come up to the queue. So  
 23 if you remember your numbers, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, but  
 24 Evelyn, please.  
 25 SAM LEVY: Evelyn, you can go ahead and

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1 unmute and turn your camera on.  
 2 EVELYN BEETER: Hello. This is Evelyn  
 3 Beeter with Cheesh'na Tribal Council. I'm a council  
 4 member. We're a compacted Tribe, and some of our  
 5 concerns are Alaska needs to have the BIA regional  
 6 office. We need to keep it here.  
 7 We're a huge state and we have many  
 8 smaller Tribes, and we're all an underserved region.  
 9 And the local staff, they understand the unique  
 10 needs of Alaska communities, and they need to act  
 11 without the red tape and bureaucracy.  
 12 Tribes need to be involved in any  
 13 decisions about any specific proposed reorganization  
 14 or cuts to BIA, especially trust responsibilities to  
 15 the Tribes. Need to address the current funding  
 16 structures including identifying efficiency barriers  
 17 to expedite funding to the Tribes and Tribal  
 18 programs.  
 19 Need to get the funding out without all  
 20 the red tape and delays. Reporting requirements are  
 21 burdensome for the smaller Tribes, and just doing  
 22 programs. It holds the program back. You have to  
 23 spend so much time trying to report.  
 24 The competitive grant structure  
 25 disadvantages the small and rural Tribes, and the

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1 Tribal governments, they're the most localized  
 2 government in Alaska and should be treated as a  
 3 government managing its own issues and providing  
 4 services.  
 5 The Tribes should be having single direct  
 6 allocations, and some of the other programs that are  
 7 really important to us as a small Tribe is like the  
 8 housing. Subsistence is a priority. That's our way  
 9 of life. It needs to be protected. The roads  
 10 program. The probate is backed up in our state, so  
 11 we need to make sure that we figure out how to  
 12 address that.  
 13 And I just want to say thank you for  
 14 listening to the Tribes, and hope our words are  
 15 valued and help support restructuring of the Indian  
 16 Affairs in a good way.  
 17 Thank you.  
 18 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So we'll go back  
 19 in the room.  
 20 ROB SANDERSON: Thank you. Rob Sanderson,  
 21 Tlingit & Haida Central Council, third Vice  
 22 President. I have over 25 years of Tribal  
 23 experience, most of the time flying under the radar.  
 24 I wear many hats, and I'm going to go on script, and  
 25 I'm going to go off script after, as I'm assuming I

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1 only have just a limited time to speak before you  
2 today, so much appreciated.

3 I am from the Haida Tribe, from Hydaburg,  
4 Alaska. So I want to speak about what real Tribal  
5 governance looks like, not in theory but in  
6 practice. Tlingit & Haida is a national model for  
7 compacting and consolidation of services, but that  
8 not did happen by accident.

9 It took decades of work, advocacy, and  
10 intentional investment in our capacity as a Tribal  
11 government. At one time the BIA had a full-service  
12 office in Juneau. Over time -- has entered into  
13 compacts and other contracts under this as we took  
14 on more and more of these services.

15 We don't do it to replace the BIA. We did  
16 it because we had the capacity to infrastructure,  
17 and most importantly the trust of our communities.  
18 Today we operate over 30 departments, employ over  
19 500 staff, and manage \$100 million budget.

20 We provide social services, public safety,  
21 workforce programs, child welfare, Tribal court  
22 operations, much of which were once handled by  
23 federal agencies. It's just not compacting, that's  
24 full spectrum Tribal governance in action.

25 Let me be clear. It wasn't the BIA

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1 downsizing that made things better. It was  
2 investment in Tribal capacity. Restructuring Indian  
3 Affairs should be about meeting Tribes where they  
4 are, not assuming one model fits all.

5 What worked for Tlingit & Haida might not  
6 work for others, or other parts of Alaska. That's  
7 why the federal staff in our regions still matter.  
8 That's why Tribal Consultation and local decision  
9 makings matter.

10 Efficiency does not come from cutting  
11 corners or collapsing offices. It comes from  
12 investing in Tribal Nations and trusting us to lead.  
13 What Tlingit & Haida needs now is sustained support  
14 for compacting technical assistance for smaller  
15 Tribes that want to follow this path, and meaningful  
16 coordination across DOI, USDA, EPA, FEMA, and others  
17 because sovereignty doesn't stop at BIA.

18 We are living proof that Tribal  
19 governments can operate full-service systems with  
20 better results when the federal government stops  
21 trying to manage and provide the service for us to  
22 lead. The question, whether this administration  
23 about build on that success or retreat into top-down  
24 models that have already failed.

25 Now, going off script. I've had the

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1 opportunity to serve in many different capacities,  
2 NCAI, Alaska area vice chair, AFN. I served four  
3 years on the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention  
4 Council under Governor Walker, vetted by his team,  
5 and that is one thing that we really need to pay  
6 attention to.

7 Every community in this great state of  
8 ours, every community has lost at least one person,  
9 okay. The numbers are staggering. They're going up  
10 more and more. We re-wrote the manual. It had one  
11 faith in there. Now it has all cultures and faiths  
12 in that manual, but that does not seem to be  
13 working. So I'm calling on the powers that be  
14 before us to do what they can to help us combat that  
15 dark scourge.

16 Tribes here in Alaska take less than one  
17 percent of the total take of subsistence, and I  
18 don't really like that word, but that's the word we  
19 use when we are out there practicing our pay of  
20 life.

21 Now, if the federal government just took a  
22 step back and actually looked at how we live our  
23 life and how we have provided for our families for  
24 centuries here, it would actually take what they  
25 assume was a burden to them, on regulating the

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1 Tribes.

2 If the government just let the Tribes go  
3 after and practice their way of life on that one  
4 percent, they would actually save themselves money.  
5 You think about that. Less regulations, less money.

6 Where is the damage being done at? It's  
7 being done at the state, the federal level on our  
8 people being able to put food on our table because  
9 there's too damn much red tape going around. You  
10 have to do this, you have to do that.

11 And finally, you know, we're going to talk  
12 about fishing here, just a little bit here. Our  
13 people are losing their fishing rights at an  
14 alarming rate here, not only in Western Alaska, the  
15 interior, but also Southeast Alaska.

16 I think Interior, the BIA has the power to  
17 influence the powers that be in this industry. Out-  
18 of-staters, people that come up and hunt and fish in  
19 our great state, they have more rights than we do.  
20 They really do, you know. You think about that.

21 And a lot of the regulations that are put  
22 on the Tribes are based on the need of the outside  
23 people that come and fish and hunt in our land, in  
24 our territories. I've been a participant in the  
25 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council for 25-

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1 plus years.  
 2 I've learned a lot from a very smart man,  
 3 my father. He talked about this to me when I was a  
 4 young kid, of what was coming, because of the red  
 5 king crab crash that happened in the Gulf of Alaska.  
 6 Nobody learned that lesson. There were times when  
 7 we were attending a North Pacific Fisheries  
 8 Management Council when there were only two Tribes  
 9 in there. We were trying to sound the alarm, but it  
 10 wasn't being heeded. Now look at where we are at  
 11 today.  
 12 It's devastating our people. It's  
 13 devastating the sea floor, and, you know, I hope  
 14 that Interior has the power or the wherewithal to  
 15 engage with Congress on what's going on out in the  
 16 Bering Sea and the Western Gulf of Alaska and the  
 17 Central Gulf of Alaska, and not over in our area,  
 18 the Eastern Gulf of Alaska where trawling is not  
 19 permitted right now, but who is to say that they'll  
 20 take that off the plate and go after our area next.  
 21 Since 2017 they have killed off what we  
 22 believe to be over 20 orcas, killer whales. That's  
 23 my clan, but yet it's a legal take. Wanton waste,  
 24 kicked off over the side, but we as Alaska natives,  
 25 if we go out and take one halibut over the limit,

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1 we're met at the dock, we're chastised, sometimes  
 2 our gear taken, our boats tied up, this and that.  
 3 You look at the weekly reports on the NOAA  
 4 website, and those numbers that are taken off that  
 5 website we believe are an undercount of what they're  
 6 taking out there in the Bering Sea and in the  
 7 Western Gulf of Alaska, where they can kill off  
 8 10,000 Chinook salmon every other week, and our  
 9 people can't even fish in our rivers here in Alaska.  
 10 And lastly, transboundary rivers, okay.  
 11 That's just a big a threat to our Native people  
 12 living here not only out West in the interior, but  
 13 in Southeast. Let me tell you, down by Ketchikan  
 14 where I live. I'm not from Ketchikan, I live in  
 15 Ketchikan. I'm from the Haida Nation. I live in  
 16 Hydaburg.  
 17 Tlingit & Haida has been invested in  
 18 transboundary for years now. A lot of you have  
 19 heard about the Pebble Mine. We know that, but let  
 20 me tell you, just because it's in a different  
 21 country doesn't mean it's less of a threat.  
 22 Okay. Let's talk about the KSM Mine, 85  
 23 miles to the east of Ketchikan, 25 miles inside the  
 24 Canadian border, the Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell Mine.  
 25 The infrastructure is already there. All they need

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1 is a buyer, which we believe will be China. And  
 2 that mine is so colossal, that would make the Pebble  
 3 look small.  
 4 Do your homework. Look at it. And these  
 5 are the mines that we're looking at and protecting,  
 6 and trying to protect our rivers here, I mean down  
 7 there in Southeast Alaska, the Una, the Stikine, the  
 8 Taku, the Chilkat, the Chilkoot, the Alsek, and most  
 9 importantly I'm going to ask my Tribal brothers and  
 10 sisters that live up in the interior, pay close  
 11 attention what's going on in the Yukon Territory and  
 12 in British Columbia, because it's coming your way,  
 13 you know. Trust me, it is.  
 14 We're finding high levels of selenium  
 15 below the Red Chris Mine on the Stikine River, which  
 16 is on the Canadian side but flowing into Southeast  
 17 Alaska by Wrangell, Alaska, and other toxic minerals  
 18 that are used, or chemicals that are used to break  
 19 up the rock to get at the precious minerals that  
 20 they're looking at, copper, gold, whatever.  
 21 So with that, in closing, along with HHS's  
 22 releases that they want a healthy America, let's  
 23 give them what they want. Let our people practice  
 24 their food. Let them practice their way of life.  
 25 Let's let them get their fish oils the natural way,

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1 right, instead of having to go to the store and buy  
 2 fish oil pills.  
 3 Let them hunt. It would save the  
 4 government untold millions of dollars just to let us  
 5 practice our way of life instead of having us  
 6 regulated right out of the -- I'm don't know the  
 7 correct word for that is, but they're regulating us  
 8 right off the dinner table.  
 9 So with that, I thank you for your time.  
 10 Good afternoon.  
 11 BEN DUNCAN: Let's keep going. You have  
 12 6, 7, 8, 9, and you might see some activity  
 13 happening. Speak into the mic. Folks are having a  
 14 little bit of challenge online hearing, so we're  
 15 going to do some technical solutions. Nothing  
 16 should -- don't be distracted by that.  
 17 NATHAN LOJEWSKI: Hi, my name is Nathan  
 18 Lojewski. I'm the Forestry Director with  
 19 Chugachmiut. We're a Tribal consortium. We serve  
 20 seven Tribes in the Chugach region of Alaska. I  
 21 think we've already heard Alaska has about 40  
 22 percent of the Tribes in the nation.  
 23 Our Native allotments in the state make up  
 24 approximately 1.2 million acres, and those are small  
 25 parcels of approximately 160 acres each.

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1 And I want to focus on trust services for  
 2 this Consultation. In our region we have about 63  
 3 Native allotments, and about the same number of  
 4 townsite lots where our people live and have their  
 5 homes and our communities. That's approximately  
 6 10,000 acres.

7 We need a knowledgeable local staff at the  
 8 BIA to deliver trust services. Chugachmiut has been  
 9 compacting those trust services through the 93-638  
 10 contracts and compacts for decades, but there are  
 11 certain processes that the BIA holds and does not  
 12 let the Tribes take.

13 And so those, we need the local and  
 14 knowledgeable BIA staff to be able to fulfill our  
 15 duties and get projects done.

16 One important project we have in Port  
 17 Graham and Nanwalek is a new airport that's been in  
 18 the works since 2005, so nearly 20 years ago, and  
 19 just three weeks ago we had multiple fatalities in  
 20 an airline accident, and one person is still in the  
 21 hospital here in Anchorage.

22 That project has needs through probates,  
 23 SHPO surveys, NEPA, archeological, and so we need a  
 24 local Alaska based staff who can do those services  
 25 so we can move these projects forward.

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1 Staff in Alaska understand the ANCSA and  
 2 ANILCA. A lot of staff in the lower 48 don't. And  
 3 some of our BIA realty functions require live  
 4 signatures on documents, and a remote logistical,  
 5 like, puzzle to get a signed document in a village  
 6 where the airport is unsafe, there's not a notary  
 7 public maybe. We have to fly someone out, charter  
 8 aircraft.

9 A lot of federal employees can't charter  
 10 aircraft because of regulations in the government.  
 11 It's extremely complicated and difficult. So having  
 12 staff in the state who understand the realities of  
 13 Alaska is very important for our Tribes and for  
 14 providing our services.

15 Another program that we operate that I  
 16 haven't heard folks talk about is Wildland Fire and  
 17 Fields Program. In Alaska we have 40 seasonal  
 18 firefighters on our two crews, the Yukon crew and  
 19 the Denali Wildland Fire Module.

20 We don't receive any suppression funding  
 21 through the BIA or the DOI. That comes through the  
 22 State of Alaska through a cooperative agreement, but  
 23 all of our work when we're not on fire assignment is  
 24 funded primarily through 638 compacts through the  
 25 BIA.

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1 We need the ability to use our 638  
 2 compacts and contracts to support our crews in the  
 3 state. In Alaska we have about 11 of our 23 crews,  
 4 are Tribal crews, and many of us are funded through  
 5 our sub governance compacts.

6 We're concerned that the proposed budget  
 7 from the Trump administration is proposing a  
 8 consolidation of all federal firefighting into one  
 9 agency, and we're worried that we might lose the  
 10 ability to use 638 contracts and compacts if that  
 11 consolidation happens.

12 If it does happen and we still have that  
 13 ability, that would be a great thing. Our  
 14 experience with other DOI agencies who have the  
 15 ability to use those sorts of agreements is the  
 16 awarding officials or granting officers aren't  
 17 willing to do it because they don't know or are not  
 18 comfortable with those authorities.

19 We have worked with the U.S. Forest  
 20 Service and the Department of Ag. We're one of  
 21 three Tribes in the Nation to enter into the first  
 22 Good Neighbor Authority Agreements for doing work on  
 23 the Chugach National Forest, so there are other ways  
 24 we can do work.

25 The Forest Service has the ability to use

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1 638 contracts. That was authorized through the 2004  
 2 Tribal Force Protection Act, but it requires trust  
 3 lands to be adjacent or in close proximity to the  
 4 National Forest system, which isn't really the case  
 5 in most of Alaska.

6 So I guess in closing, from Chugachmiut,  
 7 we have two priorities, for providing trust services  
 8 is one. We need local Alaska staff at the BIA so  
 9 that we can provide our services to our people.

10 And we request that the government still  
 11 maintain the ability to fund Fields Agreements  
 12 through 638 regardless of where the fire and fields  
 13 function is located within the federal government.

14 Thank you.

15 CYNTHIA PETERSEN: Gon-as-chish (phonetic)  
 16 to the Dena'ina for allowing us to speak on their  
 17 land. (Speaking Native American language.) My name  
 18 is Cynthia Petersen and I serve as the President of  
 19 the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, a federally recognized  
 20 Tribe on the northernmost part of Southeast Alaska.

21 I am here today to advocate for meaningful  
 22 structural changes that honor our inherent  
 23 sovereignty, and improve the efficiency, equity, and  
 24 accountability of our government-to-government  
 25 relationship.

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1 We appreciate the Department of Interior's  
 2 efforts to engage Tribes in dialogue regarding the  
 3 Executive Order on government efficiency, EO 14210.  
 4 This effort must be guided by the principles of  
 5 self-governance, cultural survival, and the  
 6 protection of our Hashagoon, our ancestral ways of  
 7 life.  
 8 True efficiency means putting decision  
 9 making closer to the people by empowering the Tribes  
 10 as the primary stewards of their lands, service  
 11 providers, and partners. The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe  
 12 has long worked toward the vision of operating our  
 13 own schools.  
 14 Tribal control over education is critical  
 15 to reversing the long term impacts of the policies,  
 16 and improving outcomes for Native students. Our  
 17 state is failing our youth. Families are leaving  
 18 our community in search of better opportunities.  
 19 We urge the Indian Affairs to create  
 20 direct funding streams that Tribal education  
 21 departments, not reliant on LEAs or states to  
 22 support the operation of Tribal schools, immersion  
 23 programs, and vocational pathways.  
 24 Remove federal policy barriers such as the  
 25 Ted Stevens rider that blocks BIE funding from being

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1 used in Alaska. Fund teacher certification programs  
 2 in workforce development, and Indigenous values and  
 3 cultural responsive curriculum.  
 4 Our recommendation is to expedite  
 5 compacting authority for Tribal education and the  
 6 establishment of the dedicated Tribal Education  
 7 Office within Indian Affairs to support self-  
 8 determined governance, especially in regions where  
 9 public schools have failed our Native students.  
 10 For generations, we have been stewards of  
 11 these lands, long before federal jurisdiction, yet  
 12 federal land management policies often restrict  
 13 Tribal authority, even over areas of deep cultural  
 14 and historical significance.  
 15 We request Indian Affairs coordinate with  
 16 the USDA Forest Service to formally recognize Tribal  
 17 co-management and expand Indigenous stewardship  
 18 agreements. The Department of the Interior  
 19 streamlined the process for Tribes to assume real  
 20 property title, conservation management  
 21 responsibilities, and ecosystem restoration efforts.  
 22 Funding be prioritized for Indigenous  
 23 climate resilience projects that blend scientific  
 24 and traditional ecological knowledge. We recommend  
 25 restructure Indian Affairs natural resource programs

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1 to support regional place based co-management  
 2 frameworks where Tribal governments are recognized  
 3 as equal decision makers, not merely stakeholders.  
 4 For Alaska Natives, subsistence is not  
 5 recreation. It is survival, identity, and  
 6 resilience, yet federal and state regulations too  
 7 often override our rights, diminish traditional  
 8 harvests, and prioritize outside commercial  
 9 interests.  
 10 The Situk River Chinook fishery, for  
 11 example, continues to decline while state actions  
 12 neglect the urgent need to co-manage and enforce  
 13 sustainable practices. We urge Indian Affairs to  
 14 elevate Tribal subsistence rights as a protected  
 15 federal trust responsibility.  
 16 Restore full Tribal management authority  
 17 under the Alaska National Interest Lands  
 18 Conservation Act, ANILCA. Increase funding and  
 19 staffing for Tribal fish and wildlife departments.  
 20 Provide legal support for Tribes defending  
 21 traditional use rights in administrative and  
 22 judicial settings.  
 23 We recommend establishing a dedicated  
 24 office of Tribal subsistence and wildlife management  
 25 within Indian Affairs, with both regulatory

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1 authority and robust funding to support Tribal  
 2 enforcement and restoration.  
 3 Despite countless funding programs, Tribes  
 4 are too often overwhelmed but duplicative processes,  
 5 unclear eligibility rules, and burdensome reporting  
 6 requirements. Efficiency should not mean cutting  
 7 services, but making the federal system more  
 8 responsive to the needs of the Tribal governments.  
 9 We recommend simplifying indirect cost  
 10 negotiation processes, increasing the use of master  
 11 agreements and pre-approved scopes of work.  
 12 Developing a single Tribal grants portal across  
 13 interior agencies to reduce fragmentation.  
 14 We recommend creating a Tribal  
 15 administrative reform task force to identify cross-  
 16 agency inefficiencies, propose regulatory  
 17 simplifications, and co-design solutions with the  
 18 Tribal leaders.  
 19 Behavioral health is central to overall  
 20 health in our communities, especially in Alaska  
 21 Native Villages where intergenerational trauma,  
 22 isolation, and systematic negative have taken a toll  
 23 on the families and the youth.  
 24 The Yakutat Tlingit Tribe is working hard  
 25 to provide culturally grounded wellness programs,

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1 but we face persistent funding gaps, rigid  
 2 reimbursement systems, and a shortage of licensed  
 3 providers willing to stay in rural Alaska.  
 4         We urge Indian Affairs and partner  
 5 agencies to expand funding eligibility for Tribes to  
 6 operate integrated behavioral health programs  
 7 including substance use recovery, suicide  
 8 prevention, and traditional healing. Allow  
 9 behavioral health compacting under ISDEAA for Tribes  
 10 ready to take on that responsibility.  
 11         Create mental health infrastructure grants  
 12 for rural Tribal clinics and wellness centers,  
 13 support training and licensing pathways for Native  
 14 providers embedded in their own communities.  
 15         We recommend behavioral health be  
 16 recognized as an essential pillar of the Tribal  
 17 sovereignty and public health infrastructure.  
 18 Expand compacting authority. Streamline  
 19 credentialing, and invest in culturally based  
 20 systems of care that work for our communities, not  
 21 just within them.  
 22         True Tribal sovereignty includes not only  
 23 the protection of our lands, but the right to manage  
 24 and benefit from their natural wealth, on our terms.  
 25         Right now mineral leasing, land

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1 management, and permitting often fall under federal  
 2 agencies like BLM without Tribal consent or  
 3 participation.  
 4         The Yakutat and many Tribes are seeking  
 5 authority to review, approve, and deny mineral  
 6 exploration and extraction on or near our Tribal  
 7 lands. Reclaim and restore lands previously harmed  
 8 by extracted industries. Develop renewable energy  
 9 and carbon credit projects grounded in Tribal  
 10 values.  
 11         Receive revenue sharing on direct benefit  
 12 from federal mineral leases on Indigenous  
 13 territories.  
 14         We recommend Indian Affairs work with  
 15 Tribes and Congress to expand Tribal authority over  
 16 lands, minerals, and permitting functions currently  
 17 held by BLM and others, and pilot Tribal land  
 18 management authorities in key regions.  
 19         The Yakutat is not asking for less  
 20 government. We are asking for the right kind of  
 21 government, one that centers Tribal sovereignty,  
 22 invests in our well-being, and recognizes us as the  
 23 right stewards of our children, lands, and futures.  
 24         We ask that Consultation leads to  
 25 transformation, not just acknowledgement. Yakutat

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1 has proven that when given the tools and authority,  
 2 we can lead. We can educate our children in their  
 3 language, heal our lands, and feed our people from  
 4 our waters, but we need the federal government to  
 5 walk alongside us, not ahead of us, and to fully  
 6 recognize the rights we have always held.  
 7         We call on Indian Affairs to modernize its  
 8 systems, not by reducing its presence, but by  
 9 expanding Tribal authority to govern, manage, and  
 10 thrive in accordance with our cultural values.  
 11         Gon-as-chish (phonetic) for taking the  
 12 time to listen. Thank you.  
 13         BEN DUNCAN: Just come up, we'll do 9, and  
 14 then we had built in kind of a break in transition  
 15 around 1:00, so I think we'll try to get as much as  
 16 we can to --  
 17         TRACY CHARLES-SMITH: I'll be fast.  
 18         BEN DUNCAN: Fast is great. I'm not going  
 19 to cut you all off. I promised that at the  
 20 beginning, so we'll probably take a break at 1:00,  
 21 maybe a truncated break, 15 minutes to get up, move  
 22 around, and then we'll come back and try to get as  
 23 much as we can, and then move into the other  
 24 session. Does that work for folks? Okay.  
 25         SAM LEVY: I hate that we're running out

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1 of time, and I don't want to put folks off. It's up  
 2 to you. If you want to break, we can still have a  
 3 break, but if you want to just roll through so we  
 4 have an extra half hour, that's fine too.  
 5         BEN DUNCAN: Yeah, I think we have,  
 6 between our -- just for our court reporter, we've  
 7 got potentially a hungry tech guy, water and coffee  
 8 flowing through our bodies -- yeah, yeah. Okay.  
 9         Yes, we got it. So let's get through  
 10 this. We'll take our break at 1:00 for about 15  
 11 minutes, but let's keep going.  
 12         TRACY CHARLES-SMITH: And as I stated when  
 13 I first got here, you know, we have a lot of Tribal  
 14 leaders here, and we're leaders. We should be given  
 15 preference over Native organizations and colleges  
 16 and all that to say our piece.  
 17         We've been, you know, we've traveled  
 18 thousands of miles and spent a lot of money, like  
 19 the lady said. (Speaking Native American language.)  
 20 Tracy Charles-Smith.  
 21         My name is Tracy Charles-Smith. I'm from  
 22 the Native Village of Dot Lake where I serve as  
 23 President. My band is Nal-bay-chishu (phonetic). I  
 24 fall on the red paint side. We're the grandchildren  
 25 of the seagull.

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1 Thank you for allowing this Consultation.  
 2 Tribal Nations have had an ongoing relationship with  
 3 the United States since its creation. Like in any  
 4 relationship, communication is key to our  
 5 government-to-government relationship.  
 6 Tribal Consultation is a right, and we  
 7 come here today as rightholders, not mere  
 8 stakeholders, to work together to find consensus on  
 9 issues that impact us all. We are grateful for that  
 10 right to consult with the government.  
 11 Tribal Consultation is most efficient for  
 12 the federal government, and most effective for  
 13 Tribal Nations when there is transparency and clear  
 14 purpose of scope.  
 15 While we have come here today as prepared  
 16 as we can be, the reality is that the scope of this  
 17 Tribal Consultation as laid out in DOI's DTLL and  
 18 addendums, is enormous and has evolved. It is very  
 19 difficult to come to a session like this with weeks'  
 20 notice and be expected to talk about every issue  
 21 abstract.  
 22 Tribal Consultations must take place  
 23 before a decision is made. And you all know Tribal  
 24 news travels faster than TikTok news.  
 25 We have heard that under the Department of

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1 Government Efficiency, DOGE, initiatives reports  
 2 that 22 percent of the BIA and Bureau of Trust Funds  
 3 administration employees have accepted buyouts or  
 4 early retirement offers. Reports also indicate that  
 5 these reductions have led to the elimination of four  
 6 BIA regional director positions.  
 7 Can you confirm whether these positions  
 8 have been permanently eliminated? Additionally,  
 9 does the BIA plan to reduce the number of regional  
 10 offices nationwide? How does the department intend  
 11 to maintain effective regional leadership and  
 12 support for Tribal Nations amidst these staffing  
 13 changes?  
 14 Tribal Consultation must take place before  
 15 a decision is made. The administration must  
 16 prioritize the delivery of services and funding to  
 17 Indian country as mandated by trust and treaty  
 18 obligations, and any effort to restructure Indian  
 19 Affairs.  
 20 We ask that you directly fund Tribes.  
 21 We're often in competition with Native organizations  
 22 and other entities for funding that help our people,  
 23 and who best to help our people than the people that  
 24 know them.  
 25 CARY FREMIN: Hello, my name is Cary

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1 Fremin. I am an elected council member for the  
 2 Village of Dot Lake, and I just wanted to address  
 3 the second point on current funding structures.  
 4 So specifically, federal funding for  
 5 Tribal programs are pretty disrupted and delayed in  
 6 a lot of cases in smaller communities where there  
 7 are lack of connectivity, decreased mail services.  
 8 There's delays in rolling out programs  
 9 because, you know, they didn't get the funding on  
 10 time. They didn't get a notice saying that there  
 11 was a delay in it, so you know, it doesn't look very  
 12 great when you're trying to rely services to a  
 13 community that are your relatives, that are your  
 14 family members, that are community members that work  
 15 in close relationships with your Tribe on why you  
 16 can't fulfill a service.  
 17 You say you're going to do it. We want to  
 18 be able to make sure that we can follow through on  
 19 the stuff that we are staying we're going to do in  
 20 these communities, and if there's delays in funding,  
 21 there's delays in awards being given out. If there  
 22 are different issues on the platforms that these  
 23 grants come through, nothing is more frustrating  
 24 than working on a report and your connectivity going  
 25 out, and then having to re-start over and over

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1 again. Nothing is more frustrating than that.  
 2 And it creates an environment of not just  
 3 frustration, but lack of efficiency. I mean, if I'm  
 4 going to have to write the same report five times,  
 5 that's not efficient. And I know that's kind of why  
 6 we are here, is to really look at the efficiency of  
 7 things moving forward.  
 8 If at the BIA offices there's been a  
 9 reduction in force and we can't get ahold of people,  
 10 that again is not efficient. It's very expensive to  
 11 fly into the hub communities from the smaller ones  
 12 off the road system, to try to find somebody to talk  
 13 to.  
 14 I know a lot of smaller communities are  
 15 facing some pretty significant cuts in their federal  
 16 funding, and it's just going to make it harder in  
 17 the long run.  
 18 Tribes know what works best for their  
 19 geographical location, for the folks that they work  
 20 with, and it may not follow a subscribed script  
 21 coming from the East Coast. It may look good on  
 22 paper, but in practice, inefficient, absolutely  
 23 inefficient.  
 24 So some of the recommendations that I  
 25 would like to put forth is advanced appropriations

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1 for funding coming directly to Tribes specifically.  
 2 I would love to see some direct funding  
 3 for Tribal justice in this state specifically,  
 4 because what we've seen, what we've lived through,  
 5 and what we know is that it doesn't work. So I know  
 6 everybody is chomping at the bit to have lunch, but  
 7 leaving it with Tribes is the most efficient way  
 8 forward.  
 9 And at the end of the day, like we still  
 10 get stuff done. If we don't have funding, guess  
 11 what? We're still at work. We're still working.  
 12 We are still having to answer to our Tribes, answer  
 13 to our communities.  
 14 Thank you.  
 15 SAM LEVY: Thank you very much. We're  
 16 going to go over to our virtual participants. So  
 17 Dean, you'll be our first commenter. David, you  
 18 will be up next, and Kevin you will be after David.  
 19 Dean, I'm going to go ahead and ask you to  
 20 unmute. You can go ahead and unmute yourself, turn  
 21 your camera on, and start your comment.  
 22 DEAN BARLIP: Hello, my name is Dean  
 23 Barlip. I'm the (audio cut out) administrator for  
 24 Native Village of Chitina. Thank you for the time  
 25 today. Get right into my comment.

