



# Alaska Federation of Natives 2006 Federal Priorities



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## Who We Are

The Alaska Federation of Natives was organized in response to the Alaska Native land claims issue that emerged after Alaska statehood in 1959. Subsequent to statehood, the State of Alaska was poised to select 100 million acres of land. Much of Alaska's more than 365 million acres of land had been occupied and used by Alaska Natives for thousands of years. AFN was the first statewide group organized to advocate for Native land claims. Early AFN leaders knew if they did not strive to retain aboriginal lands, they would be in danger of losing their homelands forever.

In December 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed into law by President Nixon to settle the longstanding claims of Alaska Natives. For extinguishing aboriginal claims, Alaska Natives were compensated with fee simple title to 44 million acres of land and were awarded \$962.5 million for lands lost to state, federal and private interests. The Act created 13 regional for-profit corporations and more than 200 village corporations to receive and oversee the land and monetary entitlements.

AFN is governed by a 37-member board of directors representing villages (both tribes and ANCSA village corporations), regional non-profit organizations, and the 13 regional ANCSA corporations.

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## 2006 Federal Priorities

**1. Increased funding for BIA and IHS budgets for FY 2007.** As reflected in the recent report, “Our Choice, Our Future,” which analyzed 30 years of statistics compiled by the University of Alaska’s Institute of Social and Economic Research on the social and economic conditions among Alaska Natives, although Alaska Natives have more jobs, higher incomes, and better living conditions, health care and education than at any time in the past 30 years, they still remain several times more likely than other Alaskans to be poor and out of work. The report also found that alcohol continues to fuel widespread social problems. Native students continue to do poorly on standard tests, and are dropping out in growing numbers. Rates of heart disease and diabetes are rising. Yet there persists a large deficit in funding federal programs that address these issues. The Administration’s fiscal year 2007 budget request for Indian programs falls significantly short of what is needed to address these issues. The BIA budget request is \$65 million less than current levels – a 2.8% reduction in the agency’s total budget authority. The Administration’s budget request for the Indian Health Service proposes eliminating entirely the \$33 million for the Urban Indian Health Program and a \$20 million cut to construction of new health care facilities, despite a continuing backlog of critically needed health care facilities.

As Congress considers FY 2007 funding for Indian programs throughout the federal budget, AFN urges the Congress and all federal agencies that distribute funds for Native American programs to carefully review the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights July 2003 Report, “A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country” and the recent 30-year trend analysis, “Our Choice, Our Future” Report on Alaska Natives, and to made a serious commitment across the board to provide adequate funding for health, education, housing, job training, and other critical unmet needs of Alaska Natives and Native Americans generally.

**2. Reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.** The federal delivery of health services and funding of tribal and urban Indian health programs to maintain and improve the health of Alaska Natives is required by the historical and unique legal relationship with Native Americans, as reflected in the Constitution, treaties, federal statutes and the course of dealings of the United States. Because of inferior health care, the quality and length of life for Native Americans and Alaska Natives fall well below the rest of the U.S. Health care expenditures for Native Americans is less than half what this country spends on health care for federal prisoners. The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (P.L. 94-437), first enacted in 1976, provides the framework for the Indian health care system. The Act has been reauthorized four times, most recently in 1992. It is currently up for reauthorization and is badly needed to bring our outdated and inadequate system into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For that reason, we call upon Congress to enact S. 1057, a bill to amend and extend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act which, for the first time, adopts the policy that the objectives for health improvements must be the same for American Indians and Alaska Natives as for all other Americans.



- **Dental Health Aide Program:** For the residents of nearly 200 small isolated communities in rural Alaska, access to dental care services is a serious problem. Alaska Natives suffer rates of dental caries (decay) at 2.5 times the U.S. national rates. Dentists employed by the Alaska Native tribal health agencies generally visit each community only once a year for a week at a time. Private sector dentists generally do not live in rural Alaska, nor do they travel to provide services due to high travel costs and lack of patient insurance. Beginning in 2003, Alaska Native tribal health organizations developed a new solution to addressing rural Alaska dental needs: the Alaska Dental Health Aide (DHA) program. The DHA augments the much-heralded Community Health Aide/Practitioner (CHA/P) program. The American Dental Association (ADA), while supporting the use of preventive Dental Health Aides (DHAs), has opposed the use of Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) anywhere in American for nearly a century. This opposition continues despite the successful deployment of DHATs in New Zealand, Canada, Great Britain and 40 other countries. The ADA is seeking to amend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to restrict DHAT services. AFN disagrees with this ADA position, as do many public health organizations as well as American Indian and Alaska Native organizations. We urge Congress to reauthorize the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and resist the efforts of the American Dental Association to restrict DHAT services as the Dental Health Aide Program ensures much needed dental services in rural Alaska.

