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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –**  
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**NINE ALASKA TOWNS REQUEST BLM FINALIZE SEALASKA'S 2008 LAND SELECTIONS SWIFTLY TODAY**

**LETTER ASSERTS TWO YEAR DELAY OUTRAGEOUS AND VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW**

Nine towns in Southeast Alaska and individuals from the region sent a letter today to the Bureau of Land Management requesting the agency act on an old letter the BLM has sat on for 28 months.

**Sealaska Corporation submitted the letter to the BLM on June 10, 2008.**

As of today, the BLM has taken no action on Sealaska's request that it be given land within the Tongass National Forest on Prince of Wales Island near their villages.

It was this location near the villages that Sealaska designated in Congressional testimony in 1975, but which Senator Murkowski attempted to thwart by introducing a bill the towns called a LAND GRAB outside the 1975 boundaries.

The nine towns request BLM comply with the law, requiring the land that Sealaska Corporation sought in its letter be transferred immediately to Sealaska, ending a long and contentious battle with Alaska's Senator Murkowski over S.881.

**Background**

In startling testimony delivered in March during a hearing on the Sealaska Lands Bill, **Deputy Undersecretary Jay Jensen** presented new information that had never before been made public.

In accordance with the *Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act* -- ALTAA -- passed into law on **December 10, 2004**, Sealaska was required to submit their final priority selections to the Bureau of Land Management no later than **June 10, 2008**.

The corporation submitted their lawful, withdrawal area selections on the deadline day along with a letter requesting postponement of conveyance pending the outcome of their legislation.

Contrary to statements from Sealaska claiming the corporation did not receive fair selection opportunities, a recent **search of congressional records** has shown that in 1975, then **Sealaska President John Borbridge testified** before Congress specifically **requesting amendment to ANCSA, which would allow them to select lands near their ten villages in the southeastern region;** citing they wanted those lands for good timber values and to combine their lands with village corporation land to form better management and economic units.

In light of the fact the **Alaska Land Transfer Acceleration Act** specifically states that those priority selections, once submitted, **may not be revoked, rescinded, or modified by the Native Corporation,** the letter's signers are requesting the agency begin swift and immediate processing of Sealaska's 2008 selections in compliance with the requirements in ALTAA.

**The Sealaska Lands Bill is an end run around the ALTAA.**

The towns believe finality of selection will enable the Forest Service to fulfill its duty to implement all of the requirements of the Tongass Land Management Plan, which would be in the best interest of all forest values.

The letter was signed by the mayors of Thorne Bay and Kupreanof, as well as elected representatives from Edna Bay, Pt. Baker, Port Protection, Naukati, Whale Pass, Hollis, and Cape Pole, along with guides and individuals from across the region; all of whom are on record opposing both HR.2099 and S.881.