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1 The recommendations to improve Indian  
 2 Affairs' efficiency through staffing changes,  
 3 resource sharing, process of improvements and  
 4 potential (audio cut out) of programs and changes  
 5 that I just want to start off by saying I hope that  
 6 the federal government doesn't make the same  
 7 mistakes that they made with Region 9 with BIA.  
 8 And EPA Region 9, they didn't mess with  
 9 the funding, but they cut the funding to the project  
 10 manager to the EPA Region 9, so they effectively cut  
 11 out the internal employees that process the  
 12 paperwork that released the funding to the Tribe.  
 13 And now, you know, and Region 8 and (audio  
 14 cut out) are going to assume those responsibilities,  
 15 so that's going to slow down the communication with  
 16 an Alaskan Tribe, so I hope that any changes or  
 17 staffing changes to not effect the self-  
 18 determination specialists within BIA.  
 19 So other ideas we had were de-centralizing  
 20 staffing authority and power in regional and local  
 21 BIA offices in Alaska to make quicker (audio cut  
 22 out) decisions tailored to Tribal needs.  
 23 Cross-training staff. Train personnel  
 24 across multiple program areas such as natural  
 25 resources, education, and housing, to increase

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1 flexibility and reduce the bottleneck.  
 2 Tribal liaisons. Expand the number of  
 3 liaison officers who are culturally competent and  
 4 familiar with the Alaska Native governance guidance.  
 5 Resource sharing. Shared service models (audio cut  
 6 out). Shared administrator services such as HR IT  
 7 procurement across multiple Tribal offices to reduce  
 8 overhead.  
 9 Digital resource libraries. Create  
 10 centralized digital platforms for grant templates,  
 11 compliance guides, and training materials accessible  
 12 to Alaska Tribes. Processing improvements, realtime  
 13 communication tools (audio cut out) digital  
 14 platforms such as dashboards and multiple apps for  
 15 realtime updates on funding and compliance, and  
 16 program changes.  
 17 Feedback loops. Institutionalize  
 18 recommended feedback mechanisms from Tribes to BIA  
 19 to continuously refine the processes. Consolidation  
 20 in programs and offices. Program integration.  
 21 Merge overlapping perhaps, i.e. housing and  
 22 infrastructure under unified management to reduce  
 23 duplication.  
 24 Pilot projects. Want pilot programs in  
 25 select regions to have consolidation strategies

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1 before farther implementation.  
 2 Thank you for your time.  
 3 I have -- there's going to be other  
 4 commentary, right, for the other questions?  
 5 BEN DUNCAN: Yes.  
 6 DEAN BARLIP: Okay. Thank you for your  
 7 time, then.  
 8 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 9 SAM LEVY: All right. David, you are up  
 10 next. You can go go ahead and unmute, and start  
 11 your comment.  
 12 DAVID: (Speaking Native American  
 13 language.) My name is Man On Top Of The Fort, and I  
 14 come from the People of the Pleasant Fjord. I live  
 15 in Chilkat Village of Klukwan, and I'm one of the  
 16 council members there.  
 17 Our President Hotch has spoken, and I just  
 18 would like to add a couple things in regards to  
 19 things I've heard, and as far as trust  
 20 responsibility and fiduciary responsibility.  
 21 We have requested DOI and BLM allow us to  
 22 sit in with their expert consultants as we do not  
 23 have the financial capacity to hire our own  
 24 consultants.  
 25 In fact, whatever the workforce efficiency

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1 and productivity comment period, I'd kind of like to  
 2 hear a little bit more about what are we facing, you  
 3 know, from the BIA directly as far as any kind of  
 4 cuts or changes in our funding.

5 I am going to speak as a member of the  
 6 Tribe that has worked the 638 programs in our Tribe  
 7 as a young man 20-some years ago, and spent a lot of  
 8 time, seven days a week, even past the hours they  
 9 were able to pay me, to make sure things are done on  
 10 time, because there is a schedule set for us.

11 I did not make enough money to really take  
 12 care of myself financially in this expensive state  
 13 of Alaska. It takes a lot of money to bring in  
 14 groceries and all kinds of other goods that people  
 15 live on. So we live on the land. The land,  
 16 everything has a yaqua-hegu (phonetic) spirit. We  
 17 respect the land. We live on that land, yet we  
 18 don't exactly have the rights that we should have on  
 19 this land.

20 We don't exactly have the place that we  
 21 can speak our own truth as experts of our own  
 22 people, like Section 106 states.

23 I feel like in this case, with  
 24 responsibility there comes accountability, and  
 25 previously in the 106 process our Tribe has been

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1 told that our culture is our bones and our tools,  
 2 rather than our living culture, even though the  
 3 bones that they were looking for are the people that  
 4 pass down the culture that we have today, like that  
 5 yaqua-hegu (phonetic) that lives in all things I  
 6 mentioned.

7 We didn't just make it up. And for us, to  
 8 have this kind of Consultation that's meaningful,  
 9 being that we are the experts, I feel like we need  
 10 to hear a little bit more that's going on with these  
 11 programs and how funding is going to change.

12 It's going to affect our people even more  
 13 so immensely. We are a Tribe that has 75 people  
 14 left here in this community, and we have many hats  
 15 in our government. Some of the positions I hold  
 16 don't even have a title to it for myself. We just  
 17 got to do the work, and that's with the current  
 18 funding situation for the past so many decades.

19 So in this commentary, workforce  
 20 efficiency and productivity, how more efficient do  
 21 our Tribes need to get? How much productivity do we  
 22 need to bring forth until it's efficient and  
 23 productive enough?

24 Losing funding is just going to make that  
 25 process much harder for our way of life. In fact,

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1 speaking of which, in regards to the protections of  
 2 the D-1 lands, well, we've had some agreements here  
 3 and some contracts. And usually when we have  
 4 agreements and contracts, there is discussion, a  
 5 negotiation that's to be had when things change.

6 Yet, I don't feel like there has been much  
 7 of that, at least in my lifetime. I was born in  
 8 '79. I am not a member of any corporation. I don't  
 9 have shares to anything. My community is what I  
 10 belong to. I'm only one person out of 75, and I  
 11 can't speak for absolutely everybody, even though  
 12 I'm a council member.

13 But I am speaking from experience, just  
 14 like our president says, it would be nice to have a  
 15 personal consultation with BIA in regards to this,  
 16 because I still haven't heard about these cuts. And  
 17 I would like to have some kind of accountability to  
 18 the D-1 lands and agreements we had on this, with  
 19 our state.

20 We shouldn't be losing our rights that we  
 21 have established. We shouldn't be losing the  
 22 funding that we have established. We should be on  
 23 the conversation when things change. It's time for  
 24 the federal government, in my opinion, in my  
 25 observation, to start working with us on making

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1 programs instead of making them for us, without the  
 2 Consultation process.

3 My commentaries are not coming from a  
 4 place of malice. It's coming from a place of  
 5 struggle. I'm just asking to be more than heard,  
 6 but to be considered in whatever plans is coming up  
 7 in the future with our Tribes and our funding.

8 Thank you.

9 SAM LEVY: All right, thank you.

10 Kevin, you are up next. And Mabel, you  
 11 will be right behind Kevin.

12 Kevin, you can go ahead and unmute.

13 You're welcome to turn your camera on if you'd like,  
 14 and start your comment.

15 KEVIN GUNTER: Hello. Can everybody hear  
 16 me?

17 BEN DUNCAN: We got you.

18 KEVIN GUNTER: Okay, perfect. So I got  
 19 invited to this. My name is Kevin Gunter. I am the  
 20 ad hoc committee spokesperson for the Tetlin Tribal  
 21 members. That has stuff that's going on, but I'd  
 22 like to talk about consent.

23 Consent is really a key topic with what's  
 24 going on. Consent merely isn't just about asking  
 25 for permission. It's about ensuring continuous

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1 information and genuine involvement agreements with  
 2 the phrase, no means no, becomes a profound and  
 3 simple, yet reminds us of the consent we should  
 4 always immediately and fully respect.  
 5         With that being said and everything going  
 6 on, my concern was with the permitting, the fast  
 7 track permitting, how things are happening, and how  
 8 consent gets stripped away from these Tribes that  
 9 are actually -- it's very vital for their survival.  
 10         You got the 1940 IRA which had happened,  
 11 and that was the law of the land, where all these  
 12 Tribes had to sign the constitution, and there was  
 13 no way these laws could ever be changed, unless it  
 14 went through the Secretary of Interior with consent  
 15 from the Tribes.  
 16         And then in 1970, the Alaska Native Claims  
 17 Settlement Act came along and had changed these laws  
 18 without the consent of the Tribes to begin with. So  
 19 now that brings you up to the 14th amendment of the  
 20 United States Constitution where you have equal  
 21 protection under the law.  
 22         So it becomes a very disadvantaged  
 23 situation for the Alaskan Tribes here to where the  
 24 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act does put us  
 25 right directly under the State of Alaska, whose

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1 intentions is not always for the benefit of the  
 2 Tribes in general.  
 3         During this whole situation of what I have  
 4 been kind of undergoing and discovering is that I'm  
 5 starting to find out that with permitting, things  
 6 like that, that money does become a situation of,  
 7 where is it going. And it's not intended for what  
 8 it was intended for.  
 9         You look, for instance, in these mining  
 10 projects that are happening with the Ambler Road  
 11 project, the Montrose project where you've got up to  
 12 a billion dollars being spent in ways that it should  
 13 not have been being spent, considering that  
 14 taxpayers are the ones who are contributing to it.  
 15         Where I found \$25 million in one instance  
 16 that was hidden with the DOT. I've had to go and  
 17 reach out to some federal officials to try to get  
 18 some help in this situation, but what really is  
 19 important about that consent, that all these Tribes  
 20 have a say-so in what happens to their land.  
 21         Like what I'm starting to see now is a  
 22 complete violation of the 1867 treaty concession  
 23 here in the State of Alaska, a breach of the IRA  
 24 1943, the infringement upon civil rights for Native  
 25 Americans.

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1             I can really keep on going. Violations of  
 2 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, if you want to  
 3 throw that in there, but a lot of it has to do with  
 4 how people attack funding. And you start looking at  
 5 a billion dollars and how somebody is going to try  
 6 to skin that up.  
 7             Now, they're not going to ask for consent  
 8 for any of these Tribes to go in there. They're  
 9 going to go ahead and actively take what they need  
 10 to. Like for Tetlin, for instance, how we've lost  
 11 or Tribal government. We lost a piece of land  
 12 that's pretty much the size of Rhode Island that was  
 13 actually a congressional land patent to where these  
 14 mining operations had went in there and stripped it.  
 15             In 2019 they stripped us of all our laws  
 16 with their contractors. And they re-wrote  
 17 everything to marginalize two-thirds of our entire  
 18 Tribe from voting.  
 19             So when you want to do these expedited and  
 20 emergency permitting, please consider consent for  
 21 all the Tribes. Those are the people who need to  
 22 really be heard, and those are the invisible people.  
 23             That's kind of all I wanted to say. I  
 24 didn't want to take up too much time.  
 25             BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, Kevin.

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1             SAM LEVY: Mabel, you're up next. And  
 2 Christine, you'll be after Mabel.  
 3             Mabel, you can go ahead and unmute  
 4 yourself, and begin your comment.  
 5             MABEL BALDWIN-SCHAEFFER: Good afternoon,  
 6 everybody. My name is Mabel Baldwin-Schaeffer. I'm  
 7 a Tribal member of the Native Village of Kiana, and  
 8 my formative experiences are centered in my Inupiaq  
 9 culture and the Alaska Native subsistence activities  
 10 and traditions.  
 11             I'm an Alaska Pacific alumna with a  
 12 Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies, and a  
 13 Master of Science in Environmental Science. While  
 14 at APU I focused on real world projects in the  
 15 Fisheries Aquatic Science and Technology Lab led by  
 16 Dr. Brad Harris.  
 17             In the spring of 2021, I became the first  
 18 Tribal Research Coordinator at the NOAA Fisheries in  
 19 Alaska, at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. In  
 20 this position I was primarily responsible for  
 21 fostering relationships with subsistence communities  
 22 and fishing sectors to identify opportunities for  
 23 scientific collaboration and co-production of  
 24 research.  
 25             I believe that this collaboration was

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1 crucial in improving the future of Alaska Tribal  
 2 communities in the institutions and agencies  
 3 committed to supporting sustainable subsistence  
 4 based likelihoods.

5 I also worked with education and outreach,  
 6 and we continue to see funding being choked up to  
 7 support our Alaska Native students.

8 As my term ends as the Tribal Research  
 9 Coordinator, comes to an end this Friday, as did the  
 10 majority of my colleagues, I find myself deeply  
 11 concerned about the future of Alaska fisheries.

12 The communications department, I have had  
 13 the privilege of working with, shares this concern  
 14 alongside with the communities in Alaska. We are  
 15 left wondering where Alaska fisheries research and  
 16 management will go from here.

17 Thank you.

18 SAM LEVY: Thank you, Mabel.  
 19 Christine, you can go ahead and unmute  
 20 yourself. If you'd like to turn your camera on, you  
 21 can do so, but I may go ahead and start your  
 22 comment.

23 CHRISTINE: I -- can you hear me?  
 24 BEN DUNCAN: We can hear you.  
 25 CHRISTINE: My name is Christina Hurt

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1 (phonetic), and I am an elected council member for  
 2 the Native Village of Tanana as well as the  
 3 comptroller for the finance department.

4 I wanted to comment on the potential  
 5 closure and relocation of the BIA office in  
 6 Anchorage, and the additional burden that it will  
 7 put on our realty and probate office. All probates  
 8 are required to undergo a judicial review, which is  
 9 currently backlogged because there's only one judge  
 10 in Alaska to do the reviews.

11 Our probate office has submitted over 20  
 12 files, completed files in 2024, and we have not  
 13 received any information back on them.

14 We had a lot of deaths since the COVID  
 15 pandemic, and the probate files keep piling up. We  
 16 will then be required to send our highly  
 17 confidential files outside of Alaska to Oregon if  
 18 the office is moved, which adds additional burden to  
 19 our Tribes.

20 I'm also concerned about the new  
 21 requirement that took place yesterday to enter  
 22 justification for every drawdown that a Tribe makes.  
 23 Tribes submit all financial and narrative reports as  
 24 required to account for all funding they receive.  
 25 Are only Tribes being required to do this,

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1 or is every agency that receives funding being  
 2 required to do this as well? This seems to go  
 3 against the efficiency and productivity mandate by  
 4 adding an additional redundant step to access our  
 5 funding.

6 Also I see that congressional hearings are  
 7 going on at the same time that this Consultation is  
 8 happening, and I think it's important that Tribal  
 9 leaders are able to address Congress also. So it  
 10 was disappointing to see that we can't be here and  
 11 there at the same time.

12 And those are my comments. Thank you.  
 13 BEN DUNCAN: All right. Thank you.  
 14 So we're going to bring back to the room,  
 15 I think we have 10 -- are we on number 10? Does  
 16 that sound right? Who's number 10? Okay. So 10  
 17 through 16.

18 I do want to ask the group, do you all  
 19 want 10 minutes? A show of hands for a break?  
 20 Otherwise we're just going to keep going.

21 Okay, keep going. Okay. I will note  
 22 there is about 40 pre-made meals for sale at the  
 23 cafeteria right here, so feel free if you need --  
 24 they only take cards, but if that's helpful for you,  
 25 please take care of yourself.

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1 So let's go 10 through 16. Oh, and  
 2 there's evidently some pizzas that were ordered.  
 3 Thank you.

4 SPEAKER 10: Hi everyone. I figured out  
 5 after I stood in line that I wanted to testify for  
 6 one after the break, and so number 11 can go.

7 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, thank you. Thanks for  
 8 your patience.  
 9 Number 11.

10 MARY DAVID: Good afternoon, now. My name  
 11 is Mary David. I am here representing Kawerak, but  
 12 I am also a Nome Eskimo Community Tribal member.

13 So Kawerak is a Tribal consortium in the  
 14 Bering Straits region of Alaska, northwest of here.  
 15 We have 20 federally recognized Tribes in the  
 16 region, and 16 communities. Our service area is  
 17 approximately 26,000 square miles, about the size of  
 18 West Virginia.

19 We have about 9,000 people and about 75  
 20 percent Alaska Native. So we've been providing  
 21 services successfully since 1973, and we have  
 22 successfully been compacting under a 93-638 compact  
 23 for self-government since 1992.

24 So we will also be providing written  
 25 comments, and those written comments will probably

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1 go into much more detail than what I'm going to be  
 2 saying today.

3 But you may have heard this saying before,  
 4 something like, not without us but with us. And so  
 5 I just want to add that, you know, Tribes which  
 6 you've heard all morning today, Tribes must be  
 7 involved in decisions about any specific proposed  
 8 reorganization or cuts to BIA.

9 BIA is intertwined with Tribal  
 10 governments, communities, and organizations. Tribes  
 11 must be co-designers in any restructuring, not  
 12 passive consultees.

13 Any changes to BIA, reorganization or  
 14 organization including staffing and funding, should  
 15 only be done after research and evidence that the  
 16 changes will really improve outcomes.

17 Cuts must not be made to places of  
 18 strategic importance for trust responsibility. So  
 19 obviously there's a lot of rumor and things going  
 20 around, and talks about, you know, staffing cuts and  
 21 staff shortages. You've heard all the concerns  
 22 mentioned today, but that is also a concern for us.

23 Recent staff cuts have led to immense  
 24 difficulty in being able to contact BIA TCR, the  
 25 Tribal Community Resilience Management. This is

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1 leading to stalled projects, uncertainty, and  
 2 inefficiency.

3 BIA TCR have necessary institutional  
 4 knowledge, and their staff must be maintained.

5 So another area of potential cuts that  
 6 we've heard was to staffing with the BIA  
 7 transportation program. The proposed reduction in  
 8 staffing to BIA transportation will create delays  
 9 and impact safety and well-being in our communities.

10 The Kawerak transportation program  
 11 coordinates with BIA transportation in relation to  
 12 the emergency relief for federally owned roads,  
 13 ERFO, after a disaster strikes, for example.

14 BIA plays a critical role in approving  
 15 roads and any reduction in staff will create delays  
 16 to repairs, to critical transportation corridors in  
 17 Tribal communities, including roads that provide  
 18 access to our subsistence resources which impacts  
 19 food security and could also impact our health and  
 20 well-being.

21 So the other area that I want to talk  
 22 about is in relation to funding, one-time funding,  
 23 ongoing funding, multi-year funding. So I'll talk a  
 24 little bit about one-time funding first, but I want  
 25 to make a general statement.

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1 Tribal programs are chronically  
 2 underfunded and must be substantially increased, and  
 3 they also should keep pace with inflation. As  
 4 working for Kawerak, we just notice year after year  
 5 that our Tribal operations costs just continue to  
 6 rise, but our funding remains relatively flat.

7 So the one-time funding that BIA often  
 8 provides or provides is important to us, and I'm  
 9 going to mention a particular area rather than talk  
 10 about generalities. I'll try to provide an example.

11 So one-time funding for Tribal justice  
 12 services creates uncertainty and a lack of  
 13 stability. Our legal team relies on one-time  
 14 special funding from BIA for our child welfare  
 15 attorney, our domestic violence justice coordinator,  
 16 and our paralegal.

17 BIA recently capped these funds at 200,000  
 18 which is sufficiently and sorely insufficient.  
 19 Without consistent adequate funding, we will not be  
 20 able to provide legal services that are really  
 21 needed in our communities, and having those  
 22 challenges also impacts recruitment of staff,  
 23 retention of staff for example. So maintaining  
 24 those funds are important.

25 I also want to talk about another area,

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1 and it was mentioned before, and that's with  
 2 probates. I want to also advocate for funding for  
 3 probate, probate funds. BIA must fund the probate  
 4 and the hearing offices at adequate levels. Earlier  
 5 mentioned it was a BIA land function.

6 So Kawerak is massively underfunded to run  
 7 its probate program. We only receive \$47,000 and we  
 8 have to subsidize this program with other funds. So  
 9 we just encourage you all to consider adequately  
 10 funding probates to address the backlog that is  
 11 impacting the estates of hundreds of families.

12 BIA obligation in this area needs some  
 13 particular attention. Also earlier the 105(1) lease  
 14 program was mentioned, so I too just want to  
 15 advocate for the need for additional funding for  
 16 more than three staff, considering Kawerak also has  
 17 an application in this program, and waiting two  
 18 years does not seem appropriate.

19 So the other area that I want to talk  
 20 about in our region is funding for Tribal climate  
 21 resilience. This area is important. Our region,  
 22 and many areas in Alaska I'm sure, experience severe  
 23 weather events. These seem to happen more often,  
 24 and again a lot more severely, such as like Typhoon  
 25 Merbok.

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1 This funding is important for remote  
 2 Tribes and communities where a rapidly changing  
 3 environment can yield natural disasters with  
 4 negative impacts to health and safety. TCR allows  
 5 Tribes and Tribal consortia to apply for funding for  
 6 regional projects that fit the unique needs of that  
 7 local and regional environment and the Tribes'  
 8 specific needs. Alaska is a huge state. Each  
 9 region of our state may have different needs.

10 Kawerak was awarded a grant in 2024 to  
 11 survey and map Tribal cemeteries across the region  
 12 that are currently experiencing or at risk of  
 13 erosion. Just imagine that happening. Coffins  
 14 becoming visible due to erosion being close to the  
 15 coastline, of which many of our communities are. So  
 16 these funds are important to address erosion, the  
 17 importance of cultural preservation, and to help  
 18 prevent health risks if graves are not preserved in  
 19 the permafrost, and if the permafrost is exposed.

20 Maintaining BIA TCR funding for  
 21 relocation, managed retreat, or protect in place,  
 22 RMP coordinators at the 2024 level is also  
 23 important. The RMP multi-year coordinator capacity  
 24 funding to Tribes is particularly important as the  
 25 stability from multi-year funding allows for the

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1 project development cycle to yield critical pace-  
 2 appropriate projects that address the biggest  
 3 challenges based by communities due to erosion,  
 4 flooding, or permafrost degradation.

5 Also having that technical assistance is  
 6 important. The RMP coordinator should remain funded  
 7 at 2024 level to support the Tribes' adaptation and  
 8 mitigation activities.

9 So lastly, I just want to say that Tribes  
 10 are successful compacters in that it is an exercise  
 11 of self-governance when Tribes opt to pool their  
 12 funding through consortia, like Kawerak, and have  
 13 consortia represent them in Tribal consultation.

14 Funds spent maintaining layers of federal  
 15 bureaucracy could be better invested in Tribes'  
 16 infrastructure, staffing, and systems.

17 Quyanaa for your time for allowing me to  
 18 speak today.

19 DOREEN LEVITZ: Good afternoon. My name  
 20 is Doreen Levitz and I am the elected Tribal council  
 21 secretary of the Inupiat Community of the Arctic  
 22 Slope. I want to welcome you to Alaska, and of  
 23 course extend an open invitation to Utqiagvik, the  
 24 farthest north city in the United States.

25 ICAS, I'll refer to Inupiat Community of

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1 the Arctic Slope as ICAS, is one of two federally  
 2 recognized regional Alaska Native Tribal governments  
 3 in the state. We are responsible for providing  
 4 services to more than 14,000 ICAS Tribal members,  
 5 most of them who are also dually enrolled in the  
 6 Native Village Tribes of Anaktuvuk Pass, Atkasuk,  
 7 Barrow, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Point Hope, Point Lay,  
 8 and Wainwright.

9 ICAS is often faced with unique obstacles  
 10 ranging from our reliance on planes and barges, to  
 11 shipping basic supplies such as food, and the lack  
 12 of redundancy in critical infrastructures like  
 13 Broadband and also our housing infrastructure.

14 These obstacles make economic and  
 15 infrastructure development opportunities costly, and  
 16 the administration of critical programs in a service  
 17 delivery area larger than the state of Minnesota.

18 This is why ICAS's relationship with  
 19 Indian Affairs and other Interior staff working in  
 20 partnership as two governments is critical to making  
 21 progress wherever we can for our members.

22 In regards to Interior's efforts to  
 23 restructure Indian Affairs, ICAS agrees that certain  
 24 services Indian Affairs provides and the processes  
 25 it has developed desperately need examination to

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1 determine how to make them more efficient and  
 2 effective.

3 We are often waiting on Indian Affairs to  
 4 act so that we can make critical investments and  
 5 progress within our service delivery area.

6 One example is our Section 17 application.  
 7 Alaska BIA regional office reviewed and worked  
 8 through small amendments with us on our Section 17  
 9 charter last year, and informed us that the charter  
 10 was being sent to the DC office. Since then it's  
 11 been sitting on someone's desk in DC without any  
 12 communication on the status or timeline for final  
 13 approval.

14 This is not efficient or effective. In  
 15 fact, it is hindering our ability to use Section 17  
 16 to promote our own economic development. Surely  
 17 there is a way for Indian Affairs to be more  
 18 efficient in this review process, and we would  
 19 welcome investments in Indian Affairs technology  
 20 that would allow us to transparently see where our  
 21 application is sitting, or funding is in the review  
 22 process.

23 ICAS is concerned about rumors that we've  
 24 been hearing about Interior proposing to move  
 25 certain staff and functions from the BIA Alaska

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1 regional office to BIA offices in other states.  
 2 For example, we heard that Interior is  
 3 trying to move Realty and Probate from BIA Alaska  
 4 regional to the Portland, Oregon, office. Is this  
 5 true?  
 6 Okay. I want to make sure that we're  
 7 clear. Oregon is two states from us, and you  
 8 yourself, Mr. Mercier, said Alaska is very unique.  
 9 The Portland office is not familiar with  
 10 our cases in our region, and for our state, for that  
 11 matter. ICAS is already located a plane ride away  
 12 from many services and staff at the BIA Alaska  
 13 regional office.  
 14 With just two of our villages, we have 48  
 15 outstanding probate cases, five realty cases, and  
 16 about 19 veteran allotment cases. A couple of these  
 17 cases are 20 years old, and it's sitting in BIA's  
 18 office.  
 19 Moving staff and certain functions to  
 20 another state would not help us address this  
 21 backlog. It will only make it worse. If Interior  
 22 really wants to improve efficiency and  
 23 restructuring Indian Affairs, it should enter into  
 24 638 agreements with Tribes, ICAS namely, and use us  
 25 as a federally recognized regional Tribe as a hub

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1 for administering Indian Affairs services within my  
 2 region.  
 3 When you equip ICAS with the tools  
 4 necessary to carry out critical services, both by  
 5 granting authority and properly funding these  
 6 functions, we can be a powerful partner in  
 7 delivering services.  
 8 This would furthermore allow the Alaska  
 9 BIA office to focus on matters that require regional  
 10 review and approval, and/or invest more time  
 11 providing technical assistance for Tribes within our  
 12 jurisdiction.  
 13 Question 2, with regards to addressing  
 14 current funding structures, we have a few points to  
 15 raise.  
 16 First, ICAS encourages funding to be  
 17 distributed directly to Tribes rather than through  
 18 state or regional BIA offices. We have found that  
 19 when money goes through the states or regional  
 20 offices, access to critical dollars is bogged down  
 21 by unnecessary processes.  
 22 Secondly, we appreciate Indian Affairs'  
 23 efforts to certify Tribal enrollment numbers to  
 24 ensure Tribes are receiving their fair share of  
 25 federal dollars. This process should be conducted

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1 on an annual basis. Sometimes the Dear Tribal  
 2 Leader letters get lost or not directed to the right  
 3 Tribal department.  
 4 For example, this Tribal Leader letter,  
 5 ICAS never received. However, the more the process  
 6 is normalized, we can ensure our numbers are  
 7 regularly updated.  
 8 Third, we encourage Indian Affairs to move  
 9 away from competitive grant funding. As part of the  
 10 trust and treaty obligations to Tribes, the federal  
 11 government should not force us to compete against  
 12 each other.  
 13 Instead, funding should be distributed  
 14 according to a formula that considers factors such  
 15 as enrollment numbers, size of service delivery  
 16 areas, employees, and other critical factors.  
 17 And lastly, Alaska Tribes are often  
 18 hindered by lack of increases in federal funding.  
 19 While we try to be creative in pooling our funds and  
 20 going to additional grants to offset our shortfalls,  
 21 we cannot and should not be left behind when  
 22 Congress provides increases in appropriations.  
 23 Question 3, with regard to Interior's  
 24 efforts to promote greater use of Tribal self-  
 25 governance and self-determination, as mentioned

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1 earlier ICAS strongly encouraged the Indian Affairs  
 2 and Interior as a whole to utilize the 638  
 3 contracting and compacting to the fullest extent  
 4 possible.  
 5 Tribes know best how to identify and meet  
 6 the unique needs of our communities. We would  
 7 welcome the opportunity to enter into a 638  
 8 agreement for various BIA regional office service  
 9 and functions, probate and realty, the first  
 10 function that comes to mind.  
 11 However, there are many others that we  
 12 could and are willing to step in. To support these  
 13 arrangements, we encourage Interior to examine its  
 14 inventory of old federal buildings and  
 15 infrastructures across Alaska and within my region,  
 16 the Arctic Slope, that no longer are in use and  
 17 could be used to aid us in delivering BIA services  
 18 and functions.  
 19 Beyond Indian Affairs, ICAS is ready to  
 20 partner in the management of federal lands  
 21 throughout the utilization of 638 contracting and  
 22 compacting. We are the original stewards of our  
 23 lands, and we have embraced resource development  
 24 while also protecting our traditional ways of life,  
 25 including our subsistence practices.

