



May 16, 2025

Dear Chairman Hurd and Ranking Member Fernandez,

Thank you for scheduling this very important legislative hearing to consider H.R. 2815, the Cape Fox Land Entitlement Finalization Act of 2025. First, I would like to thank Representative Nick Begich from our home state of Alaska for his support in introducing this bill and moving it forward through the process. This bill has also received strong local support. By background, this identical bill passed the U.S. Senate last Congress with bipartisan support and by unanimous consent. Last Congress, we simply ran out of time to get this bill to the President's desk, but I am optimistic that we can finally get this much-needed bill passed in this Congress. I also want to thank Committee staff, Mr. Ken Degenfelder and his team, for working with us to get this bill ready.

This bill provides fair and equitable treatment for Cape Fox Corporation's land entitlement under the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Section 14, "*Conveyances to Village and Regional Corporations*." Cape Fox Corporation is the only village corporation of the 13 SE Alaska Villages that has not completed its ANCSA settlement. We are the last ones after 50 years since the passage in 1971. One of the main reasons this settlement has taken so long is that the Bureau of Land Management required the Village to include acreage on a rocky mountaintop with zero economic value and not adjacent to any other Cape Fox ANCSA lands. The BLM requires legislation to deviate from its interpretation of ANCSA conveyance requirements.

For those who have not traveled to the Village of Saxman, home of Cape Fox Corporation, we are nestled between the remote, mountainous expanse of Revillagigedo Island and the Tongass Narrows, with a handful of islands scattered beyond. Ketchikan hems us to the north and is further hemmed in by the Annette Island Indian Reservation, belonging to the Metlakatla Indian Community, to the south. To further complicate matters, the ANCSA restricted us from making selections within six miles of the boundary of the city of Ketchikan, thus, our choices were significantly limited. All other Cape Fox selected lands are outside of the 6-mile designation.

However, this bill will rectify the situation and allow for the conveyance of a 180-acre tract in the Tongass National Forest under ANCSA, which will provide an access corridor between two existing Cape Fox tracts. Conveyance of this tract would allow Cape Fox to consolidate its land holdings in the area, providing access to a proposed hydro power project. Conveyance of the corridor will allow access to land currently unavailable for subsistence hunting, fishing, subsistence gathering, and other economic development.

Thank you again for scheduling today's hearing, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Sincerely,

Hon. Thomas Harris
Vice President, Cape Fox Corporation