



HAINES BOROUGH, ALASKA

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Sen. Kiehl:

The Haines Borough opposes elimination of the Alaska Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council. For nearly 40 years, the council has helped resolve management issues in this 48,000-acre state preserve.

The preserve was a unique creation, forged in compromise 1982, to protect eagles but also to protect traditional uses. Subsistence hunting and fishing, cruise ship shore excursions, firewood cutting, and guided hunting and fishing all are permitted in the preserve, the state's only wildlife preserve.

The creation of the preserve also represented an historic balance of national, state and local interests in this unique place, the nation's home of the nation's symbol. (Prior to 1980, U.S. senators had proposed including the preserve's critical habitat area and environs in D-2 legislation regarding the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, suggesting creation of a federal wildlife refuge for eagles in Haines.)

The council's twelve members include federal, state and local officials working with conservation, business and tribal representatives to ensure the eagles and historic uses – including commercial ones – peacefully co-exist in this remarkable place. Recommendations from the council in recent years have included protecting and expanding hunting allowances and providing vehicle access by fishermen and hunters in streams that bisect the preserve.

Managing for such a diversity of uses and interests requires a delicate balance as well as an advisory council that can navigate a myriad of considerations. The council has achieved this balance admirably, easing management decisions by the State of Alaska and thus saving the state money, time and grief.

I am planning to secure a Haines Borough Assembly resolution on the importance of the Alaska Bald Eagle Preserve Advisory Council at the assembly's next meeting Feb. 13.

Here at Haines Borough, we are discussing other actions we can take to influence the Alaska Legislature to block this proposal, including letter-writing, in-person testimony, and cooperative efforts between the Haines Borough and concerned local groups such as Chilkat Indian Village, Chilkoot Indian Association, Haines Sportsman's Association and others.

We understand that there are upcoming hearings scheduled in the state Senate and state House where Haines citizens and officials can testify on this matter.

Can you help keep us apprised of such opportunities and advise us on strategy, including what other actions we can take to help save this critical piece of state administration?

Thank you in advance for your help on this matter and for your continued diligent service to our community.

Tom Morphet
Haines Borough
Mayor