**3. Subsistence.** AFN urges the Secretary of Interior and the Congress to resist attempts by the State of Alaska and others to weaken the current federal law protecting subsistence in Alaska. In 1980, Congress understood that the economic and cultural survival of Alaska Natives is tied directly to our ability to continue to engage in our centuries-old tradition of hunting, fishing and gathering. Today, the only significant protection for our way of life is Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) which provides a priority for “subsistence” over sport and commercial uses of fish and game to residents of rural Alaska. The federal protections in ANILCA were the fulfillment of promises made by the United States to Alaska Natives during the settlement of our land claims. Powerful anti-subsistence forces at work in Alaska seek to weaken or even repeal this law. Given this Administration’s desire for more self-sufficiency in impoverished communities, it must stand as the bulwark against efforts to undermine this 30-year-old federal law. The Secretary of Interior and Congress should support efforts by the Native community to strengthen federal protections for subsistence and oppose any legislative effort to undermine these essential federal protections.

- *Alaska v. Norton*, No. 05 CV 12 (RMC), D. Columbia, filed 1/6/05. AFN also urges the Department of Interior to vigorously defend the subsistence regulations that were adopted by the Departments of Agriculture and Interior in January 1999, to implement the *Katie John* decision. A recent State of Alaska lawsuit seeks to have the court reduce the waters subject to Title VIII of ANILCA, and thus the overall scope of federal jurisdiction over subsistence fishing. If the State succeeds in its efforts, Alaska Natives will be left with near meaningless protections for subsistence fishing. The Native community stands firmly opposed to the State’s efforts to undermine the protections for subsistence currently in place in federal law, and urges the Secretary to broadly interpret the scope of federal jurisdiction



in order to fulfill its trust responsibility to Alaska Natives.

- Migratory Birds – Federal Duck Stamps: Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as “Duck Stamps” were originally created in 1934 as the federal licenses required for hunting migratory waterfowl. All persons over the age of 16 must purchase a Federal Duck Stamp each year if they want to hunt migratory birds. At the time this legislation was enacted, Alaska Natives were prohibited, by the migratory bird treaty between the U.S. and Canada, from engaging in their customary and traditional spring and summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds. In 1996, however, the treaty was amended to recognize a customary and traditional spring and summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds and their eggs in Alaska. The protocol amending the treaty required that any “regulations implementing the non-wasteful taking of migratory birds and the collection of their eggs by indigenous inhabitants of the State of Alaska shall be consistent with the customary and traditional uses of such indigenous inhabitants for their own nutritional and other essential needs.” Canada Protocol, Art. II, § 4(b)(1). The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. § 708 implements the Treaty. Despite the fact duck stamps are inconsistent with the customs and traditions of Alaska Natives, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has insisted on grafting the requirements of the 1934 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act into the regulations governing the subsistence hunt. Unless that Act is amended, the customary and traditional spring and summer harvest of migratory birds and their eggs will be deprived of an important part of its customary and traditional character, as Native hunters and egg gatherers find themselves subjected to a regulatory requirement that makes little sense in the context of this unique harvest. AFN urges Congress to amend the Duck Stamp Act, 16 U.S.C. § 718a, by adding an exemption for “eligible indigenous inhabitants of the State of Alaska engaged in the customary and traditional harvest of waterfowl and their eggs.”

