

STATE OF ALASKA

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FEDERAL AREAS

SEAN PARNELL, Governor

*3700 AIRPORT WAY
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99709*

PHONE: (907) 374-3737

FAX: (907) 451-2751

July 30, 2009

Secretary Ken Salazar
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas is a strong proponent of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 1308 Local Hire program. This program has been quite successful in providing jobs to Alaskans and in providing federal land management agencies with capable and knowledgeable employees.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) allocated \$85.3 million for Department of the Interior projects and employment opportunities in Alaska. We are hopeful that these funds soon will be used to provide jobs for Alaskans either directly through ANILCA Local Hire or similar job programs, or indirectly through business opportunities for Alaskan vendors and contractors.

The Commission is concerned, however, about the slow pace at which projects are moving forward. At this time the Federal Business Opportunities website lists 10 ARRA projects for DOI in Alaska, with only half of those to be opened to competitive bidding. A similar review of the USA Jobs website shows only two ARRA jobs listed for DOI agencies in Alaska. Currently, there are four ARRA funded DOI grants available nationally that could be used for fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects in Alaska.


We understand that the projects and jobs funded by the Recovery Act must follow normal procurement or recruitment processes. However, it is disappointing to note that nearly 6 months after passage of ARRA only limited progress has been made toward meeting its intended goals. This is not to be critical of the Department of the Interior or its agencies. Our discussions with agency representatives in Alaska clearly demonstrate that they are working diligently to bring projects on line as soon as possible. The signs are encouraging, but unfortunately, with half of

our short construction season already gone, it appears that it will be next year before most of these projects can provide any economic stimulus here in Alaska.

We note that Section 703 of ARRA authorizes agencies to transfer up to 10% of the funds in any account to other appropriation accounts within the agency, if the head of the agency “determines that the transfer will enhance the efficiency or effectiveness of the use of the funds without changing the intended purpose.” This flexibility could allow agencies to review and perhaps adjust its list of ARRA funded projects to bring other projects on line more quickly or to provide additional funding for jobs.

The Commission respectfully urges you to continue to do everything possible under your authority as Secretary of the Interior to help advance these projects and release them for competitive bidding at the earliest date. Additionally, consistent with Section 703, we encourage DOI and its agencies to fully utilize any ARRA funds available to expand the 1308 Local Hire program as well as other jobs programs which will provide much needed employment opportunities in Alaska.

Sincerely,



for Rick Schikora
Chairman

Cc: Governor Sean Parnell
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Mark Begich
Representative Don Young
Sue Masica- NPS Alaska Regional Director
Geoffrey Haskett – USFWS Alaska Regional Director
Tom Lonnie – BLM Alaska State Director
Niles Cesar _ BIA Alaska Regional Director
Pat Pourchot – DOI Special Assistant for Alaska