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1 We have had several conversations with BLM  
 2 over the years about taking over the management of  
 3 federal lands within our region. These areas are  
 4 difficult for BLM to manage because of their  
 5 location, and resources needed for proper  
 6 management.  
 7 We hope this administration fully embraces  
 8 638 contracting and compacting to more efficiently  
 9 manage federal funds.  
 10 I'm just going to move on to the emergency  
 11 permitting question and not wait.  
 12 ICAS supports the use of emergency  
 13 permitting for the development of critical  
 14 infrastructure like Broadband. On June 11, 2023,  
 15 sea ice severed an undersea fiberoptic cable which  
 16 connects the Arctic Slope to internet and cell phone  
 17 coverage for our region.  
 18 Remember, our region is the size of larger  
 19 than Minnesota. Because of the lack of redundant  
 20 Broadband infrastructure, there were outages across  
 21 the entire Arctic Slope. ICAS Tribal members were  
 22 not only disconnected from communications with the  
 23 outside world, but more importantly they were unable  
 24 to access critical services needed for everyday  
 25 life, such as medical and public safety.

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1 Phones stopped working. Hospitals and  
 2 clinics suffered from unusable medical equipment.  
 3 Local flights were stopped, and sadly a young child  
 4 died because the family was unable to call emergency  
 5 services.  
 6 In January 2025, sea ice once again  
 7 damaged the sub sea fiberoptic cable causing  
 8 widespread outages again, and it also extended to  
 9 Northwest Alaska as well, so Kotzebue and Nome were  
 10 also effected.  
 11 While ICAS tried to apply for funds  
 12 through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant, we  
 13 were unfairly denied because the NTIA, National  
 14 Telecommunications and Information Administration,  
 15 deemed our area served. The U.S. Department of  
 16 Agriculture Reconnect Broadband Program also deemed  
 17 our area served. I can tell you we are not.  
 18 To try and aid in a long term solution for  
 19 the recent outage, ICAS partnered with a local  
 20 telecommunications company to apply for the FEMA  
 21 Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities  
 22 Grant. Unfortunately, this funding opportunity was  
 23 canceled with this administration.  
 24 Nonetheless, in both instances our Tribal  
 25 members would have benefited from the use of

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1 emergency permitting to provide an immediate  
 2 solution. For this reason, we support the use of an  
 3 expedited emergency permitting process.  
 4 I want to note, though, that for energy  
 5 and natural resource development, which ICAS  
 6 generally supportive of, the expedited emergency  
 7 permitting process should not replace or override  
 8 Consultation with Tribes.  
 9 As previously stated, we are original  
 10 stewards of our lands. We have embraced resource  
 11 development while also protecting our traditional  
 12 ways of life including our subsistence practices.  
 13 By consulting with Tribes early and often, we can  
 14 help aid in the expedited approval of permits  
 15 necessary for critical resource development.  
 16 And I want to reiterate what the woman  
 17 from Bristol Bay had said about how great it is to  
 18 see our Tribes come together and band together so  
 19 quickly with such short notification to share our  
 20 concerns. And I know people have left for lunch,  
 21 but just looking at the space, I think the BIA  
 22 underestimated the 229 Tribes within Alaska who have  
 23 traveled hundreds and hundreds of miles to get here.  
 24 So I want to thank you for hearing us, but  
 25 please take this Consultation seriously, and I just

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1 want to close with a question for you, BIA, is how  
 2 will our comments be evaluated from this  
 3 Consultation?  
 4 Thank you.  
 5 BEN DUNCAN: So just as you're coming up,  
 6 I want to welcome, if there's anybody online who's  
 7 joined as part of the second part of this  
 8 conversation.  
 9 We're going to move through some folks  
 10 that have already signed up this morning for the  
 11 first part of the Consultation. And then I do have  
 12 a sign-up sheet so we're not putting numbers on  
 13 people, but your actual names. So if you're  
 14 interested in providing specific comment on the  
 15 emergency permitting procedures, I'll have a sign-up  
 16 list. Let me know. We'll get it in the queue.  
 17 Otherwise let's keep going through the  
 18 list we have. Thank you.  
 19 KEVIN BEARQUIVER: And Ben, if I may just  
 20 real quick, so at the very end I will address the  
 21 questions that are going on as well, so just reserve  
 22 some time for me to address some of the questions  
 23 that are out there, okay? Thank you.  
 24 MARCIE HAYNES: Pauline Koronavic  
 25 (speaking Native American language), Barbara Fields

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1 (speaking Native American language).  
 2 My name is Marcie Haynes. I am a Haida  
 3 and my clan is Eagle Frog, and I serve as secretary  
 4 on Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Council. We  
 5 serve 6,576 citizens of the Haida, Tlingit, and  
 6 Tsimshian people of Ketchikan, and I join you today  
 7 on the traditional territory of the Dean'ina people.  
 8 I stand before you representing my Tribe,  
 9 the Ketchikan Indian community, and we strongly  
 10 oppose any budget cuts, staffing reductions, or  
 11 restructuring efforts within the Bureau of Indian  
 12 Affairs and Indian Education that threaten our  
 13 services and our rights.  
 14 While efficiency is important, it cannot  
 15 come at the expense of our communities and our  
 16 inherent sovereignty. We demand an immediate  
 17 moratorium on all cuts until the following steps are  
 18 taken.  
 19 Issue a formal suspension of all staffing,  
 20 budget reductions, and office closures affecting  
 21 Alaska Tribes. Begin meaningful Nation to Nation  
 22 Consultation before decisions are made, not after.  
 23 We suggest a Tribal-led review panel to assist  
 24 impacts and develop alternatives. Ensure legal and  
 25 fiduciary compliance with federal trust

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1 responsibilities. Provide a transparency with  
 2 impact reports and staffing data before  
 3 Consultation. I know I say that funny, but I cannot  
 4 fix it.  
 5 Prioritize Native employment and  
 6 retention, not layoffs. Budget cuts threaten vital  
 7 programs, education, health, safety, language, and  
 8 social services; all essential in upholding our  
 9 sovereignty and well-being, and furthermore budget  
 10 cuts violate or trust and disproportionately impact  
 11 Alaska Native communities who face unique  
 12 environmental and logistical challenges.  
 13 The federal government and Tribes have a  
 14 profound and very important shared responsibility.  
 15 Together we share the fiduciary duty built on trust,  
 16 treaty obligations rooted in law and court  
 17 precedent, which demands responsible management and  
 18 respect for Tribal self-governance.  
 19 Tribal Nations are sovereign. We are not  
 20 line items on a budget. This is not an issue of  
 21 race or equality. True efficiency means  
 22 partnership, respect, and Native leadership. Never  
 23 austerity without consent.  
 24 Decisions were made before this  
 25 Consultation which makes it unmeaningful. My

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1 suggestion is a timely notice from BIA of future  
 2 Consultations, because there is where collaboration,  
 3 trust, and relationships are made.  
 4 We call on the Department of the Interior  
 5 to honor their mission statement, which I will read.  
 6 Department of the Interior protects and manages the  
 7 nation's natural resources and cultural heritage,  
 8 provides scientific and other information about  
 9 those resources, and honors its trust  
 10 responsibilities or special commitments to American  
 11 Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and  
 12 affiliated islands.  
 13 As the first owners of this land, the  
 14 biggest resource is our Native people, our  
 15 traditional territories, and our cultural heritage.  
 16 In turn, we can provide scientific and historical  
 17 knowledge about our collective resources. We demand  
 18 that the DOI honors its trust responsibilities to  
 19 American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians,  
 20 and island communities.  
 21 Your legal obligations and mission  
 22 statement demand that together, and I want to say  
 23 that again, together, we strengthen our communities.  
 24  
 25 How-a (phonetic), and thank you.

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1 JACOB TIMMONS: Good afternoon. I'm here  
 2 on behalf of Aleutian Pribilof Island Association  
 3 with designated authority from President and CEO  
 4 Dimitri Philemonof to provide some Consultation  
 5 recommendations for you today.  
 6 My name is Jacob Timmons. I'm the  
 7 Division Administrator for the Employment Training  
 8 and Related Services Division at APIA. APIA  
 9 appreciates this administration's efforts to  
 10 increase government efficiency and fiscal  
 11 responsibility.  
 12 APIA serves some of the most rural and  
 13 remote communities in the United States which lie on  
 14 a chain of islands spanning roughly 1,200 miles  
 15 separating the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean. We  
 16 have operated Indian Self-Determination and  
 17 Education Assistance Act, ISDEAA self-governance  
 18 compacts, as well as a public law 102-477 integrated  
 19 program plan, for well over 25 years to reduce  
 20 administrative burdens and to increase flexibility  
 21 of funds, and adapt to the unique and changing needs  
 22 in the communities that we serve, and to overall  
 23 increase the efficiency and program delivery while  
 24 adhering to fiscal integrity and responsibility.  
 25 To this alignment of goals, we are

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1 providing the following Consultation points to the  
 2 U.S. Department of Interior Indian Affairs.  
 3 In regards to restructuring of Indian  
 4 Affairs, APIA recommends that action be taken to  
 5 examine and create change that minimizes internal  
 6 process barriers, to streamline those internal  
 7 processes, and to remove silos across Indian  
 8 Affairs.  
 9 APIA also recommends that Indian Affairs  
 10 protects and assures adequate staffing for positions  
 11 that interface directly with Tribes, so positions  
 12 such as the workforce development specialists,  
 13 AOTRs. They're essential, direct points of contact  
 14 that Tribes rely on to support the success of our  
 15 programs, to respond to questions and concerns, and  
 16 to provide training and technical assistance.  
 17 APIA further recommends that Indian  
 18 Affairs protects and assures adequate staffing for  
 19 financial specialist positions who oversee funding  
 20 transfers which is necessary for Tribal operations  
 21 and programming.  
 22 In terms of addressing current funding  
 23 structures, APIA has seen delays in funding  
 24 transfers and identification of funding. So for  
 25 example, we have at times received lump sums of

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1 self-governance funds, but our ability to allocate  
 2 those funds to the appropriate budgets was delayed  
 3 until we received a proper authority to obligate.  
 4 We recommend that Indian Affairs simplify  
 5 and streamline the process of funding transfers,  
 6 including those interdepartmental transfers, and  
 7 ensure that the process includes a specification of  
 8 funds. We also recommend that adequate staffing be  
 9 dedicated to this process.  
 10 APIA significantly reduces administrative  
 11 burdens through the operation of our BIA self-  
 12 governance compacts, and through our 477 integrated  
 13 program plan, by directly compacting or integrating  
 14 various streams, broaden the scope of allowable  
 15 costs, and completing a single report rather than  
 16 numerous reports for each funding stream.  
 17 We recommend that these successful models  
 18 be utilized across Indian Affairs. For example,  
 19 grants such as those supporting natural resource  
 20 management activities could swiftly be replaced by  
 21 direct compacting using existing policies that have  
 22 already been demonstrated to be successful and  
 23 efficient under BIA's self-governance.  
 24 Additionally we recommend that Indian  
 25 Affairs advocate for their continued funding,

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1 expansion, and extension of these models across  
 2 other U.S. departments.  
 3 Similarly to the previous point, APIA  
 4 maximizes the flexibility of funding to promote  
 5 economic growth, enhance family and community self-  
 6 sufficiency, and address our community's unique and  
 7 specific needs through the operation of our BIA  
 8 self-governance compacts and the 477 integrated  
 9 program plan.  
 10 Once again, we recommend that these  
 11 successful models be utilized across Indian Affairs,  
 12 and that Indian Affairs advocate for their continued  
 13 funding, expansion, and extension across other U.S.  
 14 departments.  
 15 So in closing, APIA appreciates the  
 16 opportunity to offer these recommendations aimed at  
 17 enhancing the efficiency, effectiveness within  
 18 Indian Affairs. Our experience over the past 25-  
 19 plus years with ISDEAA self-governance compact and  
 20 the integrated 477 program plan clearly demonstrates  
 21 the benefits of reduced administrative burdens,  
 22 increased funding flexibility, and the ability to  
 23 adapt to the unique needs of our remote communities.  
 24 To further these goals, we urge Indian  
 25 Affairs to prioritize actions that minimize internal

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1 process barriers, to streamline operations, and to  
 2 eliminate silos while ensuring adequate staffing for  
 3 crucial Tribal liaisons and financial specialists.  
 4 Addressing current funding structures to  
 5 expedite the transfer of resources to Tribes is also  
 6 paramount. We strongly advocate for the broader  
 7 utilization of successful models such as ISDEAA  
 8 compacts and 477 integrated program plans across  
 9 Indian Affairs and other U.S. departments.  
 10 These approaches in power Tribes foster  
 11 economic growth, address local needs effectively,  
 12 and pave the way for greater self-determination. We  
 13 believe the implementation of these recommendations  
 14 will lead to a more efficient, responsive, and  
 15 ultimately more effective partnership between the  
 16 federal government and Tribal communities.  
 17 Thank you.  
 18 ESTELLE THOMSON: Can you hear me? First  
 19 off, I would like to thank the original inhabitants  
 20 of Dena'ina Elnena, the Dena'ina people of Alaska.  
 21 Secondly I would like to thank every  
 22 single one of you who have traveled far to be here  
 23 to testify to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to  
 24 the Department of Interior. Your sacrifice, your  
 25 financial assignment, and also your time is greatly

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1 appreciated.

2 For those of you that are not going to be

3 testifying today, I hope you will submit comments to

4 the Department of Interior.

5 And thirdly, I'd like to thank those of

6 you on the panel who have actively listened

7 throughout this process instead of scrolling on your

8 phone or seeming to be uninterested. (Speaking

9 Native American language.) My Yup'ik calling name

10 is Anuit-kalap (phonetic). It means The One Who Is

11 Supposed To Be A Man, or more appropriately, The One

12 Who Will Provide.

13 My English name is Estelle Thomson, and I

14 am the President of the Native Village of Paimiut

15 Traditional Council. I'm also, as many people in

16 this room, representative of people and

17 organizations that we serve in different capacities

18 on, some of which for me include the Yukon River

19 Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Alaska Wildlife

20 Alliance, the Alaska Ocean Observing System, the

21 Northern Latitudes Partnership, Western Alaska

22 Landscape Initiative, and the International Union

23 for the Conservation of Nature, on the committee for

24 the environmental, economic, and social policy.

25 I'm honored to represent my village and my

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1 people, and to speak alongside these other dignified

2 Tribal leaders, all of us who are deeply engaged in

3 the survival and the strength of our communities,

4 cultures, and lands.

5 In addition, in these other capacities we

6 represent our Indigenous communities and our lands,

7 waters, and wildlife locally and sometimes globally.

8 The U.S. federal government has recognized U.S.

9 Tribes as independent nations for quite a long time.

10 Tribal sovereignty for us is an inherit

11 right and pre-dates the U.S. Constitution, something

12 this administration has occasionally ignored and

13 seemingly wishes weren't so entrenched in law. The

14 United States has a trust responsibility to all

15 federally recognized Tribes. This is not symbolic.

16 It is a binding legal obligation to protect our

17 lands, cultural resources, and the well-being of our

18 people.

19 For Alaska Tribes, this responsibility

20 carries special weight. Alaska has almost half of

21 all federally recognized Tribes, as you've been made

22 aware. Although we might have not reservations like

23 in the lower 48, we still are sovereign Tribal

24 Nations.

25 I want to begin by acknowledging a

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1 frustration that has been shared by other people

2 within this room. The Consultation lacks clear

3 direction and does not follow the usual and

4 customary protocols for true Tribal Consultation.

5 We do not know how our testimony will be

6 used, how our feedback will shape policy, or what

7 decisions are being influenced by our participation.

8 Without transparency from the Department of Interior

9 and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, this process risks

10 falling short of the principles of free, prior, and

11 informed consent.

12 The United States has endorsed the United

13 Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous

14 people which requires a standard for free, prior,

15 and informed consent by Indigenous peoples prior to

16 government action impacting Indigenous communities.

17 BIA didn't reach out to Tribes when we

18 started having all these funding freezes and such,

19 and that was troubling for those of us that have

20 small Tribes that depend on BIA funding.

21 Some of the questions that have come up

22 have been like, what does restructuring the

23 Department of Interior and Indian Affairs, what

24 would it look like? How can we be expected to talk

25 about some of the issues that are important to us,

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1 in an abstract sort of way, without having any kind

2 of clear determination and direction from your

3 agency.

4 Turning to the DOI's Consultation on

5 workforce efficiency and productivity, we also have

6 deep concerns. Streamlining government services

7 should never come at the expense of Tribal self-

8 determination or culturally informed service

9 delivery.

10 Alaska Tribes rely on BIA and other DOI

11 personnel to navigate federal systems that are

12 already understaffed, undertrained, and

13 overburdened. And for those of us that come from

14 remote communities, our ability to access some of

15 these platforms is hindered by our lack of stable

16 Broadband and/or the capacity of our peoples.

17 Reducing staff, cutting regional offices,

18 or prioritizing automation over human relationships

19 would devastate Tribal access to essential services.

20 Relationships are everything to us Indigenous

21 peoples, everything.

22 When I give my traditional introduction, I

23 will tell you who I come from so that you know how

24 to relate to me. Every single person in this room,

25 if I was able to give you my lineage, you'd know how

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1 to treat me, how to talk to me, whether you were  
 2 going to be teaching me or working with me.  
 3 We think that the DOI should expand  
 4 workforce recruitment focused on Native  
 5 professionals from Alaska who understand our  
 6 geography and ways of life. We want to increase the  
 7 funding for cultural competency and Tribal  
 8 sovereignty training all a across DOI agencies.  
 9 We want to make sure that the decision  
 10 making is de-centralized. As several people have  
 11 mentioned throughout this Consultation, Alaska is  
 12 unique. Not only in geography and the distance from  
 13 Washington DC, but also with the 11 cultures and 20  
 14 languages that we have here in Alaska.  
 15 We want those decision making powers to be  
 16 de-centralized to empower our Tribal serving  
 17 personnel and regional directors to act quickly and  
 18 effectively. And saying that, we also want to make  
 19 sure that the BIA office here in Alaska is not only  
 20 fully funded, but fully staffed to meet the needs of  
 21 all of the Tribes here in Alaska.  
 22 These many Tribes, almost half of the  
 23 United States federally recognized Tribes residing  
 24 here, need the kind of support and assistance that  
 25 BIA can offer.

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1 We want to make sure that all our  
 2 workforce reforms are co-designed with Tribal  
 3 governments, not after. We want that to happen  
 4 before any major decisions are made on how the  
 5 agency is going to be reorganized so that our voices  
 6 can be heard, and our voices can help shape the way  
 7 that the BIA is able to serve us in the best way  
 8 possible.  
 9 Our communities already face delays in  
 10 land transfers, environmental assessments, and  
 11 infrastructure approvals. Efficiency cannot mean  
 12 less access for us. It cannot mean less expertise  
 13 for our Tribal people seeking assistance, or less  
 14 accountability from the federal government.  
 15 True productivity for us in Alaska must be  
 16 defined by the outcomes in our Tribal communities,  
 17 not just by cost savings for the federal government.  
 18 We also must express concern about the  
 19 department's proposed expedited environmental review  
 20 procedures under NEPA and the Endangered Species  
 21 Act. Cutting review timelines to 14 or 28 days, not  
 22 just for these specific issues, but for all Tribal  
 23 Consultation, cutting those review timelines to that  
 24 14 or 28 days make meaningful Tribal Consultation  
 25 impossible.

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1 These are not paper exercises. These are  
 2 not things that you can check off on a box. These  
 3 processes are how we as Indigenous people, Alaska  
 4 Natives, protect our sacred ancestral lands, our  
 5 traditional subsistence practices, and the way that  
 6 we run our communities.  
 7 Also emergency procedures under Section 7  
 8 of the ESA must never bypass Tribal Consultation.  
 9 Through the Secretarial Order 3206 requires it, any  
 10 attempt to sidestep this legal duty violates our  
 11 rights and the federal trust obligation. We live in  
 12 some of the most environmentally threatened regions  
 13 in the country.  
 14 For my area, just to give context, we are  
 15 experiencing climate change at a rate that's four  
 16 times faster than the rest of the world. And just  
 17 because some people in this administration don't  
 18 want us to use the words doesn't make it any less  
 19 real for those of us who are experiencing it.  
 20 We are expecting all the permafrost in our  
 21 area to be gone by 2040, and the Bering Sea to  
 22 subsume our lands by the end of the century.  
 23 Any attempt to sidestep this legal duty,  
 24 this Tribal Consultation, violates our rights and  
 25 the federal trust obligation. We live in some of

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1 the most environmentally threatened regions in the  
 2 country. In addition to climate change, our  
 3 communities face coastal erosion, permafrost thaw,  
 4 wildfire, and flooding. Those are some of the  
 5 byproducts of climate change, but they're also some  
 6 of the things that we experienced in our lands prior  
 7 to any of these major changes occurring in our  
 8 lands.  
 9 Seasonal flooding is something that was  
 10 very regular for us. Programs like the BIA Tribal  
 11 Community Resilience Program are vital for our  
 12 survival. They provide erosion and flood  
 13 assessments, climate adaptation tools, and the staff  
 14 support that makes federal promises real, on the  
 15 ground, and to our people.  
 16 We also rely on DOI science and  
 17 forecasting tools. Cuts to the USGS or NOAA  
 18 programs are weakening the Alaska Tribal Climate  
 19 Adaptation Science Center would directly harm our  
 20 food systems, Tribal safety, and ability to plan for  
 21 our future.  
 22 I really want to be clear on this.  
 23 Science funding is not optional for us. It's a  
 24 matter of life, food security, and cultural  
 25 continuity.

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1 I urge the Department of Interior to  
 2 clarify the purpose and intended outcomes of this  
 3 Consultation prior to us being able to have the  
 4 final comments submitted in July.

5 I want the Department of Interior to  
 6 affirm the trust responsibility to Alaska Tribes in  
 7 both law and action. I want the Department of  
 8 Interior to reject workforce efficiency protocols  
 9 that reduce our access to federal programs or  
 10 diminish our culturally grounded service.

11 I want the Department of Interior to fully  
 12 fund science and resilience programs essential to  
 13 Alaska's future. I want the Department of Interior  
 14 to protect Tribal rights under NEPA and ESA with  
 15 timelines and processes that allow real  
 16 participation.

17 We're not asking for anything special.  
 18 We're asking for the federal government to honor  
 19 their trust responsibilities that were promised to  
 20 us. We want to make sure that the BIA and DOI  
 21 design the workforce services and environmental  
 22 policies in partnership with us, not around us.

23 I was thinking about what I was going to  
 24 say for this specific testimony. The questions are  
 25 so broad that it made me consider that perhaps I

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1 wouldn't be able to touch on everything, so I will  
 2 be providing written comments.

3 When the BIA was established, was it 201  
 4 years ago, it was nestled in the Department of War,  
 5 and it was to manage us like farmers and other  
 6 people manage livestock, and that's not something  
 7 that the department should be proud of in its  
 8 history.

9 We are complex, robust, and full people.  
 10 We have governed our Nations for thousands of years,  
 11 long before this government was instituted, long  
 12 before the Constitution was written, and long before  
 13 any of these agencies were established.

14 In our history, the agencies haven't  
 15 always been kind to us, and if the BIA and DOI are  
 16 clearly interested in navigating the restructuring  
 17 of these agencies, we implore you to include us in  
 18 shaping what that's going to look like for us.

19 I echo the sentiment of the people who  
 20 don't want us to have to compete with one another  
 21 for funds. Some of our Tribes are small and they  
 22 lack the capacity as well as the money to be able to  
 23 do so effectively. Some of our Tribes don't have  
 24 the people within their communities that can  
 25 advocate for them at levels that we are some of

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1 these larger Tribes and Tribal organizations.

2 But I will say this, the comment that I  
 3 think people underestimated, you guys maybe  
 4 underestimated the will of the 229 Tribes here in  
 5 Alaska to be here and to speak and represent their  
 6 peoples, our different Nations, we will always find  
 7 a way.

8 Back when I was a little kid, I knew  
 9 people in my community that would pass the hat to be  
 10 able to go to testify in front of panels like you,  
 11 in front of agencies in D.C., in Juneau, in all  
 12 these different places, and regardless of the fact  
 13 that we may be looking at a different future with  
 14 funding, that might not be there, we will always  
 15 find a way.

16 And just like we've been here since before  
 17 the inception of this country, Indigenous peoples in  
 18 Alaska will always be here, and we'll always be  
 19 fighting for our people.

20 Thank you.

21 BEN DUNCAN: Two things. So one, I want  
 22 to invite, there's a couple folks online that I want  
 23 to invite in. I also want to acknowledge the Alaska  
 24 Native Heritage Center that's brought some pizzas in  
 25 the back. So feel free to indulge in pizza.

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1 And then I think we're on number 17, so if  
 2 you are still holding a number, I'll invite you into  
 3 the queue. And then reminder, specifically provide  
 4 input on the emergency permitting procedure, we're  
 5 capturing a list here.

6 So let's start, I think we're on 17. If  
 7 you all can get in line, but Sam, if you want to go  
 8 to the two online.

9 SAM LEVY: All right. Charlotte, you'll  
 10 be up first, and then Nicholas, you'll be after  
 11 Charlotte.

12 Charlotte, you can go ahead and unmute  
 13 yourself. You're welcome to turn your camera on as  
 14 well, and you can go ahead and provide your comment.

15 CHARLOTTE: Yes. Thank you, very, very  
 16 much and for inviting us for this panel and  
 17 discussion for the efficiency and productivity,  
 18 preparing for the guidelines that we all need to  
 19 share.

20 My name is Charlotte Nyagup (phonetic).  
 21 I'm originally from Chevak Native Village, and I'm  
 22 one of the Tribal Council here at Chevak. In the  
 23 many years I've been living over there since my  
 24 childhood, I have very well known BIA.

25 BIA does so much for us over the years,

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1 even from my older siblings that lived before, even  
 2 before they were sent out to places when they were  
 3 in elementary. But now we have schools now. BIA  
 4 did so many for us, even for housing, but over the  
 5 years the housing issues has been declining.  
 6 Over the years some of our Native in our  
 7 surrounding villages, in these 56 Tribes of Y-K  
 8 Delta, one of the places, one individual who crossed  
 9 for new housing under BIA, but not got one housing  
 10 for it.  
 11 It hurts. I know the fundings are  
 12 depleting and whatever we were supposed to be  
 13 getting, it's not going to be there anymore. The  
 14 housing issues, we've been talking about it over  
 15 many, many years.  
 16 As I became adult, I've been hearing it,  
 17 but nothing has moved, and our way of life, our  
 18 fishing is now being bothered, hurting many people.  
 19 Between the Yukon And Kuskokwim Delta area, our way  
 20 of life is disappearing.  
 21 Where did we all go wrong? Where did we  
 22 lose it? Maybe if the BIA had, like those other  
 23 people had stated that the pilot programs and  
 24 someone to be a representative or a liaison, or even  
 25 the BIA's that come out and walk through our

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1 village, reaching out, working with the people,  
 2 being more active, maybe we will be accomplishing  
 3 something from there.  
 4 And the whole Tribe of Alaska is facing so  
 5 many issues that we all need to work together. I  
 6 know I don't have that much of an education in my  
 7 background, but I completed my high school, but  
 8 listening to my elders for my educational teachers,  
 9 they taught me.  
 10 Maybe in other way too that for issues  
 11 that all the Tribes are facing problems, how can we  
 12 be well-known? By advertising? Reaching out? Or  
 13 voicing out? Not just for a one-time being.  
 14 Constantly and daily we need to stretch out our  
 15 voice.  
 16 We need to let people understand from  
 17 Washington DC. They don't know our lifestyle. They  
 18 don't know how we live out here. We are resilient.  
 19 We can reach out to them with our voice and with  
 20 what our elders before us have spoken.  
 21 My elders taught me to voice out, not to  
 22 be quiet. I voice out. Listen. We need your help.  
 23 We need your advice, and BIA has been our own voice  
 24 many, many years ever since I was small, and when I  
 25 got to know them. I had a good school. That

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1 education part was the best ever taught school that  
 2 I had accomplished, with my elders talking to me  
 3 that who I will say, what I will say, and what will  
 4 I do.  
 5 Even we learn from papers the policy and  
 6 procedures, we follow them. Even the missions, we  
 7 should learn how to mean it when we make missions,  
 8 statements.  
 9 On behalf of Chevak Native Village, I am  
 10 thankful for this Zoom and this meeting that all the  
 11 Tribes that are attending. My full support to each  
 12 and every one of you. Truly we need a liaison, a  
 13 representative, somebody that will voice out  
 14 constantly 24/7 to let people, those people from  
 15 Washington DC understand.  
 16 Try to open them up, let them feel our  
 17 voice. We don't have to use big words in order to  
 18 someone to listen to us. (Speaking Native American  
 19 language) for listening to me. Thanks so much for  
 20 listening to me.  
 21 Thank you.  
 22 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 23 SAM LEVY: Thank you very much.  
 24 Nicholas, you'll be up next. I'm going to  
 25 go ahead and invite you to unmute. You can do so.

