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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Statement of Chairman Don Young
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
on H.R. 1408: May 26, 2011

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The purpose of today's hearing is to hear testimony on H.R. 1408, a bill I introduced with the Ranking Member, Dan Boren, and the majority of the other Members of this Subcommittee.

H.R. 1408, the Southeast Alaska Native Land Entitlement Finalization and Jobs Protection Act will authorize Sealaska, the regional Alaska Native Corporation for Southeast Alaska, to finalize its 40-year old land settlement due under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 by selecting Native lands from within a designated pool of land in Southeast Alaska.

ANCSA allocated 44 million acres and nearly \$1 billion to Alaska's Native people, to be managed by the 12 Regional Corporations, including Sealaska, and more than 200 Village Corporations.

First introduced in 2007, this bill has undergone an extensive vetting process throughout the region that has resulted in meaningful changes such as providing for continued public access to lands, and modifying certain land selections, among others.

In addition, the legislation allows Sealaska to move away from sensitive watersheds, to select a more balanced inventory of second growth and old growth, and to select most of its remaining ANCSA lands on the existing road system, preserving on balance as much as 40,000 acres of inventoried "roadless old growth."

Further, Southeast Alaska communities face dire economic realities. Some communities have unemployment nearing 50% and many more are in the double digits. It was not always this way, but through the mismanagement of the forest by the Forest Service and the continued siege from environmental groups, industry has suffered and, over the last couple decades, the population has seen a consistent and steep decline.

By permitting Sealaska to select its remaining entitlement lands from outside of the withdrawal boxes, the Sealaska bill would help Sealaska maintain jobs in rural and predominately Native communities. Sealaska provides hundreds of jobs and is the largest private employer in the entire region.

After nearly 40 years since the passage of ANSCA, Sealaska has still not received conveyance of its full land entitlement. It is critical that Sealaska complete its remaining land entitlement under ANCSA in order to continue to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of its Native shareholders, and the Native community throughout Alaska