



# WILDERNESS WATCH

*Keeping Wilderness Wild*

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## Zinke Sneak Attack: Build Road Through Izembek Wilderness

A land trade agreement with King Cove Native Corporation was signed today by Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke that would allow for a road to be built through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and its designated Wilderness. This deal was developed secretly behind closed doors with no public involvement. It violates the Wilderness Act and several other bedrock environmental laws, and sets a precedent that threatens the entire National Wilderness Preservation System.

“By signing this corrupt land trade agreement, that would enable construction of a road through the heart of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness, Secretary Zinke has violated his most sacred responsibility to the American people. His action is especially egregious since a marine transport option is entirely feasible and would completely avoid the irreversible harm of a road in this magnificent wild place. This must not stand,” said Fran Mauer, a retired Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife biologist and Alaska Chapter Representative with Wilderness Watch.

Exhaustive studies have shown that a road would severely impact wildlife and destroy the wilderness character of one of our Nation’s most diverse and biologically productive Wildlife Refuges. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have identified non-road alternatives such as marine transport and related facilities that are not only feasible but would also completely avoid impacting the Refuge and Wilderness. Yet Zinke has chosen to ignore his stewardship responsibilities for our public lands, and in doing so, irreparably violate the Izembek Wilderness.

Resolutions and statements by King Cove and State of Alaska officials made decades ago confirm that the primary purpose for this proposed road is economic benefits rather than emergency evacuation during inclement weather. This action by Zinke marks yet another assault on America’s public lands by the Trump administration that caters exclusively to special economic interests at the expense of the public interest. The Secretary of Interior lacks legal authority for this action and Wilderness Watch will challenge it in court to keep the Izembek Wilderness as it is, wild and free of roads.

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