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1 You can turn your camera on if you'd like, and you  
 2 are free to provide your comment.  
 3 NICHOLAS: Is my camera working?  
 4 SAM LEVY: Keep talking. I think we can  
 5 hear you, but I just want to make sure.  
 6 NICHOLAS: Oh, okay, there.  
 7 SAM LEVY: We can hear you loud and clear.  
 8 Go ahead.  
 9 NICHOLAS: I come here on behalf of the 40  
 10 Tribes of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission.  
 11 We are voicing solid opposing use of emergency  
 12 permitting procedures, and are formally asking for  
 13 Consultation from the Department of the Interior  
 14 concerning any proposed, as relating to D-1 lands.  
 15 Proposed emergency permitting procedures  
 16 for energy projects, completing environmentally,  
 17 have statements in 28 days, a process that generally  
 18 takes about two years, and providing 7-day comment  
 19 period in National Historic Preservation Act,  
 20 Section 106, Culture Resource Review, completing an  
 21 environmental assessment in 14 days, a process that  
 22 normally takes up to a year.  
 23 It's not efficient to get rid of people  
 24 whose job it is to reach out and ensure Consultation  
 25 with Tribes in remote places like Alaska when that

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1 is already hard enough. Workforce reductions will  
 2 make it harder for people to meet their legal  
 3 obligations and to do their jobs.  
 4         It would be more efficient to find ways to  
 5 work more closely and collaborate with Tribes who  
 6 know the land and resource throughout a range of  
 7 efforts like 638 contracting and co-management.  
 8         If Tribes are allowed to work in  
 9 collaboration with federal agencies, they might then  
 10 be able to do more with less. Communication in  
 11 Alaska, because of distance and remote access, is  
 12 often influenced by weather and communication  
 13 infrastructure. Reducing time for review and input  
 14 regarding impacts of proposed energy development  
 15 projects could unreasonably short timelines will  
 16 result in Alaska Tribes and community members being  
 17 cut off of the process that the National  
 18 Environmental Policy Act and National Historic  
 19 Preservation Act were established to provide.  
 20         Consultation must occur with Tribes before  
 21 a decision is made here. The Department of the  
 22 Interior has declined to adopt alternatives, NEPA  
 23 and NHPA process without Tribal Consultation.  
 24         On D-1s, any decision impacting D-1 lands  
 25 must meaningfully include Tribes and the Bering Sea

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1 Interior Tribal Commission, requests the Department  
 2 of the Interior enter into a cooperative agreement  
 3 with the commissions to consult with its member  
 4 Tribes before any action is taken on D-1s.  
 5         D-1 lands are important for the health and  
 6 well-being of our Tribes' units and sustaining our  
 7 subsistence hunting and fishing, is essential to our  
 8 sovereignty and food security. We cannot lose  
 9 federal priority for subsistence hunting and fishing  
 10 on these lands.  
 11         We are already struggling enough. All the  
 12 D-1 lands in our area, they all have salmon, salmon  
 13 spawning areas. They all lead into the mountains  
 14 around, or the D-1s they're proposing to open in our  
 15 area. They all lead to salmon spawning areas, and  
 16 we have also subsistence hunting lands that we go  
 17 to. And I'd like to do, I'd do anything to help  
 18 protect those lands.  
 19         So hopefully you guys are able to do  
 20 something with this to go into negotiations with the  
 21 bare sea Interior Tribal Commission.  
 22         That's my testimony, and I'd like to thank  
 23 you guys for allowing us to speak.  
 24         Thank you.  
 25         BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, Nicholas.

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1             So can I invite the folks that are still  
 2 holding a number? Just come up to the queue, I  
 3 think. Is there 17 or 18? 17, okay. 18? And then  
 4 anybody still holding a number? Then we have a  
 5 sign-up sheet for others, particularly around  
 6 emergency permitting.  
 7             RHONDA PITKA: Hi, my number is 17, also  
 8 known as Chief Rhonda Pitka of the Village of  
 9 Beaver. I am also the Executive Director -- no,  
 10 wait, no, I'm not. I'm the chairwoman of the  
 11 Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments.  
 12             We serve eight Tribes in the Yukon Flats  
 13 region of Alaska. Our region is very remote. We  
 14 have very little road access to our region. The  
 15 cost of doing business in our area has been very  
 16 expensive, and we oppose a lot of these executive  
 17 orders because they've caused a slowdown in our  
 18 operations.  
 19             Funding basic programs has been cut  
 20 considerably. At the beginning of the year and the  
 21 beginning of the Trump administration we have had  
 22 numerous times where we couldn't access funding that  
 23 was already contracted to us, and that's happened in  
 24 a lot of different areas in our organizations.  
 25             This kind of taking back of contracted

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1 funding has been so detrimental to our operations.  
 2 We've had to lay off three people and now we're not  
 3 sure how we are going to continue funding  
 4 administrative tasks that basically are the whole --  
 5 we have program staff, but we also need the  
 6 administrative portion of the program staffing in  
 7 order to meet all of the requirements that the  
 8 government has.  
 9             Every single program that we operate has  
 10 compliance staff. We need audits. We need all of  
 11 the things, and that takes money. That takes time,  
 12 and that takes people. And that also takes away  
 13 from our ability to operate programs.  
 14             We have a very small Early Head Start  
 15 program that at the beginning of the year we  
 16 couldn't access any of the funding for, so our  
 17 children couldn't have their Early Head Start  
 18 visits. This has been so detrimental to our  
 19 operations, and it's effected all of our people very  
 20 negatively.  
 21             This is also a really unusual  
 22 Consultation. I've kind of never been to a  
 23 Consultation like this before, and I was like oh,  
 24 this is interesting.  
 25             I do this kind of thing all the time for

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1 any job, to usually there's recorders and all this  
 2 other kind of stuff, so the comments are taken down.  
 3 Our executive director will be sending our  
 4 written comments also to the email just to make sure  
 5 that it's recorded somewhere, because I'm not sure  
 6 what's going on here.  
 7 Thank you. Oh, good, okay.  
 8 It's just interesting because, you know,  
 9 we usually have a lot more back-and-forth at  
 10 Consultation. I think one of the things that my  
 11 executive director did tell me to talk about was  
 12 that ASAP.gov, new requirement for a justification  
 13 to draw down awarded funding.  
 14 It's ridiculous and it's onerous. This is  
 15 already contracted funding. It's already written  
 16 into a program agreement. It's already been agreed  
 17 on and negotiated.  
 18 Having to write that justification on  
 19 those systems is pretty unnecessary because it's  
 20 already laid out in the contract pretty clearly.  
 21 These are so cumbersome and unnecessary. They  
 22 require our small staff to spend so much time on  
 23 grants management, that our program delivery has  
 24 been effected.  
 25 It's very difficult in our area to access

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1 a lot of basic services. Right now our executive  
 2 director would have been here for CATG, but the  
 3 building, our administrative building in Fort Yukon  
 4 flooded and she's dealing with that right now with  
 5 buckets and a hose.  
 6 Like this is the kind of stuff that we  
 7 deal with in rural Alaska all the time, and adding  
 8 to that administrative burden has just become so  
 9 tiring and time consuming.  
 10 It's not actually doing any real work.  
 11 It's making sure that little boxes are checked for  
 12 the government, which, you know, it's important, but  
 13 there are a million other ways that the government  
 14 has made these requirements, that these little box  
 15 checking exercises are really tiresome.  
 16 I think it's very unnecessary to have that  
 17 ASAP.gov requirement, especially because those line  
 18 items are already listed out in our contracts. It's  
 19 unnecessary.  
 20 She will definitely be submitting those  
 21 written comments. She would have had them to me  
 22 already, except for she has now got a hose and a  
 23 bucket trying to get water out of the ceiling.  
 24 It's been a really interesting few months  
 25 trying to navigate how we work with government when

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1 all of our Tribal relations specialists have been  
 2 cut. All of the people that are supposed to be  
 3 doing these Tribal Consultations have been cut.  
 4 There's a lot of new faces, and a lot of  
 5 people don't know the mechanisms that we work with,  
 6 which is unfortunate, and it makes it a lot less  
 7 efficient for us to do our work.  
 8 Every time we fill out for a grant, we  
 9 have to go on grants.gov, sign in, and then you get  
 10 a code and all this other authentication stuff. So  
 11 each little administrative task, when we have slow  
 12 internet, causes a burden on our staff.  
 13 And by "our staff," I usually mean me  
 14 because I come from a village of 70 people, and I  
 15 can do a lot of different things, but dealing with  
 16 slow internet and government bureaucracy is probably  
 17 the worst part of my job.  
 18 I really appreciate the time today, and I  
 19 would hope that everybody that came in here to speak  
 20 today in person gets their chance to comment, and  
 21 that we continue commenting until all those comments  
 22 have been reached.  
 23 Thank you.  
 24 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 25 MARK ROSEBERRY: Good afternoon, my name

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1 is Mark Roseberry. I'm the Director of Education  
 2 for the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, and  
 3 I'm here on behalf of our Ed Committee. Danny  
 4 Pakuka (phonetic) is one of our Ed Committee  
 5 members, and asked me to speak for him.  
 6 We're still training him, and I do want to  
 7 say thank you for being here, and also thank you,  
 8 BIE. We just recently received a grant to help  
 9 develop our Tribal Education Department.  
 10 On the other side of that, I will say I  
 11 hope that you can get a grants program that works,  
 12 because we've run into a lot of things. One of the  
 13 areas that they said, you're going to get awarded  
 14 but we just can't download your application.  
 15 And then right now we're waiting for the  
 16 funding to be distributed, but there is a holdup  
 17 there because of the technology, and I'm just like  
 18 confused as to why in these day and ages where we  
 19 have AI and everything, that they can't even access  
 20 our applications or can't send us the funding that's  
 21 already been awarded.  
 22 And then we have to go through these  
 23 things, and they have to go, I don't know how  
 24 inefficient that could possibly be, but we've been  
 25 waiting months now. And we appreciate it, but we

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1 haven't seen it yet, so we know it's there  
 2 somewhere.  
 3 I do want to say, Tribal sovereignty has a  
 4 foundation in education, and that's what we're  
 5 looking for. However, Alaska Tribes must be able to  
 6 educate their over. However, while ICAS has a  
 7 constitutional responsibility to provide education  
 8 to the young and adult citizens, there is very  
 9 little funding available to do this.  
 10 Alaska Tribes cannot really operate  
 11 schools because there's no funding directly either  
 12 from BIE or BIA or anywhere else. It's blocked,  
 13 which doesn't make sense for Tribal sovereignty here  
 14 in Alaska.  
 15 And there's very little funding available  
 16 to Alaska Tribes to operate schools as well, and  
 17 that funding that is available is a competitive  
 18 grant, and the competitive grants are longstanding.  
 19 They're meant for short term, and it's not  
 20 sustainable.  
 21 And then Tribes have to compete with  
 22 everybody else, so how do you start a school that  
 23 you may have a three-year grant and then you're not  
 24 sure where the next funding is going to come from.  
 25 And what we do know here in Alaska, when

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1 we see Tribes like ours working with their youth,  
 2 they respond to that. We get local teachers, they  
 3 respond to that. They improve. Their social  
 4 emotional well-being improves. We see all of that.  
 5 And so the question would be, if we're  
 6 looking for efficiency and we're looking for having  
 7 success, why are we not supporting our Tribes to do  
 8 this, yet it's blocked.  
 9 And so I know there's ways. We've been  
 10 working with BIA in some aspects of it, but this  
 11 really needs to be looked into. And one of the  
 12 things, Alaska Tribes, as you know, do not have a  
 13 sustainable source of funding either for education  
 14 and we are forced to either work and consult with  
 15 our public education systems if we want to have any  
 16 influence in the education of our youth.  
 17 And this isn't Tribal sovereignty. While  
 18 the Tribes do have the option, and we do, we take  
 19 time and work with our local school districts and  
 20 everything. That needs to be by choice, not by  
 21 force, to have influence.  
 22 So one of the things we ask as you go  
 23 forward and communicate to the administration, the  
 24 Trump administration, if they really want to see  
 25 sovereignty, then it has to be, they have to support

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1 Alaska Tribes to offer education.  
 2 An Alaskan Tribe that wants to manage its  
 3 own school system will have difficulty doing so  
 4 because there's no current mechanism to receive  
 5 trust responsibility funding for education. The  
 6 Tribe must have some type of business or some kind  
 7 of revenue generating endeavor.  
 8 And that's very difficult, especially in  
 9 some of our rural areas. And so there are ways to  
 10 do it, but there's no tax base. None of these  
 11 things that so many places have that fund education,  
 12 so we have to come up with a way.  
 13 And one of the things I wanted to share,  
 14 you know, so our request is this. We're also  
 15 looking at how do you build facilities. It's very  
 16 expensive in rural Alaska. We just don't have  
 17 facilities sitting around that, oh, we can go rent  
 18 that, or we can, like we do here in Anchorage or  
 19 Fairbanks or on the road system.  
 20 You have to almost build everything, and  
 21 then it's seasonal because you don't have, you know,  
 22 on the North Slope we have snow roads in the winter,  
 23 but that's ending. And then you have the barges,  
 24 but you don't have a regular system of moving large  
 25 amounts, and then it's very expensive if you're

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1 doing it by plane and everything.  
 2 So how do we do this and support our  
 3 Tribes to, in a reasonable amount of time, acquire  
 4 facilities, get facilities, and because we can't  
 5 contract with the BIE or BIA for education, we're  
 6 not eligible for 105(1) leases.  
 7 And so in never way that, and this is what  
 8 we're dealing with at ICAS. At every area we try to  
 9 move education forward, we almost have a block, and  
 10 we have to eliminate those blocks.  
 11 And we know, again, if you look at the  
 12 stats where the Tribes are conducting education,  
 13 whether it's in Head Start or in the areas that we  
 14 are doing, or we're just starting Tribal schools, or  
 15 there are some charter schools, but again we in the  
 16 -- we're one of the Tribes for Tribal compacting.  
 17 And there's a reason why there's Tribes  
 18 that have worked with charter schools that want to  
 19 do Tribal compacting. The Tribe sovereignty is not  
 20 being respected when you're working with a school  
 21 district that has the right to tell you what to do.  
 22 And again, charter schools, some Tribes  
 23 are going the charter school way because it's the  
 24 only way you can do that right now if you want to  
 25 get funding, but that impedes on their sovereignty.

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1 If they want to do anything different, then they  
2 can't.

3       And a lot of times it's very difficult  
4 here in Alaska because if a school system or school  
5 board decides you're getting too big or you're going  
6 in a direction that may politically not benefit  
7 them, then they're putting blocks in the road.

8       So you have several Tribes that have been  
9 working to operate charter schools, but are part of  
10 the Tribal compacting because they want that  
11 sovereignty relationship with the state, which is  
12 appropriate and what should be happening.

13       So the request that we have is, break down  
14 the barriers that block financial and other  
15 resources, support to Tribes in Alaska that are  
16 providing pre-K through 12 and postsecondary  
17 education.

18       Advocate for adequate funding to support  
19 the basic services for education. We know that's a  
20 problem with BIE because there's been a funding  
21 freeze, which doesn't make sense. If you want to  
22 see, in Indian country, even though we really don't  
23 have Indian country up here by the legal definition,  
24 but if you really want to see our Tribes and  
25 everything succeed, you wouldn't be freezing funds.

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1 We all know that.

2       And put enough funds in so that Tribes  
3 aren't competing with each other to get the basic  
4 funds just it operate the schools. And then support  
5 the commerce clause to fully support Tribes through  
6 current and creative means to create sustainable  
7 revenue necessary for Tribes to provide all services  
8 that they are expected to provide.

9       And the commerce clause basically says  
10 that the legislature has the right not only to  
11 negotiate and contract with states, but Tribes, and  
12 it says specifically Tribes in there. We're in that  
13 commerce clause. That is a part of the  
14 constitution.

15       And we ask that that be honored because  
16 when I'm looking and we're giving millions and  
17 billions of dollars to other countries, why are we  
18 not supporting nations within our boundaries? And  
19 that's the question that we all should be asking.

20       And then for Head Start, an early learning  
21 program, funding so that we maintain that. We know  
22 that if we start young, it's in the best interest of  
23 the students. We know by, if you look at the  
24 research starting at those young ages, they cannot  
25 make up educational losses at those young ages.

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1           There can be some remediation, but you can  
2 never make up if it's lost at those early ages, so  
3 we have to focus on them if we want success here.

4           Thank you.

5           LISA WADE: (Speaking Native American  
6 language.) Hi, my name is Lisa Wade and I am Ahtna  
7 Dene' from Chickaloon Village Traditional Council,  
8 and I am part of the Water Clan.

9           I'm here today not on behalf of all the  
10 229 Tribes, but I'm here representing our Ahtna  
11 Dene' specifically. I want to thank you the elders  
12 in the room for sharing their gifts of wisdom with  
13 us.

14           I'd also like to share a special  
15 appreciation for my Dena'ina relations who are  
16 allowing me to speak here today.

17           I'm the Executive Officer for Chickaloon  
18 presently, but I've been working in a capacity with  
19 Chickaloon for the past 18 years. I served as the  
20 health director, social services director, education  
21 director, janitor, doing a little bit of everything,  
22 and that's really the small Tribal world that we  
23 live in.

24           Today I have the pleasure of fulfilling  
25 the Health Director seat, the Culture and Historic

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1 Preservation Department seat, the Education Director  
2 seat, and I serve as the Executive Officer attending  
3 events like this fun one. I hope you have stamina  
4 today.

5           The reason I bring that up is because to  
6 come here today to plan for this event, I didn't get  
7 notification of this.

8           I heard about it through word of mouth  
9 through the Tribal channels, so that's really  
10 problematic for the many people that weren't able to  
11 attend today, and I want to put that on record.

12           I also want to say that I really don't  
13 feel like this is meaningful Consultation because if  
14 you were to come to Chickaloon and in meaningful  
15 Consultation, we would first get to know each other.  
16 We would build relationship so that I could know the  
17 intent with which you're coming to us to have this  
18 conversation.

19           So today I appreciate that you're  
20 listening. I appreciate that you're taking things  
21 down. I hope it isn't just performative. I hope  
22 you will take this information back. And I think  
23 you can pretty plainly and clearly hear here there  
24 are some real concerns with how this process is  
25 going and how it's moving forward. And I imagine

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1 you'll probably hear that nationally at several  
2 stops along the way.

3       Regarding the restructuring of Indian  
4 Affairs to support more more efficient interactions  
5 with Tribes, if you really want to learn how to be  
6 efficient, come to my small Tribe. You should be in  
7 one-on-one Consultation with us. We piece together  
8 funding from all different pots of money, and we  
9 make it stretch a very long ways in our small  
10 community, much like the rest of them do here.

11       We would invite you to come to Chickaloon.  
12 We would love to have one-on-one Consultation so  
13 that it could be transparent, fully transparent,  
14 that we would better understand your plans before  
15 they're implemented rather than after the fact,  
16 which it seems like has been happening.

17       The pace with which the current  
18 administration is de-stabilizing agencies through  
19 DOGE has been creating havoc for Tribes,  
20 specifically ours. We've lost funding after the  
21 fact, that we've committed those resources, and had  
22 to go back and try and reclaim them.

23       And the unfortunate thing; when we reach  
24 out to people it goes into the black hole of we  
25 don't know who to contact, because they're already

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1 gone. And so there was no plan in place for, we are  
2 going to be restructuring this department, this  
3 division. Here's who you should contact in the  
4 future.

5       This restructuring is really concerning.  
6 We would consider it a direct attack on our Tribal  
7 sovereignty, and the trust responsibilities that the  
8 federal government has, specifically the deferred  
9 resignation program that's already having the  
10 negative impacts that I spoke to a minute ago.

11       Regarding addressing current funding  
12 structures, the current system of allocations and  
13 formulaic funding really does not work for Tribes,  
14 in that we have been underfunded for years.

15       I am the primary grant writer in my Tribe,  
16 and along with all the other jobs that I have, so I  
17 can say when we're in competition with others, many  
18 times we take a step back because it isn't right for  
19 us to have when others do not have.

20       So when there's four grants for the  
21 administration and Native American and we're trying  
22 to reclaim our language, we will oftentimes pass  
23 those up to give other Tribes the opportunity to  
24 have those grant funds. This creates a hardship for  
25 Tribes.

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1       So we live in a small community north of  
2 Anchorage in the Mat-Su Borough. It's the fastest  
3 growing borough in the State of Alaska. We have a  
4 small Tribe of around 500, maybe a little bit less,  
5 and we serve more than 6,000 people in our area who  
6 are migrating, moving into this area, with very  
7 limited resources.

8       Not having dedicated funding is really  
9 challenging in that it's hard for us to  
10 strategically plan how to best serve those people,  
11 and also I will tell you that I've become tech  
12 support for many of your agencies and departments,  
13 in that I know how to operate ERA comments, Just  
14 Grants, grants.gov, Grant Solutions.

15       If you need to know anything about them,  
16 you can call me. That's not a good thing.

17       Competitive funding is really challenging  
18 for us. We need to have base funding allocations.  
19 We need to know what we can count on. We can't  
20 build and sustain our people without that. We can't  
21 tax. We could try, but I don't think we'd get away  
22 with it.

23       We can't tax, but we also don't know what  
24 we can depend on from one year to the next.

25       So Chickaloon is in strong support of

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1 Tribal self-governance and self-determination,  
2 however again there still remain shortages in  
3 current funding levels. We can't fully partner with  
4 our trusted federal agencies like we'd like to.

5       We want to be part of the solution. There  
6 are several positions that remain unfunded and  
7 vacant, even from the first presidential Trump  
8 administration that were never filled. Special now  
9 this further complicated by the restructuring and  
10 the deferred resignations.

11       And many of those were under duress. We  
12 need our regional partners. We need them to be  
13 adequately funded, and we need them to help  
14 represent us as well as the other 228 Tribes in  
15 Alaska.

16       I had the pleasure the sitting in IHS  
17 compacts this past week across from the Indian  
18 Health Service, and there were tears because they  
19 don't know what to expect in this administration.  
20 They don't know what they can count on right now.

21       We are de-stabilized.

22       Furthermore, compacting mechanisms like  
23 the Indian Health Service should be expanded to  
24 include education, ICWA, environmental protection,  
25 and others to further strengthen the Tribal

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1 sovereignty, co-stewardship, and to allow us to  
 2 enforce areas of void that exist within Alaska, to  
 3 ensure Alaska's resources are utilized responsibly  
 4 and protected into the future.

5       Regarding the president's national energy  
 6 emergency, Chickaloon is a surviving Tribal nation  
 7 of past bad environmental destruction and planning,  
 8 or lack of planning.

9       Gold mines and coal mining projects  
 10 destroyed prolific salmon streams, hunting areas,  
 11 and created toxic areas dating back over a hundred  
 12 years which have to date never been fully reclaimed.

13       Our family members were taken away to  
 14 boarding schools and left out of any decision being  
 15 made to get at those resources. Had there been a  
 16 full NEPA process and Section 106 process, our Tribe  
 17 would not have suffered from the many things that  
 18 today we are still trying to remedy at great cost to  
 19 our Tribal citizens, and to our funders, including  
 20 the federal government.

21       Who gets to decide what projects are, and  
 22 I quote, not likely to have significant  
 23 environmental impacts? Without Tribal input, how  
 24 can you ensure that actions that are taken today  
 25 won't be the ones that create environmental and

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1 societal impacts that we will have to spend federal  
 2 and state dollars to remedy tomorrow.

3       We are losing our salmon, our belugas are  
 4 endangered, and what this administration deems  
 5 energy emergencies I would suggest are really short-  
 6 sided and poor planning.

7       We cannot rely on finite resources because  
 8 they may not run out in this administration, but at  
 9 some point they are limited and we will be in the  
 10 same position we are in today, but probably worse,  
 11 without the food and water that we need to survive.

12       Chickaloon Native Village is adamantly  
 13 opposed to the proposed restructuring of the NEPA  
 14 and Section 106 processes as they are being  
 15 presented. We would welcome the opportunity to  
 16 provide feedback on the restructuring of those  
 17 processes.

18       We are grateful that we could drop  
 19 everything on short notice to come before you today.  
 20 I want to thank you for your time. I hope that you  
 21 are not just checking the box by attending the  
 22 Consultation.

23       I look forward to open and meaningful  
 24 dialogue, not just today, but regularly during the  
 25 administration and beyond. In the future, the more

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1 information that can be provided will increase the  
 2 likelihood that the 500-plus Tribes across the  
 3 Nation will be able to provide that meaningful  
 4 feedback to you.

5       And my last comment is this. It's really  
 6 hard to stand up here and read these talking points  
 7 to you and try and cover all the bases of the  
 8 breadth of information that you've put forward for  
 9 us to address, but I will sum it up this way for  
 10 you.

11       What you're talking about with the  
 12 restructuring of these departments, the quickening  
 13 of NEPA and shortening everything up equates to us  
 14 to the death of our people. It's happened before,  
 15 and it will happen again.

16       So I just want to leave you with the words  
 17 that, if an elder comes before you to tell you to  
 18 pay attention, like we had that lovely elder up  
 19 there, we should be all paying attention to that,  
 20 because they lived that, and we're going to be  
 21 living that again.

22       They're telling us we're going to live  
 23 that again. And it is the health, well-being, and  
 24 the potential lives of our people that are at risk  
 25 right now.

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1       Chin'an.

2       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.

3       RICK HARRISON: Good afternoon. I'm Rick  
 4 Harrison, Vice Chair of Chickaloon Village  
 5 Traditional Council, an Alaska Region TIBC rep, and  
 6 TIBC co-chair.

7       I wanted to go towards the end because  
 8 I've had this conversation with many of you through  
 9 my role at TIBC. We've talked about these issues,  
 10 and you've heard what the Tribal leaders have said.

11       I know that you understand and agree with  
 12 most, if not all of the points being made here  
 13 today. I want to thank all the Tribal leaders in  
 14 the room that have presented and brought their  
 15 feelings and thoughts forward.

16       So I know I'm speaking to the choir, so  
 17 that does make me concerned that this is just a  
 18 check box. This is not a Consultation. You can't  
 19 consult on something when the administration has  
 20 already begun making dramatic changes without any  
 21 Consultation, and is now trying to do Consultations  
 22 after or during the fact.

23       And some of you may not even be part of  
 24 the bureau after Friday, is my understanding. These  
 25 changes have and/or will have severe consequences

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1 for Tribes.  
 2 So I came up here today just to state some  
 3 of the things for the record that I know that you  
 4 all have already heard. I'm sure there are some  
 5 savings and efficiencies to be found, and everybody  
 6 is for that, but administration should be using a  
 7 scalpel, not a hatchet.  
 8 Current vacancies and chronic  
 9 underfunding, those are two of the big points I want  
 10 to make here. Before this administration even came  
 11 in this year, there was already a lot of vacancies.  
 12 It's hard to determine where efficiencies and where  
 13 cuts should be made without having everything filled  
 14 to begin with.  
 15 Because you can just, it looks like it's  
 16 not working, so that we need to cut people. By  
 17 creating additional random vacancies with the  
 18 deferred resignation program or with RIFs, when the  
 19 bureau was already short staffed, is not going to  
 20 create efficiencies or cost savings.  
 21 It is only going to create chaos and make  
 22 the bureau more inefficient. It is very expensive  
 23 to recruit, hire, train, and educate, and the  
 24 historic knowledge and experience is invaluable and  
 25 irreplaceable.

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1 However, there is an opportunity to reduce  
 2 bureau staff through expanded contracting with  
 3 Tribes in a strategic manner that doesn't disrupt  
 4 services.  
 5 Now I want to talk about the chronic  
 6 underfunding. Through my role at TIBC the last  
 7 several years we've been, or since TIBC's inception  
 8 we put out a proposed BIA budget. The last several  
 9 years we've been using either data that we have or  
 10 national averages for programs that the national  
 11 American gets, that the average American gets, to  
 12 demonstrate the difference between our current  
 13 funding level and where it should be, at a minimum.  
 14 And we say a minimum, because in Indian  
 15 country, rural Alaska, it is more expensive, harder  
 16 to get things there, get people there, and so forth.  
 17 So right now our budget is around \$4.5 billion.  
 18 This year our proposed budget, and this was only  
 19 doing this to 31 out of 226 line items, brought it  
 20 up to over 32 billion.  
 21 That's a tremendous gap, and it's only a  
 22 handful of line items compared to all the line items  
 23 available to do these changes to.  
 24 Without adequate funding, you can't  
 25 determine if there's inefficiencies. As a matter of

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1 fact, you could look at it and say, wow, these  
 2 Tribes have to be very efficient to be providing the  
 3 services that they are with this lack of funding.  
 4 Just imagine what they could do if they were  
 5 adequately funded.  
 6 I was also glad to see the acknowledgement  
 7 of trust responsibilities around education at the  
 8 beginning of the program today for Alaska. The  
 9 legislation restricting BIE funding doesn't  
 10 eliminate that responsibility. Alaska Tribes should  
 11 be eligible/receiving education funding from the  
 12 Department of Education to provide appropriate  
 13 education for their children, if they can't get it  
 14 from the BIE.  
 15 That would be the federal government  
 16 fulfilling their trust responsibility. Likewise,  
 17 lack of appropriate funding through OJS doesn't  
 18 eliminate the trust responsibility in the area of  
 19 justice for Alaska Tribes. And competing with all  
 20 of the Tribes for DOJ funding does not fulfill their  
 21 fiduciary trust responsibility either.  
 22 That was the end of my things I wanted to  
 23 capture. I just, again, wanted to thank you guys  
 24 for being here. I hope that these thoughts and  
 25 feelings from the Tribal leaders gets to the

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1 appropriate people to make the necessary changes to  
 2 enhance Tribal governments and not detrimentally  
 3 effect them.  
 4 Thank you.  
 5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 6 DAVID GILILA, SR.: Good afternoon. My  
 7 name is David Gilila, Sr. I'm from Akiachak Native  
 8 Community. I am one of the Akiachak IRA council  
 9 members.  
 10 I'm here to request to see if they could  
 11 get their fundings on our projects. That Akiachak  
 12 Native Community is seeking reimbursement from the  
 13 Bureau of Indian Affairs under sub part J, contract  
 14 number A23AV01085 for \$253,117.22 for the overhead  
 15 electrical light improvements that were completed in  
 16 December 2024 for a 32-lot housing subdivision.  
 17 The Tribe desires to construct roads and  
 18 sanitation improvements in 2025 under contract  
 19 number A23AV01085 for the aforementioned 32-lot  
 20 housing subdivision. If contract number A23AV01085  
 21 remains frozen, totaling \$2,706,775, the Tribe is  
 22 not able to request the required paid construction  
 23 contracts on BIA to be able to work this year, nor  
 24 extras to contract funding.  
 25 Hopefully that money will come out to help

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1 us out.

