

STATEMENT OF  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
BEFORE THE  
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

H.R. 2815 – CAPE FOX LAND ENTITLEMENT FINALIZATION ACT OF 2025

**May 21, 2025**

Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, to discuss the Cape Fox Land Entitlement Finalization Act of 2025.

The USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, including lands in Alaska that are in proximity to Alaska Native Corporation lands. The Forest Service works closely with the Alaska Native Corporations and Tribes to coordinate on land stewardship, including forest management, wildfire mitigation, resource restoration, and cultural preservation efforts.

**H.R. 2815, “Cape Fox Land Entitlement Finalization Act of 2025”**

H.R. 2815 would allow the Cape Fox Corporation (Cape Fox), a village corporation established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), to obtain its remaining land entitlement under ANCSA from portions of the Tongass National Forest that differ from its existing selection in the Tongass which is currently pending conveyance by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

As proposed, the Secretary of the Interior is directed to convey to Cape Fox the surface estate to an approximately 180-acre tract along a 2.5-mile stretch of eastern shoreline on the west side of George Inlet on Revillagigedo Island within the Tongass National Forest, Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Ranger District. The Sealaska Regional Corporation would be conveyed the subsurface interest of the parcel.

The parcel proposed for conveyance (as defined section 3(b) of the bill) connects two parcels of private land owned by Cape Fox and generally follows the boundaries of a transmission line corridor labeled as a right of way in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license (No. 11393) for the Mahoney Lake Hydroelectric Project. The project is licensed but has not been constructed. If constructed, the transmission line corridor would likely be used to connect the Mahoney Lake site to the existing Beaver Falls Power Grid.

The USDA Forest Service currently has the legal authorities necessary to permit the City of Saxman, the FERC license holder, to use NFS lands for the construction of a road and transmission line, and other uses of NFS lands associated with the possible hydroelectric project.

With one minor exception, the 2.5-mile stretch of coastline of the proposed parcel is the only federally owned coastline on the west side of George Inlet, which provides unrestricted access to the National Forest System lands further inland. The Forest Service also welcomes a discussion regarding a reservation of the right-of-way identified in the FERC license associated with the Mahoney Lake Hydroelectric Project to effectuate the sponsor's intent.

The Forest Service supports this bill. On issues related directly to the conveyance process, the Forest Service defers to the BLM as the Federal agency tasked with transferring to Alaska Native Corporations title to lands pursuant to ANCSA.

### **Conclusion**

That concludes my testimony. Again, I thank Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present USDA's views on this proposed legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.