**4. Reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.** Reauthorization of the MMPA remains a high priority for AFN. The Indigenous Peoples’ Commission on Marine Mammals (IPCoMM), a subcommittee of AFN’s Subsistence Committee, has negotiated amendments to section 119 of the MMPA with the federal agencies to allow the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior, in coordination with Alaska Native organizations, to develop harvest management plans within existing or newly developed cooperative management agreements. These plans would implement management measures taken by Alaska Native organizations and their member tribes to regulate the subsistence taking of marine mammals for conservation purposes prior to a finding of depletion. AFN urges the Alaska congressional delegation to work to resolve any perceived or real problems with the proposed amendments and to include the harvest management amendments to Section 119 in legislation introduced to reauthorize or amend the MMPA during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

- U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Conservation & Management Act of 2005 (S. 2013): This legislation will be included as an amendment to the MMPA. It will implement an agreement signed by the governments of the U.S. and Russia on October 16, 2000, and ratified by the Senate on July 31, 2003. The bilateral Polar Bear Agreement is intended to ensure the long-term, science-based conservation of the Alaska-Chukotka polar bear population. While lawful



harvest by Alaska Natives for subsistence purposes occurs in Alaska, U.S. law does not allow restrictions on this harvest unless a polar bear population becomes “depleted” under the Marine Mammal Protection Act or a “threatened or endangered species” under the Endangered Species Act. The Russian Federation is prepared to open a lawful polar bear hunting opportunity for subsistence purposes for Native Chukotkans. When this happens, there will be an immediate, pressing need for the coordination of harvest restrictions on both sides of the border to prevent an unsustainable combined harvest. The Agreement creates a management framework to prevent this from happening. AFN calls upon Congress to enact S.2013 during this Congress. If passed, S.2013 represents a major step forward for polar bear conservation.

**5. Tribal Self-Governance Initiatives.** AFN continues to support several tribal self-governance initiatives:

- DHHS Tribal Self-Governance Amendments: On June 16, 2004, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee approved an amended version of S.1696, which would amend the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to add a sixth title to the Act, authorizing a five-year demonstration project. Under the Demonstration Project, up to 50 tribes would be authorized to plan, conduct and administer programs with DHHS including programs within the Administration on Aging, the Administration for Children and Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Health Resources and Services Administration. The bill was ready for Senate consideration when the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned. AFN strongly supports amending the ISDEAA to allow for the contracting of programs within the DHHS, and urges the Congress to move forward with such legislation during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project for non-BIA programs within the Department of Interior: On June 16, 2004, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee also approved a bill (S.1715) that would have amended the ISDEAA to add a fourth title to the Act for a Tribal Self-Governance Demonstration Project for non-BIA programs within the Department of the Interior. This bill died when the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned. On the House side, H.R. 1810, Alaska Federal Lands Management Demonstration Project Act, was introduced by Congressman Young. An identical bill passed out of House Resources during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress (HR 4734), but died when Congress adjourned. The bill would expand Alaska Native contracting of federal land management functions and activities and promote hiring of Alaska Natives by the federal government within Alaska. AFN urges the Congress to pass HR 1810, and requests that the Department of Interior lend its full support to its enactment. Enactment of this bill would further the Administration’s economic agenda of creating jobs and expanding economic opportunities for Native Americans.

**6. Energy.** AFN supports responsible and environmentally sound oil and gas development in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Responsible development will bring considerable economic benefits to Alaska, some of which should be devoted to promoting the economic and social welfare of Alaska Natives. Because of the general lack of basic infrastructure and economic opportunities in rural Native communities in Alaska, energy costs are extraordinarily



high. In order that Alaska Natives share in the economic benefits of development of ANWR, AFN recommends that: a) Congress fully endow the Power Cost Equalization Endowment Fund; b) ANCSA corporations be given an opportunity to participate in ANWR development activities; c) a Native-hire provision be included in the bill for development activities, similar to that contained in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Agreement; and, d) the legislation include a revenue sharing provision that devotes two percent (2%) of the royalties of any oil and gas development in ANWR to local and tribal governments in Alaska.