2 Akiachak is in a unique situation. With

3 that, I'd like to introduce our projects manager for

4 the projects that we've done, that we are trying to

5 get done, Mr. Joe Neimeyer, and he is one of our

6 Tribal members for Akiachak Native Community.

7 Thank you.

8 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you, David.

9 Let me ask a quick question. Is this

10 Tribal climate resilience funding?

11 JOE NEIMEYER: Yes. Although we call it

12 Tribal resilience funding because that's how it was

13 funded.

14 So six years ago and one day, David called

15 me and he said, Joe, you got to come out here,

16 something's happening we've never seen. So imagine

17 chunks of land the size of this room, sliding into

18 the river.

19 And it was the first time anyone in the

20 community ever seen springtime erosion. It's always

21 fall time in the scale of a couple feet to tens of

22 feet across maybe a couple hundred feet.

23 So in the course of 48 hours the river

24 claimed 50 to 75 feet of river bank along 1,200 feet

25 of riverfront, unheard of it. It continues to

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1 claim.

2 The community has never represented that

3 this is climate change. They don't know why it's

4 happening. The science of why the erosion is

5 occurring is pretty obvious, high water, spring

6 melt, poor soils. It slides in. But why is the

7 river choosing to migrate westerly? We do not know.

8 Back in March 2020, your agency, under the

9 previous Trump administration, chose to fund this

10 project. You chose to invest \$150,000 into Tribal

11 planning. We use those funds and we developed the

12 32-lot subdivision. And then we applied in the

13 prior administration, it got funded for 2.7 million

14 last fall. We installed overhead power. We are

15 ready to do the roads. We're ready to do sanitation

16 improvements, but that grant is frozen.

17 So we ask that you take this message back

18 to folks in DC. Tribe is ready. Construction

19 ready. Material is there. Permits are there.

20 They've got contractors in place. They got crews

21 and equipment ready to go. We think it's a good

22 project.

23 So let's speak about some of the other

24 items. Akiak applied for a FEMA brick grant and was

25 in the process of being final. That got canceled.

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1 So that resource isn't available to Tribes

2 currently. I will say that for the last six years

3 we've been working with the BIA Tribal Resilience

4 Program. Fantastic people, and I've watched and so

5 has the council watched, that program get better and

6 better and better every year.

7 That's also a message you should take back

8 to DC. That program is getting better. It's hard

9 to stand up a new program, let alone a nationwide

10 program. So we lend our support for that program.

11 And then in January, all these grants were

12 frozen and this and that. One of the executive

13 orders was, analysis of FEMA. How is FEMA going to

14 be restructured? The discussion that I'm hearing is

15 that FEMA is going to be broken up and the money

16 parceled out to the states. Well, I don't have an

17 opinion on that. That's above my pay grade, but I

18 can tell you this. FEMA has been a very good

19 program partner working with Tribes.

20 That came about in 2013, 2014. That

21 allowed Tribes to represent themselves directly to

22 FEMA. I've been impressed with FEMA's approach, but

23 if they're no longer there and the money goes to the

24 states, what I can tell you for those of us from

25 Alaska, the Alaska Division of Homeland Security

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1 Emergency Management has been an excellent partner

2 too.

3 So maybe it won't be so bad for Alaska,

4 but what about all the lower 48 Tribes? Are their

5 states going to have a state emergency management

6 arm as well-positioned at ours to work with rural

7 Alaska? They may not be able to work with Tribes

8 down below as well as here.

9 So my concern, I'm speaking on behalf of

10 the all Tribal Nations, is if this administration

11 chooses to take the FEMA money and parcel out to

12 states, I think Department of Interior and BIA

13 should raise your hands and say, not so fast. We

14 have a voice.

15 I think you need to get in there and

16 express your voice on behalf of all the Tribes. Oh,

17 and you have a wonderful platform to do that. It's

18 your Tribal Resilience Program which we always spoke

19 highly of.

20 There is legislation that the lower 48

21 Tribes have sponsored. It's called the Terra Act,

22 T-E-R-R-A, you may be aware of it. Shoalwater Bay

23 is one of the folks who are pushing that, and I

24 reason why I know about this is because BIA had a

25 first-year cohort of Tribes coming together. We

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1 were in that, so we were able to work with the lower  
2 48 Tribes and see what they're facing.  
3 They are facing very similar environmental  
4 threats the Alaskans face. We don't know if it's  
5 climate change. It may be exacerbated by climate  
6 change, but we don't know why. They are just  
7 environmental threats.  
8 And if FEMA is not going to be there, we  
9 need for you to be there.  
10 So let's talk about some of the specifics,  
11 because I've had the good fortune of working for six  
12 years in trying to do this implementation. We've  
13 expended \$5 million. We moved eight houses. We've  
14 done a number of other things, and I've worked with  
15 your agency before.  
16 So here are some points. I recently tried  
17 to share files on our Sub Part J contract, and I  
18 wasn't able to share them electronically. So I  
19 guess I have to send a whole bunch of emails to  
20 them.  
21 It would be nice if I could just put one  
22 Google drive, put them all there, and you guys can  
23 access them. I don't know if that's an issue on my  
24 side or your side, but I just found it yesterday.  
25 I want to speak highly of U.S. Department

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1 of Housing and Urban Development. They've been a  
2 wonderful partner with Akiak as well. One of the  
3 things, I would just say that I'm a retired Fed. I  
4 did 34 years as a federal engineer.  
5 I'd never seen this before. HUD has this  
6 thing called Part 50 and Part 58 about environmental  
7 regulations, and you as a responsible entity, you  
8 get to do NEPA. And what's fun is we went and  
9 talked to HUD about this, and HUD said, you don't  
10 even have to apply for ICDBG grant funding. All you  
11 have to say is you intend to apply. That makes you  
12 a responsible entity.  
13 So the Tribe is, our Tribe Akiak, is  
14 saying we're going to apply for everything ICDBG.  
15 So we have been, the entire managed retreat project,  
16 we've been doing it under Part 58 and we've got all  
17 our environmental documents in place.  
18 If you want to streamline things, accept  
19 what HUD does. Don't make it wait. Just say, go  
20 and have an agreement in place with HUD, and you  
21 know, if a Part 58 or Part 50 NEPA document comes to  
22 you, accept it. Don't delay it.  
23 Towards that end, maybe you can encourage  
24 IHS to partner with you, so IHS, BIA, HUD, ONAP.  
25 You guys are all in the Tribal settings. IHS didn't

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1 accept the Tribe's NEPA document, so there's an  
2 opportunity there for all the agencies that work  
3 with Tribes to come together and accept NEPA.  
4 The final thing I wanted to share with you  
5 is the Sub Part J contract is based upon the FAR,  
6 Federal Acquisition Regulations. Well, over ten  
7 years ago the federal government consolidated all  
8 their grant requirements under 2 CFR 200. Fantastic  
9 idea, OMB manages that, and all the Tribes know how  
10 to work under 2 CFR 200. They've been trained on  
11 how to do that.  
12 And many Tribal procurement policies I  
13 see, they're based upon 2 CFR 200. Well, now we're  
14 working on this contract and I've got to use the  
15 FAR. And so I've got to work with the council,  
16 train them up. Got to work with administration,  
17 Tribal administration. It's awkward.  
18 Take advantage that the Tribes know what 2  
19 CFR 200 is, and migrate over to that on all your  
20 platforms.  
21 That's all I have, and thank you for your  
22 time.  
23 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
24 CANDACE BRANSON: (Speaking Native  
25 American language.) My Alutiiq name is Chutman

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1 (phonetic) and my English name is Candace Branson.  
2 I'm the Tribal Administrator for Native Village of  
3 Afognak in Kodiak, Alaska. Qu yana for the  
4 opportunity to speak today.  
5 I'll start with the DOI's original request  
6 for consultation and say that effective consultation  
7 requires a plan, not just a list of open-ended  
8 questions.  
9 We're being ask to react to abstract  
10 concepts without a cohesive vision or operational  
11 roadmap. Before any changes are implemented, we  
12 expect the department to return to us with a  
13 concrete plan detailing the proposed structure,  
14 timeline, and intended outcomes so that we can  
15 evaluate the impact and provide meaningful input  
16 through additional opportunities for Consultation.  
17 Tribal leaders need to have meaningful  
18 Consultation before actions are taken and decisions  
19 are made. The department has asked us to provide  
20 feedback on staffing changes, research sharing,  
21 process improvements, and potential consolidations.  
22 I offer the following.  
23 There is no fat to trim in Alaska or  
24 Indian Affairs broadly. Our offices are already  
25 critically understaffed and essential services are

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1 delayed. There are many unresolved allotments, two-  
 2 year delay for 105(1) leases, and probate cases are  
 3 stuck in the department's care, each facing long  
 4 backlogs due to understaffing and funding gaps.  
 5         We've heard reports of reducing Indian  
 6 Affairs to six regional offices with Alaska merged  
 7 into the Pacific Northwest. This will not work.  
 8 Alaska is home to 229 Tribes which is almost half of  
 9 the Tribes in the whole Nation, serving some of the  
 10 most remote communities in the nation.  
 11         Consolidating regional offices will only  
 12 increase service delays and degrade the trust  
 13 responsibilities. We need Alaska based staffing  
 14 with cultural competency and authority, not  
 15 centralization far from the realities of our  
 16 villages.  
 17         Before making any structural changes,  
 18 Department of Interior must fill existing vacancies,  
 19 conduct thorough workforce planning, and consult  
 20 with Tribes about where efficiencies can be gained  
 21 without service cuts.  
 22         We have heard that there has been a  
 23 reduction in workforce already with staff being  
 24 offered early retirement. This was done prior to  
 25 consultation. The Native Village of Afognak has

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1 seen changes in our ability to work with the EPA and  
 2 the Department of Health and Human Services in  
 3 managing grants due to restructuring in those  
 4 departments.  
 5         Those impacts include our inability to  
 6 complete budget revision process and communicate  
 7 with our federal partners on grant management. The  
 8 Department of Interior has also asked about funding  
 9 inefficiencies. From our perspective, we need to a  
 10 stable, predictable, and streamlined federal funding  
 11 process. Current systems involve months of delays,  
 12 even for services that are legally mandated.  
 13         The BIA Tribal Transportation program is  
 14 an example of programs that award funds after the  
 15 start of the budget period. Late disbursements of  
 16 Tribal priority allocations and long wait times for  
 17 105(1) leases force Tribes to front the cost until  
 18 the BIA can catch up on their payments.  
 19         We call on the Department of Interior to  
 20 fix the unstable funding cycles but supporting  
 21 advanced appropriations and mandatory funding, and  
 22 expand models like public law 102-477 that allows us  
 23 to consolidate funds and cut red tape.  
 24         Regarding the Department of Interior's  
 25 third question, how to support self-governance.

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1 Self-governance requires not just compacting  
 2 authority, but adequate timing and flexible funding.  
 3 Compacting a chronically underfunded program simply  
 4 shifts the burden to Tribes.  
 5         We urge Department of Interior to fully  
 6 fund all compacts and contracts, including 105(1)  
 7 leases and contract support costs which match the  
 8 Tribes' negotiated indirect rate. Alaska Tribes  
 9 operate under diverse governance structures. This  
 10 must be respected.  
 11         Our ability to exercise local control  
 12 depends on funding, staffing, and regional support  
 13 that is responsive to our distinct cultural and  
 14 geographic needs. Our staff is on the ground in  
 15 Kodiak and is able to respond to Tribal needs more  
 16 efficiently than staff outside of the state.  
 17         Tribal programs are the fulfillment of the  
 18 United States trust and treaty obligations,  
 19 obligations that we paid for with our lands, our  
 20 resources, and our ancestors' lives. These programs  
 21 are essential to sovereignty, economic opportunity,  
 22 and community well-being.  
 23         We share a foundational understanding that  
 24 local governance works best. The exercise of Tribal  
 25 sovereignty is the most local form of government.

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1 We ask the department and all federal agencies to  
 2 engage in Tribal consultation prior to taking any  
 3 action. Do not proceed based on abstract questions.  
 4         We can help you identify which services  
 5 are essential to Tribal Nations and must be  
 6 preserved. Affirm in writing that Tribal funding  
 7 and programs are delivered in recognition of our  
 8 unique political status, trust responsibilities, and  
 9 treaty rights, and not based on race or  
 10 discretionary policy.  
 11         Exempt programs from every pause and  
 12 reduction in federal funding. Exempt Tribal facing  
 13 federal positions from every workforce reduction or  
 14 hiring freeze that includes any employee or office  
 15 whose function directly supports the delivery of  
 16 services to Tribes.  
 17         Moving on to the emergency permitting  
 18 procedures. The emergency framework presented  
 19 bypasses standard timelines and limits opportunities  
 20 for Tribal engagement. This raises concerns about  
 21 environmental protection, cultural site  
 22 preservation, and Tribal sovereignty.  
 23         Given the remoteness and scale of the  
 24 State of Alaska, our unique infrastructure and all  
 25 of the Tribes we have in our state, Alaska demands a

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1 more careful approach than what has been outlined.  
 2 Mail and communication delays in our region mean  
 3 that a 7 or 14-day comment window is totally  
 4 unworkable for most of our communities.  
 5 Remote villages often lack reliable  
 6 internet or cell service. They rely on delayed  
 7 physical mail, and may face logistical obstacles to  
 8 convene a Tribal council meeting. It is not clear  
 9 that Tribes must be informed on environmental  
 10 assessment in the proposed process, or given the  
 11 opportunity to provide Consultation.  
 12 Communication and Consultation should be a  
 13 requirement of each assessment prior to approval.  
 14 These realities must be factored in to any process  
 15 that requires our feedback or consent, Consultation  
 16 windows must be adjusted accordingly.  
 17 We were given less than 30 days' notice of  
 18 the opportunity to Tribal Consultation on the  
 19 changes to the permitting process. This is not  
 20 sufficient to hold community meetings, gather input,  
 21 and bring you informed consensus-based feedback.  
 22 We urge the department to extend deadlines  
 23 and include a standing process for follow-up  
 24 consultation as emergency procedures evolve.  
 25 In closing, I'd like to say that we are

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1 not resistant to government efficiency, but reform  
 2 must not come at the expense of Tribal sovereignty,  
 3 service equity, and our legal rights.  
 4 Quyana.  
 5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 6 BERNADINE ATCHISON: My name is Bernadine  
 7 Atchison. I am the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's  
 8 chairperson, and a lot of people have covered a lot  
 9 of areas that we have written down, but what I'm  
 10 going to do is just go through and just highlight of  
 11 these. So I'm just going to kind of jump through  
 12 them.  
 13 So first, on Tribal Consultation, it is a  
 14 right, and we are here to work together to find  
 15 consensus on issues that impact us all. We are  
 16 grateful that DOI has recognized this Consultation  
 17 right today, and look forward to an open and  
 18 meaningful dialogue.  
 19 The scope of this Tribal Consultation  
 20 session as laid out in DOI Dear Leader letter is  
 21 enormous, and the department has not presented a  
 22 transparent and comprehensive vision on what a  
 23 restructuring of DOI and Indian Affairs might look  
 24 like.  
 25 It is very difficult to come to a session

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1 like this with only a few weeks' notice and be  
 2 expected to talk about huge issues in the abstract,  
 3 especially here in Alaska where there are 229  
 4 federally recognized Tribes. Our interests may  
 5 overlap, but we are nonetheless distinct sovereigns.  
 6 And I just want to go off of what somebody  
 7 had said recently, that even though when these items  
 8 come to the Tribal council, it doesn't just sit with  
 9 the council. We involve our committees. We involve  
 10 whoever needs to have input on these. And so it's  
 11 not something that happens within a couple weeks,  
 12 but we do agree with all the time frames that have  
 13 been laid out, so we are in favor of that.  
 14 And also, we also agree with the comments  
 15 made that it feels like this is more of a public  
 16 comment time, that decisions have already been made  
 17 with very little input, or none actually from  
 18 Tribes, because it's after the fact.  
 19 And so we would really like that you  
 20 would, moving forward, that we are always part of  
 21 that discussion, because we do have a lot to share.  
 22 We're the ones living here, and the ones that are  
 23 going to be following through with anything that you  
 24 present or want us to put on the table. So we're  
 25 the ones that are going to be making it happen, so

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1 we need to be part of that problem-solving.  
 2 So moving forward, we hold meaningful  
 3 Consultation before an action is taken or a decision  
 4 is made. But the second DT addendum tells us that  
 5 DOI has already decided to adopt an alternative NEPA  
 6 compliance process, an expedited ESA Section 7  
 7 process, and NEPA alternative procedures.  
 8 And on May 9, DOI started RFIs at Indian  
 9 Affairs, even though it stated in a March 17th  
 10 memorandum that Indian Affairs' program would be  
 11 exempt pending Tribal Consultations. We were not  
 12 consulted before these decisions were made.  
 13 So moving down to restructuring of Indian  
 14 Affairs to support more efficient interactions with  
 15 Tribes. In key areas like trust resources,  
 16 education, public safety, social services, and trust  
 17 fund management, Indian Affairs programs are already  
 18 operating with inadequate staffing.  
 19 For example, Alaska Tribes already  
 20 experience multi-year delays when working with  
 21 BIA's, Alaska Native Veteran Allotment Program, the  
 22 105(1) leasing program, and probate estate services.  
 23 In Alaska, local responsiveness is essential as most  
 24 Tribes don't have the resources to travel to DC to  
 25 meet with decision makers. Alaska is bigger than

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1 California, Texas, and Montana combined, and it's  
 2 geography and infrastructure is one of a kind with  
 3 the majority of Alaska Tribes located off the road  
 4 system.  
 5 Many Alaska Tribes also lack reliable and  
 6 consistent broadband accesses. Indian Affairs  
 7 should take steps to address management deficiencies  
 8 identified by the USGA, all that land at the BIA,  
 9 and BIA on the GAO high risk list. Specifically GAO  
 10 identified that high staff vacancy rates  
 11 significantly inhibit BIA and BIE's ability to  
 12 support and oversee programs to address this  
 13 deficiency.  
 14 Indian Affairs should undertake  
 15 comprehensive workforce planning activities to  
 16 ensure current decisions do not further hinder the  
 17 effectiveness of Indian Affairs.  
 18 Moving to the current funding structure.  
 19 Federal funding should be equitable, an opportunity  
 20 acknowledging the geographic and political reality  
 21 of Alaska. Too often Alaskan Tribes lose out on  
 22 federal funding opportunities because of their  
 23 unique geography and environment.  
 24 When competitive grant applications are  
 25 scored based on community or regional impacts,

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1 Alaska Tribes have a competitive disadvantage  
 2 because they are often remote, off the road system,  
 3 and serve smaller populations but with outside  
 4 needs, and therefore don't have the same economics  
 5 of scale as states and local governments in other  
 6 regions of the country.  
 7 The DOI's restructuring should prioritize  
 8 breaking down barriers that prevent the timely  
 9 obligation and disbursement of funds. Many Tribes  
 10 experience late distribution of Tribal priority  
 11 allocations, delays in contract support cost  
 12 payments, and repeated grant cycle disruptions due  
 13 to short term continuing resolutions, among other  
 14 delays.  
 15 Payment platforms should be easy to use,  
 16 easy to access, and allow Tribes to track every  
 17 dollar they've owed and where payments are in real  
 18 time. Awards should be easy to process without  
 19 burdensome layers of review and approvals, and  
 20 should occur as soon as Indian Affairs has the funds  
 21 available.  
 22 Tribes consistently report difficulty  
 23 objecting timely and accurate information from DOI.  
 24 Restructuring should include improvements and  
 25 communication infrastructure. Tribal agencies

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1 across the government often look to DOI to set the  
 2 tone. The Indian Affairs website should be a hub  
 3 where information on every Tribal consultation  
 4 across the entire federal government is published  
 5 and can be found in one centralized location.  
 6 Indian Affairs should protect funding  
 7 levels for all Tribal programs to support Tribal  
 8 governance. Tribal self-governance requires full  
 9 funding, including full and direct costs for all  
 10 funding sources. It does no good to increase  
 11 pathways to self-determination and self-governance  
 12 if the funding from Tribal programs is slashed in  
 13 the process.  
 14 There must be stable programs for Tribal  
 15 governments to assume under self-determination or  
 16 self-governance agreements.  
 17 And I just wanted to add on with earlier a  
 18 speaker had mentioned about education, that we don't  
 19 have the BIA/BIE funding in Alaska, and so I know we  
 20 are pretty lucky as a Tribe that we are doing a  
 21 charter school, but it is because we used our own  
 22 Tribal funds to build our own school, and so we were  
 23 able to work with the State of Alaska so that they  
 24 could provide to have a charter school.  
 25 But it is something that we've been

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1 wanting to do for over 20 years, and the fact that  
 2 it took us over that long just to have a charter  
 3 school is ridiculous. We know our children are  
 4 falling through the cracks, and that is why it  
 5 became a very big priority for us to do this.  
 6 And so we did make it happen, but also we  
 7 have a Head Start program and that is another one  
 8 that we feel very strongly, that having our children  
 9 being able to identify any needs that they may have  
 10 at the age of 3, 4, and 5, is very helpful on them  
 11 being successful as they grow up and go through the  
 12 education system.  
 13 And then with that, when the federal  
 14 government fails to fully fund trust obligation, it  
 15 shifts the burden on to Tribal governments to  
 16 subsidize federal communities, forcing Tribes to  
 17 make a difficult choice between operating critical  
 18 services at a loss or cutting programs.  
 19 And then, I'm almost done, thank you.  
 20 Safety and justice are crucial to Tribal self-  
 21 governance. The administration should prioritize  
 22 removing judicial barriers that impede those goals.  
 23 If DOI intends to sell surplus federal  
 24 lands in Alaska, Tribes should have a right of first  
 25 refusal. These lands were Alaska Native lands in

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1 the first instance, and Alaska Tribes have proved to  
 2 be deft environmental and economic stewards.  
 3       Some of our key recommendations is  
 4 transition and existing advocacy role in Secretary's  
 5 Office to serve as a self-governance advisor to the  
 6 secretary, to ensure all departments and boroughs  
 7 within DOI are promoting and supporting self-  
 8 governance opportunities.  
 9       To guarantee full stable and timely  
 10 funding for all compacts and contracts including  
 11 mandatory CSC and lease payments, and streamline the  
 12 compacting process and reduce red tape.  
 13       And I just thank you for your time today.  
 14       Thank you.  
 15       ELIAS SAYLOR: Hello, my name is Elias  
 16 Saylor, Chief of Healy Lake Village Council. I'll  
 17 try to make this quick.  
 18       So I've just got a few things to share  
 19 here with people. So for next year's proposed  
 20 budget, President Trump proposes to make cuts to BIA  
 21 by \$617 million. In addition to that, he wants to  
 22 make cuts to BIA public safety and justice programs  
 23 at \$107 million, and also wants to make cuts to BIE  
 24 by \$187 million.  
 25       I confess, I don't know what you guys'

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1 budget was before this administration, but I imagine  
 2 that's a pretty big hit, and it's one that all of us  
 3 Tribes are going to feel.  
 4       Also right now as we speak, your guys'  
 5 departments and offices are being gutted. A lot of  
 6 employees are being offered compensation packages,  
 7 and it just makes me think with that lack of  
 8 funding, and that lack of staff in your guys'  
 9 departments, how are you going to efficiently serve  
 10 us Tribes, you guys who are obligated to serve us.  
 11       It doesn't sound like you can. I'm sure  
 12 there's a lot of people in this room who would agree  
 13 that BIA maybe fell short in some ways before this  
 14 administration, and I know this isn't your guys'  
 15 fault. You're not the ones who are cutting the  
 16 budget, and firing your employees, but the fact is  
 17 that this is going to hurt everybody.  
 18       And so I don't see how these -- you're  
 19 asking us how you can be more efficient. I don't  
 20 see how you can be, not with these cuts coming.  
 21       And maybe instead of making these cuts to  
 22 these offices like BIA and DOI, maybe the  
 23 administration needs to look at other programs and  
 24 offices that they can cut funding from, because this  
 25 right here, this is just going to hurt everybody.

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1       And so that's really all I had to share.  
 2 Thank you for giving me the time. Thank you.  
 3       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 4       Excuse me, could you -- I'm sorry. What  
 5 was your name and organization?  
 6       ELIAS SAYLOR: Healy Lake Village Council.  
 7       BEN DUNCAN: So we're going to informally  
 8 transition. We have a few folks that have signed up  
 9 specifically for the permitting.  
 10       Bryan, I don't know if you wanted to  
 11 provide any brief background.  
 12       BRYAN MERCIER: We have a couple slides.  
 13       BEN DUNCAN: I know we've heard some  
 14 comments already, but just before you go, Chance,  
 15 I'll invite you up.  
 16       BRYAN MERCIER: So, yeah, we have a couple  
 17 slides here that I'll hop through here, but I think  
 18 the first lesson we've learned just from this  
 19 Consultation is that we're going to go through all  
 20 our slides first so that we can reserve the balance  
 21 of the day for comments, right.  
 22       So lesson already learned from you all, so  
 23 thank you for being first in our Consultation on  
 24 this, because we will adjust in the next few to make  
 25 sure that we get through the slides to that we're

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1 not interrupting again in transitioning, and so  
 2 appreciate everybody.  
 3       So about three weeks ago the  
 4 administration asked us to include this recent  
 5 Secretarial Order in these Consultations. So we  
 6 acknowledged that it was not ideal to add this to an  
 7 already broad subject that we were consulting on  
 8 most of the morning today about the workforce  
 9 efficiencies.  
 10       But the president has declared a national  
 11 emergency around energy development, and these knew  
 12 NEPA regulations and streamlining the processes are  
 13 taking effect in other hallways and other branches,  
 14 and so we felt compelled to add this to these agenda  
 15 and talk a little bit about it.  
 16       So the Secretarial Executive Order and the  
 17 subsequent Secretarial Order really is to address  
 18 this national emergency that the president has  
 19 declared, and they are looking to develop energy  
 20 resources across the country.  
 21       Next slide, please.  
 22       I can't see over here. Is in right in  
 23 front of me? Okay, perfect. I've got to put my  
 24 glasses on though, it's too small. There we go.  
 25 Will do, I'll try to speak louder.

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1           So the alternative NEPA compliance process  
2 is largely shortening the time frames for the  
3 assessments and the public comment periods for our  
4 EASes and environmental assessments. I heard folks  
5 speak to that earlier today. They've obviously seen  
6 the news and understand what is happening there.  
7           They're also modifying some of the  
8 definitions in the expedited Section 7 of the ESA  
9 Consultation, and important to the Tribes because of  
10 our Section 106 Historic Preservation Act  
11 Consultations, they're expediting this process as  
12 well to just 7 days of notification for NEPA Section  
13 6 -- Section 106 undertakings, shortening that time  
14 frame.  
15           And we are noting from Alaska that that is  
16 not a sufficient time period to actually even notify  
17 folks, so we will be taking this back, what we've  
18 heard today, but that is largely it. I think that's  
19 the last slide that I had. The right next slide I  
20 think is -- was that it? Yes.  
21           So lesson learned. We will, at the next  
22 Consultations, just get through all the slide deck  
23 and open it up, but I think we intended for this  
24 section to now be for comments specifically to this  
25 Executive Order and the Secretarial Order of

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1 streamlining the NEPA process.  
2           So I'll turn it back over for public  
3 comment.  
4           BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. So Chance, you'll  
5 be first, and then we do have a sign-up sheet if  
6 anybody is still interested. We have a list of  
7 folks.  
8           CHANCE SHANK: Hi everyone. My name is  
9 Chance Shank. I'm the Vice President of the Dot  
10 Lake Village Council. I came here today with my  
11 Tribe to represent my people and to speak on this  
12 Executive Order.  
13           I'm here to submit input on the U.S.  
14 Department of Interior's request for comments  
15 concerning the emergency permitting procedures  
16 announced on April 23rd, 2025, in response to the  
17 national energy emergency.  
18           This emergency references delays in energy  
19 project approvals that pose risks to the Nation's  
20 economic stability, national security, and foreign  
21 policy interests. The plan for the department to  
22 utilize emergency authorities under existing  
23 regulations such as the National Environmental  
24 Policy Act are a big significant concern for my  
25 Tribe.

