

**Before the
United States Senate
Committee on Indian Affairs**

**Legislative Hearing on S. 2301
108th Congress
2d Session**

Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska



**Statement of
Gordon Jackson, Manager
Central Council Business and Economic Development
April 29, 2004**

Good Morning Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice-Chairman, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear and comment upon S. 2301. My name is Gordon Jackson, and I am the Manager of the Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes Business and Economic Development Department in Juneau Alaska. Our Department is also staff for the Southeast Alaska Inter-tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The Central Council Mission supports the intent of S.2301:

“Our mission is to preserve and enhance the economic and cultural resources of the Tlingit and Haida nations and to promote self-sufficiency and self-governance while providing a safety net of services for our citizens and protecting our inherent sovereign rights. We have a strong sense of pride in our rich heritage and we are dedicated to the use of fair and professional management systems as we strive to improve the quality of life for our citizens. We are determined to collaborate with others as we advocate the issues of our people.”

The Purpose of the Southeast Alaska Inter-tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission also supports the intent of S. 2301:

“The Commission’s purpose is to protect and advance the inherit legal rights of Alaska Natives to continue the customary and traditional uses of natural resources in Southeast Alaska.”

I am here to speak in support of the Native American Fish and Wildlife Resources Management Act of 2004 (S.2301), introduced by Senator Inouye. Section 102. Purposes, of the Act clearly reflect our Tribes and Native organizations goals and needs in Alaska. The Federal Government Trust responsibilities towards Alaska Natives combined with our government-to-government relationship addressed in Section 101, Findings, clearly supports positive economic and cultural development partnerships under this Act.

We have attached for your review a couple of documents which reflect our work on behalf of our Tribal members in areas of business development; commercial fisheries development; and subsistence uses for our Native people. Throughout the process of representing our Tribal members we work to benefit all citizens of Alaska. Our

Department has coordinated numerous Economic Summits in Southeast Alaska to address our regional benefits of resource use and development. Per our Mission we collaborate with the Southeast Conference; local Tribes; State Department of Commerce and Economic Development; State Fish and Game; State Department of Labor; Denali Commission; U.S. Forest Service and National Parks to accomplish our common mission in Alaska of providing both economic and social benefits directly to individuals and City Governments. Many of our Tribal governments; Native and Regional Corporations have extensive experience in working with the U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Indian Affairs; and National Parks with co-management type agreements, so re-affirming that relationship under S. 2301 is appropriate.

Our Department has produced many reports and documents which reflect our mission of economic development for our Southeast Alaska villages and community members. My testimony relies on the work and jobs we have produced as a result of our organizations Regional partnerships I have previously mentioned. Our work applied here is reflected in the Findings and Purpose of this Act. Our work is solely for building economic systems for our communities in Alaska and for our Tribal members. This is in areas of developing both a cash and subsistence economy as they balance one another in our people’s lives in Alaska.

However, if you look at the Central Council analysis of the Denali Commission’s Distressed Community list you will see that based upon our analysis and experience in working with communities in Alaska the unemployment and poverty rate is very high. For example, look at a few samples which reflect the economic state of our villages in Alaska:

Community	Poverty Rate	Unemployment rate
1. Angoon	27.9%	50%
2. Craig	9.8%	29.7%
3. Haines	7.9%	44.1%
4. Hoonah	16.6%	51.7%

5. Hydaburg	24.1%	66.3%
6. Kake	14.6%	49.5%
7. Klawock	14.2%	39.6%
8. Klukwan	1.5%	66.3%
9. Metlakatla	8%	49%
10. Pelican	4.7%	34.7%
11. Petersburg	5%	36.4%
12. Saxman	12.1%	47.9%
13. Yakutat	13.5%	28.2%

In our service to these communities we also consider the high cost of living in areas of food, clothing, shelter, water, sewer, power, fuel, medical and education. Unlike urban areas of America the only means of service is by boat or small airlines. This raises the cost of service immensely as we do not have the luxury of reaping the benefits of economy of scale in Alaska. For all of the communities listed commercial fishing and subsistence resources are the only means of generating food and jobs to our people.

Therefore, our Tribe and the Southeast Alaska Inter-tribal Fish and Wildlife Commission has worked extensively in promoting and development of commercial fishing opportunities and working to maintain and add new infrastructure needs in each of the villages we service. The goal is to help establish employment and job opportunities with resources that are readily available to our region, and an economic tax base for our community governments so they can also become self-sufficient with economic developments we may help provide.

This is why Sections 301; 302; 303; 401; and 402 are so vital to helping reduce poverty and unemployment to our fishermen and seasonal employment in Alaska.

In addition S.2301 supports our needs in the following ways;

- Subsistence fishing and hunting is the top issue of concern for Alaska Natives, but in the context of this bill, subsistence can add to the economic solution of our

people's poverty and unemployment by helping provide the ability of a family to make a living in rural Alaska.

- This bill balances economic health with community health -- It is well known that the best cure for social and economic poverty is employment.
- This bill supports the kind of economic development needed in our communities-- Native people taking responsibility for resource management.
- The opportunity of fish & wildlife resource development has multiple economic benefits and carries over to rural tourism opportunities-- the single fastest growing industry in Alaska. Natives, working as fish & wildlife managers, stewards of natural resources that will appreciate in value over time in fisheries and tourism opportunities.
- The bill supports common goals of self-determination and self-sufficiency. Natives are the best stewards of the land and resources of which we make a living. Natives are stable residents (i.e., not the typical transient seasonal worker).
- Natives in Alaska are principal land owners -- owning perhaps as much as 25% high quality habitat in Alaska, and should be entrusted with real joint responsibility under this bill.
- Natives, through ANCSA, own 44 million acres of a total of 377 million acres of all Alaska (which equals 12%) but if you consider the percentage of high quality habitat land, i.e., not ice fields, lakes and mountains, it is actually more like 20-25% of high quality habitat that we bring to the table of partnership under S. 2301.

In closing, we suggest that just as the funding for managing health programs came from continuing Indian Health Service appropriations, funding for this bill should come through 638 contracts/compacts with relevant federal agencies like Fish & Wildlife and U.S. Forest Service of which we have experience in working with in Southeast Alaska.

Thank you,



Gordon Jackson, Manager
Business and Economic Development

Attachments/ Supporting Statistical and Organizational documentation

