

Opening Statement  
H.R. 1408: SEAlaska  
Full Committee Mark-up  
July 13, 2011

**Mr. Chairman,**

**There is no dispute that SEAlaska is entitled to more federal acreage to address land claims under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.**

**There is also no dispute that resolution of those claims has been pending for far too long.**

**It is important to note, however, that there is also no dispute about the fastest way to resolve SEAlaska's outstanding claims and move forward – the Corporation could select**

**lands already identified within the existing withdrawal areas. The Tongass Land Use Management Plan is based on these existing withdrawals, meaning that the forest could be sustainably managed after SEAlaska made its selections. The Forest Service has testified in full support of SEAlaska choosing its lands from those that are currently identified.**

**What is causing the current delay is SEAlaska's request for legislation allowing them to select lands OUTSIDE the current withdrawal areas. It should come as no surprise that the idea of allowing a for-profit corporation to select national forest land for its own purposes raises some concern.**

**It is my understanding that Committee staff sought to resolve these concerns – and perhaps craft a less controversial version of the bill – but those efforts were not successful.**

**As a result, issues such as potential impacts to water quality, salmon, old growth timber and local communities are unresolved in this legislation. H.R. 1904 does not even include basic conservation provisions included in the companion bill sponsored by Senator Murkowski.**

**If the most important goal is to resolve SEAlaska's outstanding land claims quickly**

**and fairly, the Corporation should simply move forward with its current land selections.**

**If, however, it is important to allow SEAlaska to identify new lands on the Tongass, it is our responsibility to insure that these concerns are addressed.**

**I yield back.**