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1           The Dot Lake Tribe believes the decision  
2 to adopt an alternative NEPA compliance process will  
3 prioritize the compressed timeline for projects over  
4 prioritizing Tribal Consultation. NEPA is an  
5 important tool for ensuring Tribal Nations have a  
6 seat at the table in federal decision making that  
7 effects us.  
8           The Tribe believes an environmental  
9 assessment should not be limited to only 14 days,  
10 and that a project requiring a full environmental  
11 impact statement should not be limited to 28 days.  
12 These expedited timelines do not provide sufficient  
13 time for Tribal Consultation on impacts to Tribal  
14 lands and our natural and cultural resources  
15 including our critical water resources.  
16           In addition, the timelines don't provide  
17 sufficient time for Tribal participation as a  
18 cooperating agency. Given the need for development  
19 of memoranda of understanding between the lead  
20 agency and any non-federal agency, including because  
21 such timelines, they need to take into account that  
22 Tribal government decision making.  
23           The expedited timelines also do not allow  
24 sufficient time for critical studies to be  
25 completed, including scientific and cultural

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1 resource studies that assess the impact of a  
2 proposed project on federally protected Tribal  
3 resources.  
4           The Tribe believes the current timelines  
5 for both an environmental review and an  
6 environmental impact statement allow for adequate  
7 meaningful Tribal consultation on these projects.  
8 The current timelines give Tribal Nations a voice to  
9 ensure federal actions avoid damage to Tribal lands,  
10 our natural and cultural resources including our  
11 critical water resources, as well as to avert  
12 potentially costly litigation activities.  
13           The Dot Lake Tribe would like to stress  
14 that the main focus of any NEPA changes should be  
15 maintaining meaningful Tribal input without  
16 compromising that input for development.  
17           NEPA reviews should continue to be robust  
18 and should not, as a result of expedited timelines  
19 gloss through analysis of impacts of major federal  
20 actions on Tribal interests and resources.  
21           I represented my Tribe at the National  
22 Congress of American Indians in 2023 at New Orleans,  
23 and we brought two resolutions forward that  
24 concerned the NEPA process. There is more  
25 development that's coming into Alaska, especially in

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1 the interior, and there's like policies that are so  
 2 outdated that it's meant for like the villages that  
 3 are up north where they're used to, like, you have  
 4 to do like a drilling pad and then there's nowhere  
 5 for them to go.  
 6 In the interior, there's roads and you  
 7 could get to it, so when they do like a manned camp  
 8 or something like that, those policies are outdated.  
 9 And when you cut the process in such a way, you  
 10 bypass things like an enforceable safety plan. That  
 11 was one of the resolutions that we put forward that  
 12 passed.  
 13 Tribes that are by a manned camp,  
 14 especially in the lower 48, even in Canada, there's  
 15 a rise in violence, all kinds of crimes. That  
 16 resolution passed and, you know, we also lost our  
 17 ability to like be a cooperating agency because  
 18 there was no environmental impact statement for like  
 19 a big project that's happening in our area.  
 20 One of the speakers before, he referenced  
 21 it, it was a mine in Tetlin called the Manh Choh  
 22 Mine, but as a cooperating agency the village could  
 23 have held really strong input in the matter, and  
 24 when the studies got released on like things that  
 25 that mine could have did to prevent contamination to

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1 the land or anything like that, they gave  
 2 recommendations to like more safeguards, and I don't  
 3 believe those safeguards were put in place, but if  
 4 the Tribe was a cooperating agency, we could have  
 5 said, put that extra thing in, like take your time,  
 6 but that just wasn't done.  
 7 My Tribe has worked with other Tribes  
 8 there's one that worked and had development in their  
 9 area, and they became a cooperating agency, and they  
 10 got word from that developer, future projects, so  
 11 they had a run time for the other things and they're  
 12 able to collaborate in that way.  
 13 There's no way you could get that done in  
 14 28 days or 14 days, so that's why I felt it was  
 15 really important to come here and give that  
 16 testimony on behalf of Dot Lake Village.  
 17 Thank you.  
 18 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 19 So Ms. Jackie, can I have you go? So this  
 20 is emergency request. PJ, I'm going to have you go  
 21 next, if that's okay, so you can make a flight. All  
 22 right.  
 23 JACQUELINE PATA: Thank you. Gon-as-chish  
 24 (phonetic). I did want to speak to this area of  
 25 NEPA, ESA, and NHPA. So I'm Jackie Pata. Thank you

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1 for giving me the opportunity to speak today.  
 2 In addition to serving as the first vice  
 3 president for Tlingit & Haida, I also serve as the  
 4 president and COE of Tlingit & Haida Regional  
 5 Housing Authorities whose mission is to connect  
 6 Southeast Alaskans with sustainable housing  
 7 opportunities and innovative financial solutions.  
 8 And I also serve as the co-chair of the  
 9 Tribal Interagency Advisory Council, the TIAC, for  
 10 the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and  
 11 Urban Development.  
 12 And so, and under that role and capacity I  
 13 have submitted written comments to HUD also about  
 14 the streamlining of environmental, and some of those  
 15 apply to other agencies, and so I'd like to just  
 16 speak a little bit to those recommendations.  
 17 So we understand the administration's goal  
 18 to respond to this national emergency through  
 19 streamlined environmental permitting, but the path  
 20 forward must not sacrifice the rights of Tribal  
 21 Nations or disregard the realities on the ground  
 22 where we are working on building and maintaining  
 23 affordable housing in our communities and other  
 24 infrastructure.  
 25 And it's a great importance of the

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1 proposed expedited comment periods for the National  
 2 Environmental Protection Act, NEPA, the Endangered  
 3 Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act.  
 4 These proposed expedited periods do not provide  
 5 adequate time for meaningful Consultation with  
 6 Tribes.  
 7 And Tlingit & Haida supports the efforts  
 8 to improve permitting and environment review  
 9 processes, especially when the process delay urgent  
 10 housing and infrastructure development in our  
 11 communities, reform must not come at the cost of our  
 12 sacred lands, natural resources, or our cultural  
 13 heritage.  
 14 And these changes are not about cutting  
 15 corners. They are about respecting Tribal self-  
 16 determination, avoiding waste, and getting roofs  
 17 over our peoples' heads faster.  
 18 With that said, I have five  
 19 recommendations that I'd like to make today that can  
 20 focus on the challenges faced by Tribes and Tribal  
 21 designated housing entities during the environmental  
 22 review process.  
 23 The first one is exempt low dollar  
 24 projects from environmental review. So Tribal  
 25 communities often rely upon small grants, especially

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1 small Tribes, and sometimes they're under \$250,000  
 2 for essential services or improvements.  
 3 And yet, even these minor efforts are  
 4 delayed sometimes by burdensome environmental  
 5 reviews, and we recommend that statutory language  
 6 exempt low dollar or non-ground disturbing projects,  
 7 especially when they are already categorically  
 8 excluded under NEPA.  
 9 Additionally as I said earlier, BIA does  
 10 not currently have an MOA with the state historic  
 11 preservation officers like other agencies do, and  
 12 this causes undue delays as limited staff at BIA to  
 13 initiate and manage all the 106 reports as part of  
 14 the environmental review process.  
 15 And I want to follow up on a previous  
 16 speaker when he talked about Part 50 and Part 58. I  
 17 urge that. I can tell you that, especially for BIA,  
 18 as at our housing authority, we do all of our  
 19 environmental reviews internally, and I tried to do  
 20 them for BIA during COVID when you didn't have any  
 21 satisfy there, and I got my hand slapped.  
 22 And so I just wanted to say, if we can do  
 23 it faster and make the job happen, then that should  
 24 be the ultimate result. Stop redundant reviews  
 25 across agencies. Our housing projects often use

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1 funding from multiple housing agencies, and right  
 2 now that means sometimes repeating environmental  
 3 reviews for the same project.  
 4 So once again, you know, if we're going to  
 5 husband HIP money and Healthy Homes money or any,  
 6 USDA's money, we should all be able to do that, and  
 7 I know for many years we tried to get a lead agency  
 8 designation to actually work, even though it's  
 9 allowed under NEPA, but somehow the agencies don't  
 10 want to play together in the sandbox sometimes.  
 11 And so that continues to be a challenge,  
 12 and I also sit on the Interagency Environmental  
 13 Review task force working group. We still don't  
 14 have that solution in place. So I would say if you  
 15 want to save time and energy and Tribal time and  
 16 energy, let's cross that hurdle.  
 17 Respect Tribal authority in the process.  
 18 Tribes should be able to designate our own  
 19 environmental certifying official. Tribes pass  
 20 resolutions under their recognition of their own  
 21 sovereign rights. They make decisions about who's  
 22 going to represent them on certain projects and what  
 23 they're going to do. They should be able to  
 24 designate their certifying individual.  
 25 Do you know how much time it takes,

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1 especially when you're working in a consortia model,  
 2 like many times I have worked with, I have 12  
 3 different Tribes that I partner with, and how many  
 4 times we have to follow up or, you know, cause  
 5 challenges to smaller Tribes to have to get a  
 6 signature for us to be able to move forward, when  
 7 the Tribe has already given their authority and  
 8 their approval for us to move forward and implement  
 9 the project as spelled out in their designated  
 10 resolution.  
 11 So honor the sovereign rights of Tribes  
 12 and honor their decisions in letting them determine  
 13 who can be the certifying official.  
 14 Alaska's specific wetlands challenge. So  
 15 in Alaska wetlands are everywhere. Roughly 130  
 16 million acres with substantial percentage of the  
 17 acreage throughout Southeast Alaska.  
 18 And federal agencies, not all federal  
 19 agencies, federal agencies' refusal to accept Army  
 20 Corps general permits like the RGP01 is causing  
 21 unnecessary confusion and delay. Before making  
 22 significant changes, we need to better understand if  
 23 statutory changes are needed to streamline  
 24 compliance without compromising environmental  
 25 standards and our Tribal values.

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1 But those general permits, especially in  
 2 the small, you know, the Army Corps general permit,  
 3 recognized especially in the small villages that  
 4 sometimes we may be in the line of sight of a fuel  
 5 storage unit, or we may be, you know, some of those  
 6 other things can affect us and we shouldn't create  
 7 additional barriers because those are the conditions  
 8 of the communities that we are living in, especially  
 9 in the smaller communities.  
 10 And then another one that I would like to  
 11 put on this is the flood insurance and unfounded  
 12 mandates. So the FEMA flood insurance requirements  
 13 are not workable for many of our Tribal communities,  
 14 and especially in rural communities. And the Tribes  
 15 shouldn't lose funding because local governments  
 16 refuses to join into the NFIP, or FEMA lacks the  
 17 support capacity.  
 18 Tribal funding should have statutory  
 19 exemption from flood insurance.  
 20 And then I wanted to lastly speak to the  
 21 notice requirement. So you heard from a lot of  
 22 people here saying that the shortened time period  
 23 creates great stress, and largely it's because most  
 24 Tribes and small Tribes, but most Tribes just don't  
 25 have enough staff, just like you don't have enough

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1 staff to do the jobs that you have.  
 2 And the person who has to look at these  
 3 notices or identify the notices that they care  
 4 about, usually is wearing multiple hats, and doesn't  
 5 really get to them. And so when we were dealing  
 6 with that challenge before when we were trying to  
 7 deal with cell tower placement with the FCC, we  
 8 created a process.  
 9 So Tribes can self-identify the areas of  
 10 jurisdiction that they cared about so that there was  
 11 a preliminary way of looking at the maps and saying,  
 12 I care about these area, they have culture  
 13 significance to me, and therefore I want to limit  
 14 the notices I get to this area.  
 15 It's kind of like a registry, and we tried  
 16 to create something like that again when we were  
 17 dealing with the pipeline issues in the Dakotas and  
 18 the water challenges. And we tried to see if there  
 19 was a way of making that work more nationally for  
 20 other environmental reviews rather than just for  
 21 cell tower placement.  
 22 I still think it's a great idea. I think  
 23 it would allow Tribes to be contacted earlier and  
 24 there would be more transparency in the process. A  
 25 lot of times, especially with energy development,

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1 that those conversations have already happened at  
 2 the state level and with the developer level before  
 3 Tribes ever get involved.  
 4 And if there was a better way for Tribes  
 5 to be identified earlier in the process, it could  
 6 probably help make for maybe some more meaningful  
 7 engagement. So look for a longer term solution than  
 8 just a short term emergency fix.  
 9 And so my closing statement is I'm not  
 10 opposed to improving the permitting environment or  
 11 review processes. As I said earlier, I have lots of  
 12 recommendations myself, especially when those  
 13 processes delay urgent housing and infrastructure  
 14 needs in our communities, but reform cannot come at  
 15 the cost of our safeguard lands or natural  
 16 resources, or our cultural heritage.  
 17 And these changes are not about cutting  
 18 corners, they're especially about respecting Tribal  
 19 self-determination, avoiding waste, and getting  
 20 roofs over our peoples' heads faster.  
 21 Gon-as-chish (phonetic). Thank you.  
 22 I will, thank you. Thank you.  
 23 BEN DUNCAN: All right, thank you.  
 24 PJ.  
 25 PJ SIMON: Thank you again for this

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1 opportunity to testify on this process. Just a  
 2 short history on my Tribe. About 10, 12 years ago,  
 3 we're great hosts. We invited at NCAI, Chris  
 4 Anderson with IHS. He came to Allakaket. Under the  
 5 Obama administration we had Lordes Ramirez who was  
 6 under Julien Castro talking about housing.  
 7 Well, fast forward from their visit, not  
 8 much has changed. We didn't get another house. It  
 9 was nice to see them, though.  
 10 Allakaket, we're pro development. We have  
 11 a resolution of proposed Ambler Road. Those types  
 12 of developments provide jobs and opportunities for  
 13 my Native people. As a chief, I have to look after,  
 14 you know, our elders, our immediate Tribal members,  
 15 and down the road a little bit.  
 16 What are we going to do? As an Indian, I  
 17 get special monies from the U.S. government, federal  
 18 subsidies. Why? Why are we fighting development?  
 19 Ninety days we work, we can get benefits, health  
 20 benefits, better than what IHS provides.  
 21 So when we fight development, we just  
 22 fight ourselves, and we fight among each other, you  
 23 know. There's an old joke around here, there's  
 24 chief of Facebook. Somebody would say something at  
 25 council meeting, somebody don't like it, then they

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1 run to the social media.  
 2 But the reality is, the cuts are coming.  
 3 LIHEAP, we have SNAP program, Medicaid expansion.  
 4 That's all going to be cut under the CBO score  
 5 coming out of the Trump administration, pretty much  
 6 says a lot of that's going to be gutted. BIA.  
 7 What are my people going to do in a few  
 8 years, five years, 10 years, when those 8-year-olds  
 9 are 18, right out of high school. We can have  
 10 mining jobs. My great great grandfather came up the  
 11 Koyukuk river in the 1890s. He was a gold miner.  
 12 My grandfather on my dad's side worked at Hog River  
 13 gold mine, his brother did. They made half less  
 14 than the white people at Hog River gold mine, maybe  
 15 1930 or 1940.  
 16 Then my dad and his brother worked at Hog  
 17 River gold mine. My son worked at Hog River gold  
 18 mine, straight out of Bozeman, Montana. Now he's  
 19 working in Portland, standing on his own two feet.  
 20 I just want my people to be strong, to  
 21 work, to have a retirement, to have health. How do  
 22 we get there? Well, we have to have compromise,  
 23 some sort of development. Allakaket Tribe, we  
 24 respect other people's vision. This is our vision.  
 25 There's UCOR rivers elements (phonetic) in the rain

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1 mountains. You got Doyon, our own ANC have Doyon  
 2 Wiseman Metals. Then you have South 32 right out of  
 3 Allakaket, and then proposed Ambler Road.  
 4 So we're blocked in by mining, but we need  
 5 the jobs. It's imperative, we need the jobs and the  
 6 training, and Interior is supposed to provide stuff  
 7 like that if we ask.  
 8 Where's our 477 dollars? Please bring  
 9 back to the secretary that he is invited to  
 10 Allakaket. We embrace development. We had meetings  
 11 with our elders. We thought, well, we had the  
 12 pipeline in the '70s. We totally blew that one, but  
 13 now with this new development, in creating a long  
 14 range plan for our people, for our children to work  
 15 right out of high school, so they don't have to walk  
 16 just having a tough life.  
 17 None of us want our kids to have a tough  
 18 life and struggle and bury some that are less  
 19 fortunate, and our elders have to see it, and they  
 20 look at us and say, why didn't you guys do  
 21 something? We're burying our young before we pass  
 22 away.  
 23 This is a tough subject. It's an  
 24 emotional subject. We say, our lands. When I talk  
 25 to the mining companies, when I talk to the state,

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1 and I talk to ADA I tell them. Talk to our village  
 2 corporation. They own the lands. Talk to Doyon.  
 3 They own surface and subsurface.  
 4 Then you guys talk to them. That are in  
 5 ANCSA and ISDEAA. They're a Tribe up to a certain  
 6 level. CIRI gets health care here in Anchorage  
 7 because they're a Tribe. Same thing in Fairbanks  
 8 with NAHASDA. Doyon gets NAHASDA dollars because  
 9 they're a Tribe.  
 10 So in all of this, we come here a long way  
 11 from Allakaket. We're between a rock and a hard  
 12 place, but we want training. We want a visit from  
 13 Interior. Actually, visit every single Tribe, every  
 14 single Tribe in the state. If there's a thousand of  
 15 you guys, and you guys go out and, you know, just  
 16 one night. The Tribal council meet every two weeks  
 17 or every month, and you guys can listen to them,  
 18 because they'll have elders. They'll have the  
 19 people that couldn't make it today because of  
 20 whatever reason, but we got to do something for our  
 21 kids.  
 22 You guys know the cuts are coming. The  
 23 cuts are coming, and if we fund every ask today,  
 24 that's not going to happen. We might as well fly  
 25 around the world in a hot air balloon while we're at

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1 it. It ain't going to happen. There's cuts. We're  
 2 \$37 trillion in debt, our country.  
 3 We've got to work. So, you know, give us  
 4 some work programs. We tried the state. We tried  
 5 the mining companies, but you guys with our trust  
 6 responsibility, have to come up and work, meet us.  
 7 All of you guys have to work together.  
 8 I don't want to take up everybody's time,  
 9 but you know, Interior Department, right now this  
 10 administration is welcome in Allakaket, so you guys  
 11 come out, talk with us. No disrespect to any other  
 12 Tribe here opposing development, because we all live  
 13 different lives, and we all see the world in a  
 14 different lens, but in a way we're all together.  
 15 So thank you. Thank you for your time.  
 16 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you. Mary David.  
 17 MARY DAVID: All righty. I don't know if  
 18 this is picking me up all right, but hello again.  
 19 Mary David. I am with Kawerak Incorporated in the  
 20 Bering Straits region. I am a Nome Eskimo Community  
 21 Tribal member.  
 22 So my comments are as follows. We will  
 23 also make written comments on this area as well. We  
 24 are the first conservationists and managers of our  
 25 resources. We are stewards of our lands and our

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1 lands have sustained us for thousands of years.  
 2 We are the knowledge holders of our lands,  
 3 our resources, including our subsistence resources.  
 4 We have 20 Tribes in our region, and therefore my  
 5 advocacy is particularly around ensuring that Tribal  
 6 Consultation takes place around this area before any  
 7 decision is made regarding permitting procedures,  
 8 but it sounds like with the second addendum that DOI  
 9 has already decided to adopt an alternative process  
 10 and procedure before even Tribes were consulted and  
 11 included in the decision making process.  
 12 We have concerns about the expedited  
 13 timelines. They are far too quick, and doesn't  
 14 include Tribes in the conversation or even the  
 15 decision making process.  
 16 These accelerated timelines risk bypassing  
 17 legally required environmental and cultural reviews,  
 18 or limit our ability to participate meaningfully in  
 19 them. Given our region's challenges, like you've  
 20 heard today regarding Broadband and communication  
 21 connectivity issues, even getting the mail, it just  
 22 limits our capacity to respond quickly.  
 23 And you all may have access to other  
 24 federal agencies that provide technical assistance,  
 25 data, facts. You have all that available to you,

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1 but oftentimes we at the Tribal level have to become  
 2 experts, therefore it may take us time to respond,  
 3 so I hope you will keep that in mind.  
 4       And because we rely on subsistence  
 5 resources, our sensitive Arctic ecosystems, the food  
 6 resources that we rely on may suffer irrevocable and  
 7 irreversible harm without adequate time to evaluate  
 8 the long term environmental impacts and climate  
 9 risks, and also disruptions to our traditional  
 10 practices, which is really vital to our community's  
 11 health and well-being, and our resilience.  
 12       So lastly, I just want to again just state  
 13 that we need all four seasons to have an accurate  
 14 environmental assessment regardless of what project  
 15 is planned. It is important to allow for that  
 16 thorough assessment to take place.  
 17       So quyana for the time once again, and I  
 18 appreciate you all listening. Thank you.  
 19       BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 20       Next up is Charles. Charles.  
 21       CHARLES SINK: Hello. My name is Charlie  
 22 Sink, or Charles Sink. I work for Chugachmiut which  
 23 is a Tribal consortia. I'd like to do something a  
 24 little different, if you'll allow me. I used to  
 25 live in Galena, and I'd sit in a session like this

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1 and an elder would get up and speak, and they would  
 2 tell a story and I wouldn't know where they were  
 3 going, but my job as a land manager was, I had  
 4 agency people there and they'd get all nervous  
 5 about, what's this guy talking about.  
 6       And I said, well, calm down, listen. And  
 7 the elder would tell a story, and it would be  
 8 disconnected and I wouldn't understand, as my people  
 9 that I was hosting wouldn't understand what I was  
 10 talking about. Calm down, they'll get to it.  
 11       And then he would. I'm going to do a  
 12 little performance art for you guys.  
 13       Up on a cliff here, got a bank into the  
 14 spit here. Got to kind of back a little bit, come  
 15 around, you got to power down a little bit. Oh,  
 16 wheel touches down, the other wheel touches down.  
 17 Oh, there's a dog on the runway! Dog on the runway!  
 18 We got to feather the prop! Feather the prop!  
 19 Wooo.  
 20       This happened three weeks ago. Two people  
 21 died. Another plane landed behind them. People  
 22 jumped out. People from the community came down.  
 23 They lifted up the wings. One person was alive,  
 24 maybe two people.  
 25       Who are they? What's going on? Hey

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1 daddy, I saw a plane go down. Okay, we've got to  
 2 get everybody up. Is there a chap in the community?  
 3 Get the defibrillator. It's an emergency. We got  
 4 to find out who it is, who's there.  
 5       I'm at my office, and I hear about this on  
 6 a telephone call. Let's look up our Tribal status.  
 7 Who of our employees is out there? We got three  
 8 employees going into that community today.  
 9       Who are they? Oh, no, we got -- heard  
 10 from had one kid. His dad reported that he was on  
 11 the other plane and he got out. What about the  
 12 other two? Oh, one landed earlier, so who's left?  
 13 Joe.  
 14       Joe Nyholm. There's a defibrillator out  
 15 there. Got to save these lives. We pulled them out  
 16 of the plane. How do we get there? Oh, can't land  
 17 anymore. Got to get a helicopter. Who's got a  
 18 helicopter? Call the Coast Guard. No, the troopers  
 19 got there with a helicopter. They pulled the guy up  
 20 into the health clinic. He was still alive.  
 21       The second person that defibrillated  
 22 didn't make it. Oh. Three weeks ago, Joe is still  
 23 alive and he's recovering. So what does this story  
 24 tell us?  
 25       We've got a story about the State of

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1 Alaska has identified the Nanwalek Airport as the  
 2 worst airport in the State of Alaska.  
 3       When did you guys start working on funding  
 4 this airport to get it replaced? Oh, about 2008.  
 5 We had NEPA. We had soil studies, engineering  
 6 studies, surveys. Now we're acquiring property.  
 7 How long does it take to acquire property? For us  
 8 it's about 18 months to acquire a parcel of  
 9 property.  
 10       How many parcels do we need? Well,  
 11 there's two Native allotments and there's six other  
 12 Native allotments that are going to need right-of-  
 13 ways.  
 14       Okay. How many owners are on those  
 15 properties? Well, there's four there, two there,  
 16 two there, four there. On this other property there  
 17 was 68, but about 40 percent of the people died, so  
 18 that's about 26, 27 people. Oh, yeah, they're in  
 19 probate. Okay, that might take a while.  
 20       You know, when the state looked at the  
 21 job, they were trying to find out where the sand and  
 22 gravel was. So they had to do a survey and find out  
 23 where the sand and gravel was because they wanted to  
 24 use local materials.  
 25       Airports need astro certified grade

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1 material. Where do you find that? Well, there's no  
 2 committed rock sources out there, so we're going to  
 3 have to ship that in. Original price for this  
 4 airport, 30 million. Price around 2020, 60 million.  
 5 COVID hit. Little bill of inflation.  
 6 About 2022 I was on a building project.  
 7 We got a report from the Associated General  
 8 Contractors Association that construction costs were  
 9 rising in double digit figures per month. So we got  
 10 a deadly airport, and it's taken a few years to do a  
 11 project.  
 12 I'm speaking to the choir out here,  
 13 because they all know how long it takes us to build  
 14 something, but people are dying.  
 15 Thank you.  
 16 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 17 I'm going to invite Dean online. Dean,  
 18 can you hear us?  
 19 SAM LEVY: Dean, I'm going to invite you  
 20 to unmute. You can also turn your camera on, and  
 21 you are free to provide your comment.  
 22 DEAN BARLIP: Hello everybody. I wanted  
 23 to talk a little bit about the funding, the federal  
 24 funding and the (audio cut out) expanding the wide  
 25 support and outreach (audio cut out) increase in

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1 Tribal liaison presences (audio cut out) staff in  
 2 Alaska cultural and regional (audio cut out) to  
 3 assist in (audio cut out) directly mobile outreach  
 4 teams.  
 5 Establish mobile units to travel to remote  
 6 villages to provide (audio cut out) for application  
 7 and services. Simplify and streamline the access  
 8 (audio cut out).  
 9 BEN DUNCAN: Okay.  
 10 DAEN BARLIP: Simplify and streamline  
 11 access to unified application portals. Develop and  
 12 centralize digital platforms and Tribes can apply  
 13 for multiple federal programs with a single  
 14 application (audio cut out) language materials.  
 15 Ensure all program documents are written in clear  
 16 accessible language and translated into Alaskan  
 17 Native languages where needed.  
 18 Building Tribal capacity. Technical  
 19 assistance for grants. Fund Tribal staff positions  
 20 dedicated to grant writing compliance and program  
 21 management. Training and mentorship programs.  
 22 Offer regular workshops and peer mentorship  
 23 opportunities to build local expertise navigating  
 24 federal systems.  
 25 Address infrastructure and connectivity

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1 gaps. Invest in Broadband access. Prioritize  
 2 funding and internet infrastructure in rural and  
 3 remote Alaska Native communities. Digital access  
 4 points. Create community based access centers with  
 5 internet, computers, and trained staff to help  
 6 Tribes engage with federal services.  
 7 Improve coordination across agencies  
 8 (audio cut out) Tribal services. Co-locate services  
 9 from BIA, IHS, and HUD and other agencies with the  
 10 regional centers for streamlined access. Align  
 11 funding cycles. Coordinate deadlines and reporting  
 12 requirements across federal programs to reduce  
 13 administrative burdens.  
 14 Increase flexibility and equity in  
 15 funding. Adjusting eligible criteria. Modify  
 16 programs rules to reflect the unique governance and  
 17 geographic realities of Alaska Native villages and  
 18 corporations. Advance an emergency funding options.  
 19 Allow Tribes to receive funds up front or on an  
 20 emergency basis, especially for disaster response  
 21 and infrastructure.  
 22 Moving on to the next section on how can  
 23 Indian Affairs optimize its functionality and  
 24 effectiveness to provide Tribes with improved  
 25 flexibility and foster economic growth. Address

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1 (audio cut out) local needs of the communities and  
 2 create pathways for self-determination and self-  
 3 governance.  
 4 The first part on that was expand Tribal  
 5 self-governance and compacting opportunities. I  
 6 really believe that should have said in broadening  
 7 638 contracting and Tribal self-governance, because  
 8 not all Tribes are eligible to become Tribal self-  
 9 governance right now.  
 10 Broaden 638 contracting and compacting.  
 11 Allow more Alaskan Tribes to manage federal programs  
 12 under the Indian Self-Determination and Education  
 13 Assistance Act with tailored support for smaller  
 14 remote communities.  
 15 Flexible funding use. A lot of grants are  
 16 flexible funding streams that allow Tribes to  
 17 allocate recourses based on local priorities rather  
 18 than the rigid federal categories. Support economic  
 19 development tailored in Alaska. Invest in local  
 20 industries (audio cut out) like ecotourism,  
 21 fisheries, cultural arts, and (audio cut out) in  
 22 line with Alaska's geography and traditions.  
 23 Access to capital (audio cut out). Expand  
 24 Tribal access to federal loan guarantees, venture  
 25 capital, and revolving loan funds for business

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1 development (audio cut out) local governments  
 2 capacity (audio cut out) governance training.  
 3 Funding programs that would build Tribal  
 4 leadership skills and finance the planning and  
 5 negotiations. Data sovereignty and planning tools.  
 6 Provide Tribes with tools and training to collect  
 7 and manage their own data planning, grant writing,  
 8 and advocacy.  
 9 Improve infrastructure and connectivity.  
 10 Invest in transportation and broadband. Prioritize  
 11 infrastructure projects that connect remote villages  
 12 to markets, services, and each other. Sustainable  
 13 infrastructure models supporting community-led  
 14 design and maintenance of infrastructure suited to  
 15 Alaska climate and geography.  
 16 Fostering interagency and  
 17 intergovernmental collaboration. Tribal federal and  
 18 state compacts. Encouraging collaborative  
 19 governance models that respect Tribal sovereignty  
 20 while aligning resources across governments.  
 21 Institutionalize Tribal Consultation and  
 22 co-design. Establish permanent Alaska Pacific  
 23 advisory bodies to guide BIA policy and program  
 24 design. Participatory budgeting. Involve Tribes  
 25 directly in setting priorities for federal funding

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1 allocations in Alaska.  
 2 Moving on to the second topic that was  
 3 added related to Executive Order 14210 concerning  
 4 the department's emergency permitting.  
 5 Reduce Tribal Consultation and oversight.  
 6 The emergency permitting process significantly  
 7 shortens environmental review times from months or  
 8 years to as little as 14 days. This compressed  
 9 schedule may limit meaningful Tribal Consultation,  
 10 undermining Tribal sovereignty and the ability for  
 11 Tribes to protect culturally significant lands,  
 12 sacred sites, and subsistence resources.  
 13 Environmental and cultural risk. Fast  
 14 track projects may bypass through assessment under  
 15 the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, the  
 16 Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic  
 17 Preservation Act. This could lead to increased risk  
 18 in environmental degradation of ecologically  
 19 sensitive areas, disruption in traditional hunting  
 20 and fishing and gathering practices, and damage to  
 21 archeological and cultural heritage sites.  
 22 Erosion of Tribal sovereignty. The Alaska  
 23 executive order accompanied the emergency  
 24 declaration defines federal policy to prioritize  
 25 energy development on state and federal lands,

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1 including lands near and overlapping with Alaskan  
 2 Native corporation holdings. This may shift  
 3 undermine Tribal authority over land use decisions,  
 4 create conflicts between Tribal governments, and  
 5 federal and state agencies, and favor corporate and  
 6 state interests over Tribal priorities.  
 7 Limited economic benefits for Tribes.  
 8 While a policy promotes energy development, it does  
 9 not guarantee equitable economic participation for  
 10 Alaska Native Tribes. Without Tribal Consultation  
 11 (audio cut out) and benefits sharing mechanism,  
 12 Tribes may bear the environmental cause without  
 13 receiving proportional economic returns.  
 14 These changes would really jeopardize our  
 15 salmon, moose, and caribou populations in Alaska.  
 16 The salmon stocks in the Copper River are essential  
 17 to ecosystems of the culture of the Ahtna region.  
 18 Chinook salmon from the Copper River contribute  
 19 significantly to the Gulf of Alaska population which  
 20 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
 21 is currently assessing for Endangered Species Act  
 22 listings due to the substantial declines.  
 23 All species of salmon in the Copper River  
 24 are currently in a state of low abundance. The  
 25 reduction of habitat protections under ESA could

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1 exacerbate the degradation of spawning and marine  
 2 grounds in the upper Copper River, consequently  
 3 worsening these declines.  
 4 Escapement numbers were below the  
 5 threshold by 90,000 last year. Any actions that can  
 6 contribute to the decline of the species will only  
 7 intensify this issue, leading to food shortages in  
 8 numerous Alaska villages, towns, and communities.  
 9 The Copper River Chinook salmon play a  
 10 critical role in supporting the Gulf of Alaska stock  
 11 which are currently undergoing ESA review of the  
 12 demand due to the marked population decline. All  
 13 five species of salmon within the Copper River are  
 14 presently low.  
 15 So any kind of re-defining harm may allow  
 16 for activities to damage spawning and rearing  
 17 habitats in the upper Copper River, thereby  
 18 aggravating the ongoing problem.  
 19 The local caribou population is currently  
 20 experiencing a significant decline and is under  
 21 considerable stress due to climate change and  
 22 alterations to the landscape, destructions to  
 23 habitat including tundra fragmentation, noise  
 24 disturbance, and modified migration corridors have  
 25 grown the decline of these herds.

