

**TESTIMONY OF
PATTY BROWN-SCHWALENBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHUGACH REGIONAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
ON THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS FY2013 BUDGET
MARCH, 19 2012**

As Executive Director of the Chugach Regional Resources Commission (“CRRC”), located in Alaska, I am pleased to submit this testimony reflecting the needs, concerns and requests of CRRC regarding the proposed FY 2013 Budget. As is everyone, we are aware of the ongoing economic problems in the United States. While the government is trimming its spending, the federal government must still fulfill its legal and contractual spending obligations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs not only has a legal and contractual obligation to provide funding for the CRRC, but the CRRC is able to translate this funding into real economic opportunity for those living in the Prince William Sound region.

After failing to seek funding for CRRC for more than a decade, we are very pleased that the BIA has recognized its obligation to CRRC and has requested \$350,000 for CRRC in FY 2013. In its FY 2013 Budget Justification, the BIA recognized CRRC’s role in developing the capabilities of its member villages to better facilitate their active participation in resource use and allocation issues in Alaska. We urge the Subcommittee to support this funding and include it in the final bill.

Chugach Regional Resource Commission History. CRRC is a coalition of Alaska Native Villages, organized in 1987 by the seven Native Villages located in Prince William Sound and Lower Cook Inlet in South-central Alaska: Tatitlek Village IRA Council, Chenega IRA Council, Port Graham Village Council, Nanwalek IRA Council, Native Village of Eyak, Qutekcak Native Tribe, and Valdez Native Tribe. CRRC was created to address environmental and natural resources issues and to develop culturally-sensitive economic projects at the community level to support the sustainable development of the region’s natural resources. The Native Villages’ action to create a separate entity demonstrates the level of concern and importance they hold for environmental and natural resource management and protection – the creation of CRRC ensured that natural resource and environmental issues received sufficient attention and focused funding.

Employment. Through its many important programs, CRRC has provided employment for up to 35 Native people in the Chugach Region annually – an area that faces high levels of unemployment – through programs that conserve and restore our natural resources.

An investment in CRRC has been translated into real economic opportunities, savings and community investments that have a great impact on the Chugach region. Our employees are able to earn a living to support their families, thereby removing them from the rolls of people needing state and federal support. In turn, they are able to reinvest in the community, supporting the employment and opportunities of other families. Our programs, as well, support future

economic and commercial opportunities for the region – protecting and developing our shellfish and other natural resources.

Programs. CRRC has leveraged its \$350,000 from BIA into almost \$2 million annually to support its several community-based programs. Specifically, the \$350,000 base funding allowed CRRC to maintain core administrative operations, and seek specific projects funding from sources such as the Administration for Native Americans, the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council, the State of Alaska, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of Education. This diverse funding pool has allowed CRRC to develop and operate several important programs that provide vital services, valuable products, and necessary employment and commercial opportunities. These programs include:

Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery. The Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery is the only shellfish hatchery in the State of Alaska. The 20,000 square foot shellfish hatchery is located in Seward, Alaska, and houses shellfish seed, brood stock and algae production facilities. Alutiiq Pride is undertaking a hatchery nursery operation, as well as grow-out operation research to adapt mariculture techniques for the Alaskan Shellfish industry. The Hatchery is also conducting scientific research on blue and red king crab as part of a larger federally-sponsored program. Alutiiq Pride has already been successful in culturing geoduck, oyster, littleneck clam, and razor clam species and is currently working on sea cucumbers. This research has the potential to dramatically increase commercial opportunities for the region in the future. The activities of Alutiiq Pride are especially important for this region considering it is the only shellfish hatchery in the state, and therefore the only organization in Alaska that can carry out this research and production.

Natural resource curriculum development. Partnering with the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, CRRC is developing and implementing a model curriculum in natural resource management for Alaska Native students. This curriculum integrates traditional knowledge with Western science. The goal of the program is to encourage more Native students to pursue careers in the sciences. In addition, we are working with the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society and Tribes across the country (including Alaska) to develop a university level textbook to accompany these courses.

In addition, we are in the process of completing a K-12 Science Curriculum for Alaska students that integrates Indigenous knowledge with western science. This curriculum is being piloted in various villages in Alaska and a thorough evaluation process will ensure its success and mobility to other schools in Alaska.

Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. CRRC is a member of the Council responsible for setting regulations governing the spring harvest of migratory birds for Alaska Natives, as well as conducting harvest surveys and various research projects on migratory birds of conservation concern. Our participation in this state-wide body ensures the legal harvest of migratory birds by Indigenous subsistence hunters in the Chugach Region.

Statewide Subsistence Halibut Working Group – CRRC participates in this working group, ensuring the halibut resources are secured for subsistence purposes, and to conduct harvest surveys in the Chugach Region.

We urge Congress to sustain the \$350,000 included in the BIA's FY 2013 budget for CRRC. We appreciate the opportunity to submit this important testimony.