

Port Protection Community Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 68
Point Baker, AK 99927

Honorable Representative

The community of Port Protection on the north end of Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska is strongly opposed to HR 2099, which would giveaway the subsistence lands that are so important to our community to a private corporation.

Thirty seven years ago Sealaska agreed to and helped select the location of it's land base. Since then they have heavily logged the most productive of these areas, shipping the logs in the round overseas. Now they wish to exchange less productive land in this land base for more productive land outside of it. Some of this newly selected land is surrounding our rural community of Port Protection.

Sealaska came to our community for a short two hour presentation that glossed over our concerns and resistance to a takeover by their corporation of the customary and traditionally used subsistence lands in our immediate area. They showed us slides of their supposedly more responsible way of logging the land while at the same time showing pictures of stands of trees erroneously portrayed as 15 years old clear cuts, which they then had to acknowledge were not as portrayed, and said "Thank you for pointing that out". It does look like Sealaska gave a little more buffer for our water system in their new selection, but limestone hydrologic systems such as this must be managed as an ecological unit to ensure protection of the resource. Sealaska says we can keep using the land for subsistence, but that will do us no good if it is all clear cut, which is their obvious intention. We will have no say or input over what happens to the uplands of our fish streams or clam and crab beds. ANILCA title VIII was included by Congress to protect local subsistence land use against such a corporate incursion. Title VIII guarantees subsistence rights on Federal land. Section 802 states that the policy of Congress is to cause the least adverse impact possible on rural residents who depend upon subsistence uses of the resources of such land. If this land becomes private, it will be managed by the State which does not guarantee subsistence, therefore we will lose our subsistence protection covered by ANILCA.

Years of multiple use planning has gone into managing the Tongass. Years of effort, thought, participation, time and money have been expended. The area on the north end of Prince of Wales Island is a multiple use forest used and enjoyed by many. Port Protection's record of prior use of this area goes back many years. There is a continuous record of the communities of Port Protection and Point Baker working with the U. S. Forest Service to protect our most crucial subsistence areas. There are formal, official documents on file with both the USFS and ADF&G recording this area as our closest most important subsistence area with a history of years of established use. These Federal lands now belong to all of us, if our most intimate surrounding area is given to a private corporation how is that fair to the rest of us who have worked within the Forest Service system on area planning and management for the past 34 years. Our community participated in the Tongass Reform Act land management plan with community members traveling to Washington D.C. We wrote letters in the fall of 2007 to the House of Representatives Resource Committee in opposition to this same Bill, now we must write again to protect the last Old Growth adjacent to our community from becoming profit for a private corporation's shareholders. Sealaska wants the areas that we use to hunt, fish, trap, get firewood, and forest service lumber permits, and has the potential for more tourism use, as this is a business that is starting to develop here, with lodges large and small already established. It is unique in it's beauty because we have worked hard to keep it that way.

North Prince of Wales is an area rich in karst and cave systems and one of the most productive areas in biodiversity within the Tongass National Forest. The Community of Port Protection is opposed to HR 2099 not only because it will take public lands important to our subsistence life style away from public use

and the protection it receives from ANILCA, but also because this highly valuable, productive but fragile karst area will lose all protection it receives under the Federal Cave Resources Project Act which Congress enacted in 1988 to protect cave and karst resources from destructive logging. Karstlands tend to support bigger trees and more salmon, consequently developed karst areas have a long history of timber production. The USFS funded panel of karst experts in 1993 found the karst on North Prince of Wales to be significant at both national and international scales, and concluded that karst was being degraded by timber harvest. In addition their analysis showed karstlands to be critically important to fisheries resources. North Prince of Wales Island with it's 83,773 acres of vulnerable karst, called "Karst Central" by USFS Geologist James Baichtal was one of the main sites for the Tongass Cave Project, an official project of the National Speleological Society. The Lab Bay planning area that encompasses this land surrounding our community first applied karst strategy in to the planning of timber harvest in 1994, harvest was reduced from 85 million board feet to 42million bf to avoid harvest of high vulnerability karst, that high vulnerability karst is within this chosen Economic Development land selection.

In 1993 the Tongass Cave Project made major discoveries in this area including On Your Knees Cave where human remains were later found dating to 10,000 years BP, along with 8,000 year old deer and caribou bones and 6,000-12,000 year old bear bones. Karst hydrologic systems must be managed as an ecological unit to ensure protecting cave resources, they are easy to destroy as studies have shown, and future discoveries in this area would be lost forever. Fisheries would be effected by logging the Old Growth on this karst landscape. Streams flowing through karst support more fish than non karst streams as shown in USFS studies which stressed greater management emphasis on maintaining riparian habitats and instream habitat of karst dominated aquatic ecosystems to ensure continued productivity of these systems. We do not fully understand aquatic ecosystem processes in karst landscapes, by degrading more in the area over what has already been harmed we may be irreparably damaging the ability of the ecosystem to recover. When karst is logged the 2" of average soil depth is washed by the heavy rains of this area down into the karst and cave systems, destroying what we cannot see but nonetheless effecting the whole cave system. Many thousands of hours and funds have been spent, many dedicated volunteers have taken part in studies to put protections in place to preserve this area and the integrity of it's resources. We are opposed to this takeover of public lands that so many of us have spent years protecting.

Will Congress let a corporation make it's own Bill and select the land it wants with no regard for who is already using it or what valuable national resources may need protection there to provide short term profit for their shareholders? Was the Forest Service involved in evaluating the effects of this exchange of land on subsistence uses and need as instructed by ANILCA title VIII section 810?

We are a small rural village, maybe the impact on us does not seem like a big thing. We do not have a timber economy, we make our living mainly from fishing and more recently from some tourism, neither of which will benefit from having this area clear cut. Port Protection has a spring fed water system, a boardwalk connecting our homes and school, and floats for our main form of transportation--boats. We have no road connecting us to any other communities, we have kept it that way on purpose and are protective of our way of life. Our protection of this area is why there is now something to fight for. A giant clear cut is worth nothing to anyone. Science has shown there is value in leaving Old Growth forests intact, protected Old Growth just becomes more valuable, not for it's monetary worth but because our health and that of our communities depends even more upon it.

Sincerely, Judy

Magnuson

Port

Protection Community Association

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P.O. Box 68
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Honorable Senators

The community of Port Protection on the north end of Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska is strongly opposed to S-881, which would giveaway the subsistence lands that are so important to our community to a private corporation.

Thirty seven years ago Sealaska agreed to and helped select the location of it's land base. Since then they have heavily logged the most productive of these areas, shipping the logs in the round overseas. Now they wish to exchange less productive land in this land base for more productive land outside of it. Some of this newly selected land is surrounding our rural community of Port Protection.

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