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1 Excluding habitat from the definition of  
 2 harm eliminates essential tools for safeguarding  
 3 caribou populations before they reach a state of  
 4 crisis.  
 5 Historically we were engaged in hunting  
 6 caribou in the Kenny Lake and Upper Tonsina regions.  
 7 Nonetheless, as regardless of wildfires and  
 8 population declines, caribou migrations have not  
 9 been observed in these areas for over a decade.  
 10 Caribou herds within the Ahtna region are  
 11 currently low population levels. Habitat  
 12 fragmentation, increasing disturbances, and  
 13 diminished protections may further hinder recovery  
 14 efforts. This altercation remains a crucial  
 15 safeguard for species such as caribou and their  
 16 listing on the Endangered Species Act.  
 17 In the Ahtna region, we have found  
 18 cultural artifacts that have been carbon dating back  
 19 over 10,000 years. The people in the Ahtna region,  
 20 we have successfully managed our land, our  
 21 resources, and our game management for almost ten  
 22 millennia.  
 23 We just ask the government to stop telling  
 24 us our priorities. Bring us to the table. We'll  
 25 tell you our needs. We'll tell you our priorities.

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1 We are willing to work with you to meet those needs.  
 2 Thank you for your time.  
 3 BEN DUNCAN: All right, thank you, Dean.  
 4 Let's go Janet and Estelle. Janet. Janet Erik,  
 5 yes. I see you. And then Estelle, you'll be next.  
 6 JANET ERIK: Hi. Thank you for the  
 7 opportunity. I would like to ask for APIC  
 8 translator, please.  
 9 Jolene? Would you mind translating for  
 10 me?  
 11 BEN DUNCAN: Ad hoc?  
 12 JANET ERIK: Obviously I can speak  
 13 English, but I want to demonstrate how challenging  
 14 it is for Tribes and communities, 229 of them in  
 15 Alaska, communicate with the federal government or  
 16 anybody in the outside world, because there are so  
 17 many different languages and dialects, and they all  
 18 have to communicate in English.  
 19 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 20 Via interpreter: She is from the Village  
 21 of Chefnak and she is also the daughter of  
 22 (speaking Native American language), and she is also  
 23 the granddaughter of (speaking Native American  
 24 language). Her father is by blood a nonnative and  
 25 her grandparents are also Vernon and Jean from the

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1 States.  
 2 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 3 Via interpreter: She is sharing that she  
 4 is from the Village of Chefnak where actively  
 5 today they continue to use honeybuckets as a form of  
 6 waste system in their homes, and there are at least  
 7 500 residents.  
 8 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 9 Via interpreter: Chefnak, at one point,  
 10 because it's by a mountain they experienced a  
 11 volcanic action where the volcanic ash came out, and  
 12 so their land is, the terrain is rocky. It is flat,  
 13 however permafrost degradation is causing a lot of  
 14 environmental damage, including causing deep water  
 15 sources around their land.  
 16 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 17 Via interpreter: So due to the ongoing  
 18 erosion, their community is basically melting  
 19 underneath, thereby causing homes to sink into the  
 20 tundra. I know they're a boardwalk village, so  
 21 they're boardwalk system is also sinking into the  
 22 tundra. The homes that are near the edge of the  
 23 rivers also are causing havoc with concerns of them  
 24 falling into the river.  
 25 (Speaking Native American language.)

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1 Via interpreter: The federal government,  
 2 way back when, had encountered her ancestors, the  
 3 elders. At that time the federal government  
 4 basically required them to become not nomadic any  
 5 longer, but be residents of that community and  
 6 forced their children to attend school.  
 7 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 8 Via interpreter: So it's been since after  
 9 the federal government has forced them to be there  
 10 in that community. They are also on the other hand  
 11 neglecting to help their when they need the support  
 12 in terms of, like, fixing their community,  
 13 installing water and sewer system as well.  
 14 (Speaking Native American language.)  
 15 Via interpreter: Thank you for listening  
 16 to her. She is on the Tribal Council of the Village  
 17 of Chefnak, and she is encouraging all of us to  
 18 visit her community, and you will be welcomed and  
 19 entertained.  
 20 So, thank you, Jolene.  
 21 My name is Janet Erik. I am from  
 22 Chefnak. I am the Tribal Council President since  
 23 February 2020. Trial by COVID. As mentioned, our  
 24 community faces a lot of challenges, a lot of it due  
 25 to permafrost degradation, erosion, and much, much

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1 more.

2 But I wanted to have this demonstration

3 here to show that one two-week time frame a month is

4 not enough to communicate with Tribes and expecting

5 them to come back with solid informed decisions that

6 are going to affect the rest of their lives, that's

7 going to affect the whole community and for

8 generations to come.

9 So I really wanted to show that, and by

10 the way, that was not my idea. I was going to say

11 something totally different, but I do have written

12 comments for my Tribe, submitted already. This has

13 not been. This was somebody else's idea and I loved

14 it.

15 So translation in itself is also

16 challenging. Jolene captured the essence of what I

17 wanted to say, but not exactly the way I had

18 intended to say them.

19 So things get lost in translation, and she

20 did great. She took notes and we're both fluent in

21 Yup'ik. We know who each other is, but we don't

22 know each other in a more personal level, so that's

23 a good example of how when we're trying to go back

24 to our communities, to our Tribal members and try to

25 explain this thing from the federal government to

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1 them, it's really hard because a lot of the

2 technical language and terms do not exist in the

3 Yup'ik language.

4 And their messages back, their questions,

5 their concerns that we bring back are also hard to

6 translate because as fluent as I am in Yup'ik, there

7 are a lot of words, older words that are not heard

8 so much anymore, I don't know what they are. So

9 that disappoints me when I can't fully communicate

10 back exactly what my elders are trying to share.

11 So like I said, we had already committed

12 comments, just not this right here. It's something

13 else. And I also want to say I talked about the

14 erosion that we're facing, and we are retreating

15 from the river.

16 We have -- oh, shoot, I lost the term.

17 Resilience monies already awarded to us, but are

18 frozen and we cannot access them. We have

19 piecemealed little bits of money here and there to

20 try to get us up.

21 We have, like that other community, we

22 have identified a subdivision. We have done all the

23 leg work for it. We have work that has been done by

24 a contractor to study the temperature of the

25 permafrost, and now we can't pay them because one of

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1 them, a \$3 million grant, is frozen and we can't pay

2 them.

3 Why is it frozen? I mean, the work

4 started. It's taken us years, and we're stuck. We

5 have no other way to pay them. It doesn't make

6 sense to me.

7 Well, thanks again for taking the time and

8 giving us the opportunity to speak to you today.

9 Quyana.

10 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.

11 Estelle? Yep.

12 ESTELLE THOMSON: Here I am again, wearing

13 one of my other wardrobe pieces. It's not a hat.

14 We don't wear -- we don't just wear different hats

15 in our communities. It's an entire wardrobe.

16 And you'll have to excuse my voice. Again

17 (speaking Native American language) my name is

18 Anuit-kalap (phonetic). My English name is Estelle

19 Thomson. You'll have to excuse my voice. I have

20 some thyroid issues potentially from the

21 contamination that was left by the U.S. Air Force

22 near my village.

23 I come from a contaminated site, so NEPA

24 protections are really, really important to me.

25 Every single one of my elders in my mother's family,

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1 and in my village, have died of cancer, various

2 types of cancer.

3 And had the Army and the Air Force, and

4 any other federal agency complied with environmental

5 regulations, perhaps I wouldn't be facing the health

6 issues that I have today.

7 In addition to this wonderful throat thing

8 that I have that has just come up recently, I've

9 also lost my entire reproductive system because of

10 contaminants. I'm almost 51 years old. Every

11 single person in my family has been affected by

12 people not following laws.

13 The U.S. Air Force left barrels of

14 contaminants. And they buried it in the ground

15 thinking that the permafrost would keep them safe,

16 but as you know, or maybe you should know, the

17 levels of permafrost in Alaska fluctuate depending

18 on how much they thaw, how quickly they thaw, and

19 whether or not those containers can remain sealed.

20 Obviously they haven't. So the people in

21 my community are acutely aware of what can happen

22 when agencies and the federal government do not

23 follow regulations. Acutely aware.

24 We have buried many, and we will continue

25 to bury more. NEPA procedures must ensure that

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1 environment information is available to all of our  
 2 public officials. That doesn't just mean the agency  
 3 people. It means community members. It means  
 4 Tribal leaders. It means state and local agencies,  
 5 and our citizens. Not only the American citizens,  
 6 but our Tribal citizens, before decisions are made  
 7 and before actions are taken.

8 Accurate scientific analysis, expert  
 9 agency comments, consultation with scientific  
 10 experts and community members, along with the public  
 11 scrutiny, are essential to implementing NEPA  
 12 correctly.

13 NEPA documents must concentrate on those  
 14 issues that are truly significant to these actions  
 15 and questions. And as far as the questions go, I'll  
 16 answer them in just a moment.

17 The whole process is intended to help  
 18 officials like yourself and other agency officials  
 19 make decisions that are based on the understanding  
 20 of these consequences, and to take actions that  
 21 protect, restore, and enhance the environment.

22 The CEQ regulations provide the direction  
 23 to achieve this purpose. And for those of you that  
 24 are wondering, I don't have all kinds of  
 25 credentials, fancy credentials after my name. I've

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1 had to learn this because this directly affects me,  
 2 my family, and will affect my descendants.

3 The kind of contaminants that live inside  
 4 my body I pass on to my children, in utero. Two of  
 5 them have never lived in the village but they have  
 6 exactly the same chances of dying from cancers that  
 7 affect our internal organs.

8 The federal government is legally  
 9 obligated by these environmental laws to analyze all  
 10 land use applications it receives, and it's required  
 11 to do so through scientifically based environmental  
 12 studies and traditional ecological knowledge.

13 Title 1 of NEPA contains a declaration of  
 14 the National Environmental Policy. That policy  
 15 requires the federal government to use all  
 16 practicable means to create and maintain conditions  
 17 under which man and nature can exist in productive  
 18 harmony.

19 For those of us that are from Indigenous  
 20 communities, especially from rural Alaska, we  
 21 understand that relationship between us and our  
 22 lands and waters and air implicitly. It's inherent  
 23 to us. It's what we've been brought up with.

24 We don't believe the abbreviated timeline  
 25 allows us to meet the goal that maintains that

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1 harmonious balance.

2 I'm going to refer back to my testimony  
 3 where I mentioned that we as Indigenous Tribes  
 4 required standard for free, prior, and informed  
 5 consent by us, our Indigenous peoples, prior to the  
 6 government action impacting Indigenous communities.

7 And some of those factors that influence  
 8 the time that has been spent on some of these  
 9 assessments and why they've taken so long, have just  
 10 been illustrated by Janet and by Jolene. That's  
 11 just one.

12 That's just one of the factors.

13 Communication. As Janet said, there is much that's  
 14 lost in translation. Janet also mentioned that we  
 15 don't even have words in our languages for some of  
 16 the things that are occurring.

17 My Tribe has been spending the past couple  
 18 years working with an organization on developing a  
 19 dictionary in our dialect of Yup'ik that talks about  
 20 climate change and what each of those actions mean.

21 And the people that have been working on  
 22 that dictionary have been working extraordinarily  
 23 hard, not only to access some of these ancient  
 24 words, but also to create new ones that people can  
 25 understand.

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1 And I don't know if you know, if you speak  
 2 your own Tribal languages, that is a daunting task.

3 So some of these factors, the complexity of whatever  
 4 project is coming up, for permitting for drilling,  
 5 for minerals, for oil. That takes a lot.

6 The more complex the project, the more  
 7 extensive the environmental impacts and alternatives  
 8 that it will take longer for us to review, for them  
 9 to be reviewed. To coordinate with agencies, NEPA  
 10 requires agencies to coordinate and provide comments  
 11 which can add to the timeline, just as Janet and  
 12 Jolene illustrated.

13 Not only hearing, collecting, translating,  
 14 and recording those comments can take. You can  
 15 imagine doing that with an entire community.

16 Cheformak has something like 240-some-today people I  
 17 think, somewhere around that. My village has 1,500.

18 If you can imagine taking comments from  
 19 1,500 people in Yup'ik and translating it, how long  
 20 it would take. Just that short little introduction  
 21 took quite a bit of time, and it wasn't even  
 22 completely accurate.

23 Public involvement. To do a proper public  
 24 review and to do a comment period, it can influence  
 25 that pace, that process. My village is displaced.

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1 My people are displaced. Where I grew up has 1,500  
 2 people but my village is small, and our people are  
 3 displaced between three neighboring villages.  
 4 Whenever we go out to the main village  
 5 where I grew up, it can take all day to get there  
 6 and thousands of dollars. In addition, we are at  
 7 the mercy of weather. One of the times we went out  
 8 for a meeting for our Tribe to do an election, we  
 9 had to come back because of a ground blizzard that  
 10 just hit us really quickly. So we had to turn  
 11 around in Bethel. We didn't even get out to my  
 12 village for that meeting.  
 13 Another community meeting we had for one  
 14 of our environmental programs, we had to pivot and  
 15 do a hybrid meeting because there was a Russian  
 16 volcano that erupted and blew ash up into the air  
 17 that prohibited us from traveling. It stopped  
 18 travel for maybe two weeks.  
 19 So those are some of the things that we  
 20 have just as challenges. This is normal, everyday,  
 21 Alaskan challenges, to be able to meet and to be  
 22 able to collect the information that we need to  
 23 convene some of these meanings, and meet the NEPA  
 24 requirements.  
 25 As Tribes, we acknowledge intent to

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1 streamline the NEPA processes, but we have concerns,  
 2 and we do have recommendations. Our concerns  
 3 include the risk of insufficient environmental  
 4 review.  
 5 The categorical exclusion or projects  
 6 resulting in up to 25 acres of new surface  
 7 disturbance may be overly broad. Even small scale  
 8 disturbances have significant cumulative and long  
 9 term impact on sensitive ecosystems, subsistence  
 10 resources, and cultural sites.  
 11 The proposed exclusion could limit  
 12 necessary site specific environmental reviews.  
 13 I spend a lot of time working with  
 14 migratory birds because my village is smack dab in  
 15 the nesting grounds of over 220 species of birds  
 16 that come from all over the world. Not only do  
 17 those birds need those nesting grounds to lay their  
 18 eggs, hash, and rear their young, they also need  
 19 stable food sources.  
 20 Having impacting from drilling or mining  
 21 or gas development on some of those critical nesting  
 22 habitats could mean extinction. Our lands are the  
 23 only nesting habitat for emperor geese and Black  
 24 Brant in the entire world. It's the only place  
 25 where they nest.

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1 And our bird numbers are declining. One  
 2 of the things that we've been really spending a lot  
 3 of time on is working with other organizations,  
 4 institutions, agencies, governments, and Indigenous  
 5 people on the other end of our flyway.  
 6 Currently my village has started working  
 7 with over 20 countries that has our birds. They  
 8 winter our birds on the other ends of these flyways.  
 9 And what we've been able to ascertain is the  
 10 challenges and the impacts that we have on our lands  
 11 as well as the challenges and impacts that are  
 12 happening on the other end of the flyway or on some  
 13 of these areas where they kind of rest. They load  
 14 up, they feed again before they fly.  
 15 And that paints a really broad picture.  
 16 So it's not just something that happens here.  
 17 Something small that can happen here will  
 18 detrimentally effect the numbers that end up  
 19 migrating.  
 20 And as a few other people mentioned here,  
 21 we're already facing critical extinction, mass  
 22 extinction level events with the salmon crash.  
 23 We're about ready to lose our king salmon  
 24 completely.  
 25 With the removal of some of those

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1 regulations on fishing and on this, that could  
 2 impact not only our fishing grounds, but also the  
 3 habitat where these salmon go to lay their eggs.  
 4 So our habitat is unique in the world. It  
 5 literally could be considered a UNESCO World  
 6 Heritage Site, and some of those criteria for that  
 7 include not only does it have a scientific  
 8 significance, it has to have a cultural  
 9 significance. It has to be unique, and we are so  
 10 unique up here in Alaska.  
 11 And it also has to have, you know, other  
 12 significance as well. So we have a very unique  
 13 ecosystem in Alaska that is very easily upset by  
 14 disturbance from our land.  
 15 And as you heard Janet and as you've heard  
 16 others, we are already experiencing some severe  
 17 environmental impacts to our people, to our lands,  
 18 to our waters, that's effecting our food security,  
 19 our food sovereignty, and also, you know, the  
 20 ability for some of our nonhuman relatives to live  
 21 peacefully and successfully grow their young in our  
 22 lands.  
 23 So those ecosystems can be affected. Our  
 24 subsistence resources can be affected, and our  
 25 cultural sites. The proposed exclusion could limit

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1 those necessary site specific environmental reviews.  
 2 Those limited Tribal consultation  
 3 requirements. The current language in this  
 4 particular exclusion, it doesn't not sure for  
 5 adequate consultation with the Tribes that are going  
 6 to be affected prior to the project approval.  
 7 Tribal governments must be given proper  
 8 consideration and enough time to evaluate those  
 9 concerns to be able to talk about the traditional  
 10 knowledge about that particular site, and the  
 11 cultural impacts. It's a process that you can't  
 12 rush.  
 13 So some of the situations not covered by  
 14 the process, subsistence and traditional use. The  
 15 exclusion doesn't adequately consider the importance  
 16 of our traditional knowledge, traditional ecological  
 17 knowledge, or the potential impact on subsistence  
 18 hunting, fishing, and gathering.  
 19 Any project, even within whatever little  
 20 footprints that are existing already, should be  
 21 assessed for impact on these critical practices,  
 22 especially considering the changes that our current  
 23 environment is experiencing right now.  
 24 Our cultural and historical sites outside  
 25 mapped area. Many of our culturally significant

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1 areas, our heritage sites, are undocumented or not  
 2 formally mapped. That exclusion may allow for  
 3 disturbances or even, you know, destroying some of  
 4 those areas without our prior identification,  
 5 mitigation, or our ability to preserve some of those  
 6 things from those sites.  
 7 Climate and permafrost sensitivity. Here  
 8 in Alaska, even these small scale activities can  
 9 effect permafrost and add to climate impacts, and  
 10 also as far as like everything else goes, throwing  
 11 this in at the very last second was not something  
 12 that we would recommend that the Department of  
 13 Interior or the Bureau of Indian Affairs does again.  
 14 This should be its own thing, own complete  
 15 thing, because we might not have all the people here  
 16 that can speak to this adequately.  
 17 So we recommend limiting the categorical  
 18 exclusion to projects within previously disturbed  
 19 areas only. That's it. We request that site  
 20 specific analysis for all new disturbances  
 21 regardless of acreage.  
 22 We expect early and formal Consultation  
 23 with Tribes, and thorough Consultation, not rushed,  
 24 for all actions under this exclusion. We also want  
 25 to make sure that protections for subsistence

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1 resources under ANILCA and any other federal laws  
 2 regarding subsistence are honored, our traditional  
 3 use areas are protected, and our unmapped cultural  
 4 sites are also protected.  
 5 When you include Alaska specific concerns  
 6 like permafrost and our vulnerability into these  
 7 NEPA procedures, it will make things a lot easier  
 8 for all of us around.  
 9 So we also encourage you to uphold your  
 10 trust responsibilities as we have mentioned prior,  
 11 in prior testimony, and we really also encourage you  
 12 to live up to your own Tribal knowledge to uphold  
 13 our traditional ways of life.  
 14 Alaska is a really unique place. It's one  
 15 of the last places that we can live this way here in  
 16 the United States, and it is far too delicate and  
 17 unique to destroy just for a little bit of oil or  
 18 some minerals.  
 19 Thanks.  
 20 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 21 Counsel woman, I can't read the writing so  
 22 I'll just invite you up, Counselor.  
 23 GAYLA HOSETH: Thank you. Hi. I'm, for  
 24 the record, again Gayla Hoseth, the First Chief of  
 25 Curyung Tribal Council from Dillingham, Alaska.

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1 I just have to say that the two ladies  
 2 that spoke before me, I hope that you guys are able  
 3 to get the understanding of how difficult it is that  
 4 when we are at those meetings of how do we translate  
 5 the information that is being put upon us into --  
 6 one of my latest mottos is education to  
 7 understanding.  
 8 And for us to be informed, we need to  
 9 understand what it is that we are going to be voting  
 10 on all our Tribal council levels, at our regional  
 11 meeting levels, statewide boards that we serve on,  
 12 but we need to know what we're voting on, understand  
 13 what we're voting on to make good decisions that  
 14 will have the least impacts for us.  
 15 And a lot of times what I see is that if  
 16 you see somebody who is an expert in a certain  
 17 field, possibly going with what that person says  
 18 because we don't understand it yet. Somebody  
 19 doesn't want to just say, hey I don't really  
 20 understand what that person just said, but since you  
 21 said yes, I'm going to go with a yes.  
 22 And I think that's common across, doesn't  
 23 necessarily matter if it's Tribally or non-Tribally.  
 24 It just is in general, I see it around a lot of  
 25 meetings.

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1 In regards to the emergency permitting  
 2 process, I guess, you know, this just was a little  
 3 bit mind boggling to me because the first NEPA  
 4 process that I was ever involved in was Pebble, with  
 5 Pebble Mine, and that started in 2003.  
 6 We just got the final permanent  
 7 protections in 2023. That took 20 years. Twenty  
 8 years of meetings. Twenty years of rollercoasters.  
 9 Twenty years of understanding what the information,  
 10 even if we speak English, to know what it is of what  
 11 these impacts will have on us and how we're going to  
 12 vote at the council level and then at our nonprofit  
 13 level, our ANCSA corporation levels.  
 14 And so the analogy or what was just  
 15 presented to you really just spoke volumes to really  
 16 get that through the door. And then what's going to  
 17 happen to the person who doesn't understand.  
 18 They're going to say, well what do you think? Yes  
 19 or no? And you could have somebody who has really  
 20 good intentions telling them to vote yes or no, or  
 21 somebody who has their best interests in mind for  
 22 their pocketbooks to have them vote a certain way.  
 23 So understanding a DEIS process and the  
 24 projects in itself. I think ours was about 5,400  
 25 pages long. Didn't read it all. Didn't have the

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1 time. I worked with people who I trusted for key  
 2 points to talk about at the microphone during our  
 3 three minutes that we had for a speech to advocate  
 4 on what we were going to be doing.  
 5 But I guess I have a question for you  
 6 guys, and I don't know if you guys are able to  
 7 comment or anything since this is a Consultation, is  
 8 how is the federal trust responsibility going to be  
 9 upheld during the NEPA process? How is the  
 10 government-to-government Consultation going to be?  
 11 In Alaska, you know, there is 229 Tribes  
 12 of us. Regionally in the Bristol Bay region that we  
 13 had our Consultation, we have 31 Tribes. 28 days,  
 14 31 villages, how is that going to happen for the  
 15 full impact, full environmental impact statement?  
 16 The scoping meetings that need to take  
 17 place. How is that going to happen? When you guys  
 18 travel out to our villages and our communities and  
 19 key hubs, and we fly people to those areas, have to  
 20 work with people to get grants to get people to go  
 21 to these meetings.  
 22 It costs us a lot of money. I don't even  
 23 know how much money we spent on that yet.  
 24 We were a cooperating agency during the  
 25 process, our Tribe was. This was a certain time

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1 frame that we had to sign up to be a cooperating  
 2 agency, and there was a deadline. Is that going to  
 3 still be that way?  
 4 Because I think there were two Tribes, if  
 5 I recall correctly, that were a part of the  
 6 cooperating agency, and lucky we were there, because  
 7 if we weren't there some of those key basic  
 8 information that we thought needed to be in there  
 9 got put in there.  
 10 And we're not scientists. We're not  
 11 lawyers. We're just leaders and people within the  
 12 community. So I guess my point is, that it's a long  
 13 process, and from what I know of my understanding is  
 14 that, you know, is every agency going to have a  
 15 different NEPA process that they're going through?  
 16 How -- what's DOI's plan for NEPA going  
 17 forward with the agencies within the Department of  
 18 Interior to comment and get engaged with the draft  
 19 environmental impact statements?  
 20 U.S. Fish and Wildlife was a key for us  
 21 for Bristol Bay for Pebble, all the birds that  
 22 migrate through, all of the animals, everything that  
 23 happens within U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.  
 24 National Park Service commented.  
 25 A lot of the agencies under DOI commented

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1 individually as agencies, and how is that going to  
 2 work? That's a question moving forward.  
 3 Because I was sitting here thinking about  
 4 that. There's no way that could happen in 28 days.  
 5 And Pebble, it's not that we're against  
 6 any development. We're not against development.  
 7 We're not against mineral exploration, oil and gas.  
 8 We're not against any of that, just needs to be in  
 9 the right place. And your Tribal people who live on  
 10 the land, who has always been there, are going to  
 11 know the areas that need to be protected, the areas  
 12 that are our key subsistence areas of use, and maybe  
 13 what areas will have the least impact for that.  
 14 And if anything does go through, your best  
 15 partnership is going to be with the Tribes to  
 16 empower the Tribes of anything that is moving  
 17 forward. Don't forget about the Tribes if you're  
 18 going to be having things in their backyard, because  
 19 they're the ones that are going to be living there.  
 20 For the ESAs, the seven days, I'm still  
 21 wrapping my brain around us just commenting on these  
 22 just really brief paragraphs with such big impacts  
 23 to us, not everybody has broadband.  
 24 Tribal administrators' email boxes are  
 25 full. How are we going to get the notices in time

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1 to be engaged in these processes to have a voice and  
 2 then to finally get something in the mail, and then  
 3 we miss the deadline?  
 4       And you know, in conversations and kind of  
 5 joking around, we were like, we're going to have to  
 6 have something that's going to be constantly having  
 7 to monitor everything. We don't have the funds to  
 8 pay somebody to do that.  
 9       Maybe you guys could have a listserv that  
 10 we can, a database or something or a listserv that  
 11 we could get automatic emails of things coming our  
 12 way that we need to have a separate email box just  
 13 for DOI, but just, you know, figure out how we're  
 14 going to get notice of all these information that  
 15 you guys are sending out.  
 16       And then when we get to the Historic  
 17 Preservation Act, I need more time to understand  
 18 what that means, I really do. I don't even  
 19 understand what that means of the new -- the new --  
 20 I don't even know what it's called. The streamline  
 21 process for the Historic Preservation, are those not  
 22 going to be included anymore?  
 23       Is it something with the emergency  
 24 permitting process that they're not going to be  
 25 valid because -- or not valid, they're not going to

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1 be taken to the same level they were taken before  
 2 with our historical sites and our cultural areas?  
 3       So those are my comments, but I just  
 4 wanted to know if you guys can say anything in  
 5 regards to what is it going to look like for the  
 6 NEPA process or the Department of Interior?  
 7       Can you guys say anything?  
 8       BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, Gayla, so the -- we  
 9 don't, I mean, we don't know what it's going to look  
 10 like. I don't think -- the scope of this is very  
 11 narrow.  
 12       It's just energy projects that are  
 13 declared as part of this national emergency. So it  
 14 won't be a standard process for our routine NEPA  
 15 actions that are occurring.  
 16       We will still have the same -- Section 106  
 17 is typically a 60-day. There's a 30-day kind of  
 18 notice, and then a 30-day if the Tribe wants to  
 19 consult, a 30-day consultation period for a Section  
 20 106 in HPA, so there's usually 60 days built into  
 21 Section 106.  
 22       This reduces that to 7 if it's an energy  
 23 project that falls under this national emergency.  
 24 We haven't done one yet, so I don't know how it will  
 25 look. And I don't know if the department has done

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1 one elsewhere, because it just got issued the end of  
 2 April.  
 3       They asked us immediately consult. That's  
 4 why we added it to this agenda a week later, and  
 5 we're trying to -- we're playing catch-up.  
 6       We have not implemented it yet because  
 7 we're waiting until after Consultation. We want to  
 8 hear from you all, a lot of these concerns are very  
 9 valid that we'll be taking back. And I don't know  
 10 what -- if -- or I don't know what will happen after  
 11 we go back to the secretary and explain to him after  
 12 we've consulted with all the Tribes in the country,  
 13 the concerns that we're hearing.  
 14       We're also hearing some support though.  
 15 Some folks are wanting to have, you know,  
 16 streamlined NEPA so they can do development. And we  
 17 have energy producing Tribes in this country that  
 18 would love -- love this idea of streamlining NEPA  
 19 for their resources.  
 20       So it's not going to be a one-size-fits-  
 21 all, ever in any country, right. 574 Tribes, all  
 22 very unique and different. And so I think we're  
 23 going to gather all these comments and take it back,  
 24 and present it to the secretary. And then we will  
 25 see how ultimately the proposal is to implement it,

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1 if at all.  
 2       GAYLA HOSETH: Yeah, some things need to  
 3 go a lot faster than they are, obviously.  
 4       And then I guess as another follow up is,  
 5 are we going to have a follow-up on this  
 6 Consultation of a write-up of what was discussed  
 7 here, kind of answers to some of the concerns that  
 8 people have as a dialogue back and forth?  
 9       Or is this just -- it just -- it's just so  
 10 big of hitting the tip of the iceberg when there's  
 11 so many things that one thing has a domino effect  
 12 that connect everything.  
 13       BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, and I think this is  
 14 another lesson learned for our future Consultations  
 15 here is to build in a little bit more back and  
 16 forth, early.  
 17       You know, I was trying to wait until the  
 18 end to answer a lot of the questions that have come  
 19 up and I've heard, and you know, one of them that we  
 20 wanted to probably earlier nip in the bud, and I  
 21 think Kelly tried to do that by referring to the  
 22 Reddit post.  
 23       This idea that there is also a decision to  
 24 consolidate the Alaska region with the Northwest  
 25 region is false. Like, that is nowhere in the

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1 Department of Interior that I'm aware of, and I'm  
 2 speaking directly to the DOGE people and the  
 3 secretary, and so that is just a rumor run a mock  
 4 that is not actually planned at all at this point.  
 5       That's not to say that there won't be some  
 6 changes in the future, just there is no discussion  
 7 at all about having Alaska be consolidated with  
 8 Portland. That is false.  
 9       GAYLA HOSETH: Okay, that's good to know.  
 10       BRYAN MERCIER: It is completely false.  
 11       GAYLA HOSETH: Yeah. Okay.  
 12       BRYAN MERCIER: And we've been -- I've  
 13 been telling everybody, because you're not the first  
 14 folks here to raise this over the last couple weeks.  
 15 And we're just saying, that's not true. And I  
 16 understand, because there's not any information  
 17 coming out because we're still consulting. People  
 18 are running with their own stories, right.  
 19       So the other that, the question that came  
 20 up earlier from the ICAS, lady from the ICAS was,  
 21 what happens next? What are we going to do?  
 22       So we're going to go through these three  
 23 weeks of Consultation. There will be a 30-day  
 24 written comment period as well. We'll be gathering  
 25 the recordings of these meetings, all the comments

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1 that we've had.  
 2       We are paying people to actually compile  
 3 that, consolidate it, and help us understand what we  
 4 are hearing across the country. And ultimately we  
 5 will be taking that back to the secretary as well to  
 6 inform him on both workforce efficiently.  
 7       And there we're going to be working to  
 8 have a reorganization plan. So all the other  
 9 hallways in the Department of Interior have already  
 10 submitted their reorganization plans and their  
 11 potential reductions in force, which the Executive  
 12 Order called for.  
 13       We have not. We have been exempt from  
 14 that pending this Consultation. So this  
 15 Consultation will help inform our reorganization  
 16 plan, and I'm hopeful we won't have any RIFs,  
 17 largely because the DRPs that we've done have  
 18 allowed for those that are eligible to retire, to  
 19 retire with this buyout package.  
 20       And so my hope is that we've met whatever  
 21 goals there may be, and we will just restructure and  
 22 streamline ourselves to provide services.  
 23       Part of the strategy we have there is  
 24 we're focused on maintaining services to our  
 25 customers and clients. You are our customers and

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1 clients, so whatever we do here, we're trying to  
 2 minimize any effects to the services to our  
 3 customers and clients.  
 4       And you know, we're looking at leveraging  
 5 technology. We're trying to figure out ways to  
 6 invest in the BIA so that it's not so people and  
 7 paper based that we currently are. And that's going  
 8 to be a challenge in Alaska. We recognize that,  
 9 because of the infrastructure things up here.  
 10       But, you know, Starlink and other things  
 11 that are available may make it possible with the  
 12 rate of technology development. It is going so  
 13 fast, maybe there's opportunity to leverage that,  
 14 right.  
 15       So a lot of this, there have been very few  
 16 decisions made. There was another comment I heard.  
 17 Have decisions been made, this is just a check-the-  
 18 box exercise? I can assure you, at least from the  
 19 conversations I'm having in the Interior, there are  
 20 very few decisions that have been made around Indian  
 21 Affairs.  
 22       Other than the DRP, the voluntary buyouts.  
 23       GAYLA HOSETH: Okay.  
 24       BRYAN MERCIER: And that was largely  
 25 because staff were demanding it from us, right.

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1 They can see what is happening in all hallways and  
 2 across the government, and they did not want to miss  
 3 out on this opportunity and then be RIFed later in  
 4 the year, right.  
 5       So we owed it to our staff to give them  
 6 the opportunity to retire and get a buyout and find  
 7 their next opportunities as well.  
 8       And so it's been all voluntary so far, and  
 9 we haven't had anything that's been a forcing  
 10 function, if you will, to date because we've been  
 11 really -- we've been exempt, and we've been waiting  
 12 to complete these Consultations, hear from you all  
 13 before we propose a reorganization plan.  
 14       GAYLA HOSETH: Okay. Thanks for answering  
 15 some questions, and I look forward to working back  
 16 with you guys and seeing what comes out of these  
 17 meetings.  
 18       And good luck on your travels, and I hope  
 19 all you guys are here in Anchorage, that you guys  
 20 get a chance to kind of see the beauty that's around  
 21 you. Go for a drive, maybe down towards Girdwood or  
 22 something tonight, but at least see how nice it is  
 23 and not just inside a building.  
 24       But thanks. Thank you.  
 25       BRYAN MERCIER: Can I share just quick

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1 funny stories? The first time I came to Alaska, I  
 2 went to the Dog Salmon Festival in the Village of  
 3 Kakes. When that gentleman was talking about that,  
 4 they asked me to volunteer. I was in my 20s, and  
 5 they asked for a volunteer to hop in a canoe for the  
 6 canoe races. So I actually have raced at the canoe  
 7 races at the Dog Salmon Festival at the Village of  
 8 Kakes.

9           So I've been out in the communities here  
 10 before.

11           GAYLE HOSETH: Nice.

12           BRYAN MERCIER: It is very, very  
 13 beautiful.

14           GAYLE HOSETH: Nice.

15           KELLY RAEL: And the Fourth Brigade, 25th  
 16 Infantry Division, so this place has always been  
 17 very special to me.

18           GAYLE HOSETH: Nice. Thanks. All right.  
 19 Thank you, guys.

20           BEN DUNCAN: Great, thank you. I saw  
 21 we're at Kerry. Thank you for your patience. We  
 22 have one comment online, one comment in person, and  
 23 then Director, I'll have you kind of close us out.  
 24           Kerry, are you still there?  
 25           SAM LEVY: Kerry, you can go ahead and

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1 unmute.

2           KERRY IVORY: We are still here, yes. I'm  
 3 here with a council member and a Tribal member.  
 4 We're what's left of the council who was here this  
 5 morning.

6           My name is Kerry Ivory. I am the Tribal  
 7 administrator for the Native Village of Ouzinkie,  
 8 and my comments are going to be fairly short.

9           I wanted to point out that typically the  
 10 NEPA process is a long process, but decisions that  
 11 impact generations to come need to be thoroughly  
 12 thought out and planned thoroughly as well.

13           Our Tribe vehemently opposes suspension of  
 14 any part of the permitting process that limits  
 15 Tribal input or defers environmental impact studies  
 16 that might allow projects to go forward that will  
 17 endanger our already threatened environments.

18           This so-called energy emergency is a  
 19 manufactured emergency meant to increase revenue  
 20 gained by the consumption of fossil fuel. This puts  
 21 our Tribal communities, our ecological environments,  
 22 and the very world that we live in at risk.

23           Our land is changing so rapidly due to  
 24 climate change, a dirty word to this administration.  
 25 Adding additional stressors without completely

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1 understanding what the potential impact of each and  
 2 every project is, is extremely short-sighted.

3           The science supports moving to clean  
 4 energy, and while I know that this is not what this  
 5 administration wants to hear, our Native villages  
 6 must pursue these alternatives and lower our  
 7 dependence on fossil fuels, not just to slow climate  
 8 change, but to survive.

9           The cost of our dependence on diesel  
 10 generator is not only the devastating impact on our  
 11 environment, but also on our finances, as both  
 12 governments and community members pay a very high  
 13 price for their use.

14           If we're talking about actual emergencies,  
 15 let's tuck about the crash of fisheries impacting  
 16 numerous communities and countless families, and  
 17 inhibiting customary use of these fish by Tribal  
 18 communities.

19           Let's talk about the lack of affordable  
 20 and livable housing throughout Alaska villages.  
 21 Let's talk about the erosion problems in the Y-K  
 22 Delta. Let's talk about the permafrost thaw that is  
 23 threatening homes and infrastructure in Native  
 24 villages.

25           How about the lack of running water in

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1 Alaska Native villages? These are real emergencies  
 2 affecting real people, not manufactured emergencies  
 3 affecting the pocketbooks and bottom lines of  
 4 wealthy oil companies and individuals.

5           Quyana. Thank you.

6           BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.

7           DONNA BACH: I'm really nervous to be  
 8 here, but just for transparency purposes, but name  
 9 is Donna Bach. I am Tribal member of the  
 10 Orutsararmut Native Council. I am speaking as a  
 11 personal citizen. I also am still employed with the  
 12 Bureau of Land Management as one of the Tribal  
 13 liaisons.

14           And I don't have prepared notes, but I do  
 15 plan on submitting comments essentially speaking to  
 16 you as a U.S. citizen and as an Alaskan, and as a  
 17 descendant of ancestors who have been in discussions  
 18 with the Department of Interior since before I was  
 19 born.

20           I am 48 years old. I am essentially an  
 21 afterborn of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement  
 22 Act, so full disclosure as well. I'm a Doyon  
 23 shareholder, I Bethel Native Corporation  
 24 shareholder, and a Calista shareholder.

25           I love Alaska. I understand a little bit

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1 about NEPA. Looking at this particular  
 2 implementation procedure on 25 acres for renewal  
 3 rights. I understand the State of Alaska's owner  
 4 wealth condition.  
 5 I also understand the political whiplash  
 6 that our resilient Indigenous people have  
 7 encountered since before the Prudhoe discovery. I  
 8 feel like there's a little bit of a history lesson  
 9 here that might benefit you or anyone that might be  
 10 listening.  
 11 My great grandfather participated in the  
 12 people's heritage dialogue in the early '60s, and  
 13 this was essentially galvanizing of forces of before  
 14 Prudhoe discovery, but after the proposal of Project  
 15 Plowshare under the atomic energy commission that  
 16 basically, you know, gave Alaska an opportunity to  
 17 say, we're going to do a peaceful atomic  
 18 demonstration.  
 19 Many people here in Alaska may know it as  
 20 Project Chariot. I think of it as the first  
 21 galvanization of a conservation effort. Before Ada  
 22 Deer, before Tribal Indian self-determination,  
 23 before NEPA, before -- it was sort of in that post  
 24 '40s era when, you know, the gold mining industry  
 25 subsided, but it was a new exciting scientific

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1 endeavor that a lot of academia supported at the  
 2 time.  
 3 Think of the Oppenheimer era. And I lean  
 4 on that, not only because my great grandfather was,  
 5 you know, a descendant of living on the Kuskokwim.  
 6 He was in his elderly years, but the Indigenous  
 7 voice at that time was maybe when there was one  
 8 telephone that was working in a village.  
 9 And the word of mouth went around, and  
 10 there was a dialogue that occurred multiple times in  
 11 Point Barrow. And what eventually happened was the  
 12 scientific community and the Indigenous community of  
 13 leadership got together, and they didn't take the  
 14 million dollar deal of, you know, an atomic  
 15 detonation occurring in the Ogotoruk Valley of  
 16 47,000 acres, in an era where it might have been  
 17 enticing because Alaska wasn't solvent, and I think  
 18 we're still dealing with this situation currently in  
 19 the year of 2025.  
 20 I understand that our nation is  
 21 encountering \$36 trillion in debt. I try to  
 22 rationalize maybe an understanding of what a  
 23 national energy emergency means when we're operating  
 24 on debt as a nation.  
 25 And energy security I think has allowed a

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1 part of the history, even the broken parts of our  
 2 history of our state, to do well for itself.  
 3 Let's fast forward to the 1970s when the  
 4 Trans-Alaska Pipeline was constructed. I know that  
 5 there was an EIS environmental process that went  
 6 through three years, and it actually created an  
 7 influx of people coming to our state. There were  
 8 probably broken promises, probably still very hard  
 9 feelings about that time and era.  
 10 However, year after year our state  
 11 legislature is having to deliberate or possibly  
 12 borrow from our funds to administer solvency,  
 13 whether it's building of our roads, maintenance of  
 14 our schools, maintenance of our roadways, runways.  
 15 And right now we're seeing exodus of people leaving  
 16 our state.  
 17 I think again going back to this, you  
 18 know, 25 acres, approval modification. I can see  
 19 the silver lining of possibility of this working as  
 20 long as there are compliances and assurances with  
 21 all applicable requirements including regulations  
 22 and onshore orders if it does lend to acknowledging  
 23 the sovereignty of Tribes and people that are  
 24 adjacent or near those 25 acres.  
 25 If it's geothermal, I'm not sure if this

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1 is speaking to L&G, you know. There's other forces  
 2 at hand that I'm also really having a difficult time  
 3 understanding the broadness of this question.  
 4 However, advancement of those things will  
 5 only work if the money is intended to go quickly and  
 6 swiftly to the people that you are working with in  
 7 proximity to those lands.  
 8 I just want to thank you for your time. I  
 9 also feel like there is a level of anxiety that is  
 10 attached to wearing multiple hats. Like Estelle  
 11 said, there is a wardrobe that comes in Alaska. You  
 12 -- I don't even know how many people were in this  
 13 room earlier. There's not very many anymore, but  
 14 it's a critical mass of ingenious Indigenous  
 15 ingenuity.  
 16 And that is the safeguard of everything  
 17 that came before me, and it is going to be constant  
 18 and steady in the wake of we are smarter, we  
 19 understand business. Yes, there are aspects of the  
 20 federal government that can be reduced. However, if  
 21 there are aspects of advancements within the federal  
 22 government, fund it to the degree and fortify these  
 23 agencies to work in tandem with Tribes or  
 24 corporations, or Native allottees, to advance these  
 25 things in a true sovereign fashion.

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1 Thank you for your time.  
 2 BEN DUNCAN: Okay, thank you.  
 3 So we're going to go take one last comment  
 4 online. If it's Kerry -- so if I'm mispronouncing  
 5 your name, and then we have once last in-person  
 6 comment that will close out our day.  
 7 Is it Kerry? We're going to invite you to  
 8 come off mute.  
 9 SAM LEVY: All right. Can you go ahead  
 10 and unmute. You're also welcome to turn your camera  
 11 on if you'd like, and go ahead with your comment.  
 12 CORY ERICKSON: Hi, thank you. It's  
 13 pronounced Cory, but appreciate it. My name is Cory  
 14 Sikuaq Erickson. I am a member of the Native  
 15 Village of Unalakleet. I was there for most of the  
 16 day, and I thought I would share this comment at the  
 17 end.  
 18 When you guys are talking about making  
 19 these processes more efficient, I think you should  
 20 really think about who is it making it more  
 21 efficient for.  
 22 Obviously you heard a lot today that the  
 23 back-and-forth communication that the NEPA and these  
 24 other -- that these processes allow is because of  
 25 these huge communication and geographical gaps that

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1 we have, and cultural gaps.  
 2 If we look back at 1946, the  
 3 Administrative Procedures Act, which is the reason  
 4 why we're sitting here giving you comments and not  
 5 knowing where they're going to go, are they going to  
 6 end up in a binder on a shelf somewhere? Are they  
 7 going to get ignored? Is because we've become  
 8 conditioned to this process of this notice and  
 9 comment process.  
 10 Go back to 1946, and that's when they  
 11 wanted to make it more streamlined, more efficient  
 12 for the federal government to make decisions with  
 13 federal land and federal projects, and that was in  
 14 the Procedures Act.  
 15 So if you look at what you have in Alaska  
 16 to the, in rural Alaska specifically, you have  
 17 roughly around 240,000 people with around 220  
 18 million acres of land across rural Alaska, which  
 19 breaks down to roughly 931 acres per person, if  
 20 you're looking at it per capita-wise.  
 21 Look down at the lower 48, you have  
 22 roughly 326 million acres of federal land and 418  
 23 million people -- I'm sorry. 418 million acres of  
 24 land and 326 million people. It breaks down it  
 25 about one acre person if you're looking at it per

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1 capita. So we have almost a thousand-fold acres of  
 2 federal land around our rural communities.  
 3 And we have such a various group of  
 4 federal agencies trying to do projects and trying to  
 5 communicate and everything. Our people are forced  
 6 to go to these notify-and-comment kind of hearings  
 7 as a revolving door. And it's -- so at the end of  
 8 the day, the communication and I just wanted to ask,  
 9 who would -- the streamlined processes, who is it  
 10 making it more efficient for?  
 11 If it's very obvious that it's making it  
 12 more efficient for energy developers and it's making  
 13 it tougher for us, it's been pretty obvious today  
 14 that people are really concerned about that, so I  
 15 just wanted to crunch those numbers.  
 16 We have a thousand-fold federal land  
 17 surrounding our villages out there, so thank you.  
 18 BEN DUNCAN: All right. Thank you, Cory.  
 19 KIMBERLEY STRONG: Just when you thought  
 20 you were out the door. Thank you for your patience.  
 21 (Speaking Native American language.) I'm Kimberley  
 22 Strong. I'm with the Chilkat Indian Village, people  
 23 of Chilkat, Chilkat Klukwan.  
 24 I just, I was listening online and I'm  
 25 here in Anchorage from Southeast Alaska, and I felt

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1 it important enough to come in here and give you  
 2 some of our thoughts on the processes that's going  
 3 on here.  
 4 Really not much notice for us to come and  
 5 pull our thoughts together, but I want -- a question  
 6 that's burning in our minds, what is the energy  
 7 emergency we're talking about?  
 8 What is it that we want to feed with  
 9 curtailing all of the NEPA processes that are in  
 10 place today?  
 11 Where it was going to take us two years to  
 12 go through a very good environmental study to see  
 13 what the impacts were going to be on our  
 14 environment, is now going to happen within 28 days?  
 15 That's a little bit insane. We have a  
 16 very difficult time believing that in any way that  
 17 the Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian  
 18 Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, can possibly do  
 19 these things in any meaningful way to protect our  
 20 traditional lands.  
 21 In Klukwan, our traditional lands was 2.6  
 22 million acres. We're down to 1,800 acres for our  
 23 village. One thousand eight hundred acres. We rely  
 24 on the D-1 set-asides.  
 25 When land claims happened, our land was

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1 picked down because there is no area left in the  
 2 Chilkat Valley because of the big give-away of our  
 3 ancestral lands to the State of Alaska, Department  
 4 of Education, for the mental health trust which is  
 5 another crazy institution that is really stressing  
 6 our mental health as Native people.  
 7       The D-1 land set-asides were set aside  
 8 during the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to  
 9 protect our way of life, to ensure that we would  
 10 have lands to hunt and fish on.  
 11       With this speed-up process of getting the  
 12 energy, digging up the lands for mining, expediting  
 13 that whole exploration for essential minerals, my  
 14 little quotation marks here. What are essential, is  
 15 really disheartening.  
 16       My community has lived for thousands of  
 17 years along the Chilkat River. Jilthka-heeni  
 18 (phonetic) means The River That Belongs To The  
 19 Salmon.  
 20       We get all five species of salmon that run  
 21 in that river, plus other androgynous fish. We  
 22 jeopardize -- we're currently being jeopardized by a  
 23 hard rock acid mine that BLM manages.  
 24       We've asked BLM during their community  
 25 meetings with us, our Consultations so to speak. A

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1 meaningful Consultation means that you listen to us  
 2 and take our advice, and you try and make  
 3 adaptations to what we're asking.  
 4       We've gone with BLM. We are -- we do our  
 5 darnedest for the past forever having government-to-  
 6 government Consultations that we someday believe and  
 7 hope that it will be meaningful, meaningful for the  
 8 federal government to listen to us, meaningful for  
 9 the Tribes to get our needs met.  
 10       When we meet with BLM, I've constantly  
 11 said, we don't have enough funding to have these  
 12 experts to come in to our meeting. You come in and  
 13 you tell us when the experts say. The experts are  
 14 your experts.  
 15       Can we ask them those questions in a  
 16 different way? In a way of the Native people on the  
 17 land, that we are looking to protect for the next  
 18 seven generations. I think my president said that  
 19 when he spoke earlier today.  
 20       We don't have any of these -- we don't  
 21 have the funds. If you would give us like millions  
 22 of dollars in funding so we can hire the experts  
 23 that could come in to help us advise the Tribe,  
 24 these are the areas and how we could possibly push  
 25 back.

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1       But if you guys would invite us to the  
 2 table when you're getting these consultations from  
 3 those experts out there that are going to tell you  
 4 why they believe that helicopters should be flying  
 5 around with the mountain goats that are just jumping  
 6 off of the cliffs, because those helicopters for  
 7 heli skiing are scaring those mountain goats.  
 8       They're frightening them. They're causing  
 9 bears to come out of their dens in the middle of the  
 10 winter, so we could have heli skiing on the ring of  
 11 fire with the BLM lands.  
 12       There's so many just atrocities that are  
 13 happening over and over and over again for our  
 14 people, not just in my Chilkat Valley, but across  
 15 the State of Alaska and across the Nation.  
 16       We are just, again, asking you, please,  
 17 when you go forward and you represent the Tribes in  
 18 Alaska and the Tribes across the Nation, that you  
 19 continue to realize it's your voice. It's our  
 20 voices. We need your voice to sound like us. The  
 21 urgencies of wanting to protect our way of life.  
 22       Again, I don't want to hold everybody up  
 23 this have been waiting here for the time to leave,  
 24 but again, look at those D-1 lands and look at the  
 25 purpose of them during the Alaska Native Claims

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1 Settlement Act.  
 2       It's my last holdout to protect it from  
 3 the extractions. The river, as I said, I think that  
 4 the coho run on the Chilkat River is the largest --  
 5 the third largest coho run in the State of Alaska.  
 6       The run of sockeye salmon, cohos and  
 7 pinks, and chum salmon used to be, but ever since  
 8 the exploration of mining right above my village has  
 9 been happening off of the Klehini River, which is  
 10 Klehini is the mother river, ever since they started  
 11 doing exploration there, the number of chum salmon  
 12 have declined significantly.  
 13       The number of eagles, because Chilkat  
 14 Valley is known for being the Valley of the Eagles.  
 15 The number of eagles that perch, bald eagles that  
 16 perch on the trees on the Klehini declined.  
 17       The question to Department of Fish and  
 18 Game, what's going on? Is there a water issue going  
 19 on since the mining exploration started?  
 20       DEC said -- they said good to DEC, we  
 21 don't monitor the waterways. DEC, Department of  
 22 Environmental Conservation monitors the waterways.  
 23       I called DEC up. They say, do you know  
 24 how many waterways there are in Alaska? We can't  
 25 possibly monitor all of them. I'm not asking them

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1 to monitor all of them. I'm asking them to monitor  
 2 one that has five species of salmon.  
 3 The idea that the State of Alaska, through  
 4 the Department of Natural Resources, is going to  
 5 protect our way of life is crazy. They have a  
 6 mission, whether it's Department of Natural  
 7 Resources, houses, all of these different agencies  
 8 that are in conflict with conservation.  
 9 We look upon the federal government to  
 10 protect us, to protect our way of life. I hate the  
 11 whole idea of -- I think I say if I was considered  
 12 an endangered species, maybe we would get  
 13 protection, but that's what's happening.  
 14 The genocide of our people continues. It  
 15 continues with every inch of taking. Taking the  
 16 resources because there's some kind of energy  
 17 crisis. Taking the riches out of Alaska is taking  
 18 from us.  
 19 And it's not even taking the riches that  
 20 we honor and -- and love. They're taking those  
 21 riches of minerals and oil in extraction. Not the  
 22 renewable resources that we could enhance, like the  
 23 salmon.  
 24 I'm not anti-logging because I believe  
 25 that's a renewable resource, done well, but come on

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1 you guys, let's, please, I beg of you on behalf of  
 2 my Tribe and my people, to let our voices be heard.  
 3 Let our voices be heard on our grandfather's land.  
 4 Gon-as-chish (phonetic).  
 5 BEN DUNCAN: Thank you.  
 6 Director.  
 7 BRYAN MERCIER: Yeah, so almost seven and  
 8 a half hours straight. That might be some kind of  
 9 record, I don't know, but I appreciate everybody's  
 10 participation.  
 11 I should have said this earlier. The  
 12 reason we are here at Alaska Pacific University is  
 13 because our previous spot downtown, a federal  
 14 building, fell through because of the virtual  
 15 connectivity. We couldn't do the Zoom there.  
 16 So we didn't underestimate the Alaska  
 17 region by any means. This was the only place that  
 18 could take us on a week's notice, so we appreciate  
 19 the Alaska Pacific University giving us this space.  
 20 It was a little tight earlier, so please  
 21 pass on to those that are still here, pass on to the  
 22 folks that were here, that this was -- we made do  
 23 and it went -- went pretty well, all things  
 24 considered.  
 25 I answered a few other questions earlier

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1 about the rumors that we were hearing, so I won't go  
 2 into that, but again, this is just the start of the  
 3 Consultation period.  
 4 We'll have six more Consultation sessions  
 5 that will all be virtual, so those online that  
 6 hadn't had a chance to add a comment, you'll have  
 7 ample opportunity in the future to do it.  
 8 And then we will have a 30-day written  
 9 comment period before we actually start to compile  
 10 and take this to the separate for consideration,  
 11 both on workforce and on the national emergency  
 12 energy NEPA regulations.  
 13 So appreciate everybody's comments, and  
 14 thank you all for your time. Appreciate it.  
 15 BEN DUNCAN: I think that's it, right?  
 16 That's the chat. Thank you. Thank you all for  
 17 coming.  
 18 We did have some questions just around the  
 19 transcripts. They will be posted on the BIA  
 20 website.  
 21 So thanks everybody, have a great night.  
 22 (WHEREUPON, the ALASKA TRIBAL CONSULTATION  
 23 concluded at 5:27 p.m.)  
 24  
 25

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1 CERTIFICATE

2

3 I, Miriam ODell, do hereby certify that I  
 4 reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing  
 5 matter and that the foregoing transcript pages  
 6 constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said  
 7 proceedings to the best of my ability.  
 8

9 I further certify that I am neither related to  
 10 counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any  
 11 interest in the outcome of the proceedings.  
 12

13 IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand  
 14 this 28th day of May, 2025.  
 15

16   
 17  
 18 Miriam ODell, #3658  
 19  
 20  
 21  
 22  
 23  
 24  
 25

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