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program: Alaska Natives living in rural Alaska pay some of the highest prices in the country for fuel, oil and gasoline and many live near or below the poverty level. Because of the extreme weather conditions in Alaska, families living in rural communities in Alaska require substantial amounts of energy for home heating. The recent, dramatic increase in the cost of fuel, oil and gasoline in rural Alaska is having a dramatic impact on limited household and community financial resources, creating conditions that threaten public health and safety, reduce basic services, negatively impact the capabilities of school districts to provide quality education, and threaten the economic viability of rural Alaska families and communities. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) has existed for more than 25 years to assist those at or near poverty level with payments to their home energy bills during difficult winter months. For FY 2006, the President's proposed budget for LIHEAP was nearly 10 percent less than 2005, yet energy costs, including the cost of home heating fuel, have increased as much as 140% over last year's level. With heating costs predicted to rise up to 50%, and with hurricane victims still struggling to restore energy services in new or temporary homes, millions of low-income Americans are expected to have an unprecedented need for home energy assistance. AFN urges the Congress to fund LIHEAP in FY 2007 in an amount sufficient to meet the needs of all currently eligible recipients.

**7. Rural Justice and Law Enforcement.** Congress established the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission in December 2003. Over the last year, the Justice Commission has reviewed federal, state, local and tribal jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters in rural Alaska and released its Initial Report and Recommendations to Congress and the Alaska Legislature on a variety of issues, including rural law enforcement. During this same timeframe, the State began unilaterally to restructure the Village Public Safety Officer program, an integral component of law enforcement in rural Alaska. Often the only law enforcement officials in the communities they serve, VPSO's are first responders on public safety issues. The program has been sorely underfunded since its inception. In 2003, the governor cut the program by nearly \$1 million, effectively eliminating the program in three of the nine Native regions then operating a VPSO program. During 2004, one of the regional Native non-profits was able to continue its VPSO program, and effective March 1, 2004, assumed responsibility for three additional regions that had been cut by the 2003 budget veto. The remaining five VPSO contractors, with the help of Alaska's Congressional delegation, have been able to continue contracting with the State for the VPSO programs in their regions, despite pressure to further consolidate or accept an unrealistic cap on administrative costs. AFN strongly supports federal legislation and appropriations addressing the inadequate presence of law enforcement in Alaska Native villages. AFN also supports the recommendations of the Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission and believes the Commission, in the next phase of its



work, should look at creating a pilot project giving Native villages the authority needed to enact and enforce local ordinances aimed at stemming the flow of alcohol into their communities.

**Alaska Legal Services Corporation Funding:** AFN calls upon Congress to increase funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). The President has recommended a 5% cut in the LSC budget, which represents a \$16 million cut from its current funding level of \$327 million. The LSC had requested \$412 million for 2007. LSC provides the bulk of Alaska Legal Services Corporation's funding. A series of decreasing and/or elimination of federal and state funds have caused ALSC to cut services to its rural offices. ALSC is, and always has been, the sole provider of legal aid to low-income Alaskans, parents and children confronted with domestic violence. As noted by the Alaska Rural Justice and Law Enforcement Commission in its draft interim report, "residents of rural Alaska do not have access to sufficient civil legal assistance to redress legal problems related to domestic violence and child abuse," and recommends more funding to meet civil legal needs from local, state, federal and private sources. We urge Congress to increase the LSC funding to the level requested by the LSC, and ensure that ALSC qualifies for future grants under the Violence against Women Act. Parents and children who are facing domestic violence often need legal assistance, not only to obtain immediate order of protection, but also to obtain (or retain) housing and other necessities.

## **8. Economic Development:**

**8(a) Contracting:** The federal government's unique legal and political relationship with Native Americans is recognized in the U.S. Constitution, statutes, and Supreme Court decisions. The Native 8(a) program was created in order to promote the economic and political self-sufficiency of Native Americans and in furtherance of the federal government's trust obligation. The program was also intended to remedy barriers to Native economic development that were created by past government policies. The 8(a) provisions have been an important tool to achieve social, educational, and economic goals. This is especially important for Alaska Natives, many of whom live in rural areas far removed from major industrial centers and markets. Native communities suffer from some of the worst poverty in this country, with unemployment levels up to 75%. Providing access to federal contracting opportunities to qualified Native companies provides critical incentives that stimulate economic growth in Native communities, provides economic opportunities for Native American businesses, and encourages entrepreneurship. Despite the Native 8(a) program's success, there have been attempts in Congress to modify it without the benefit of Congressional hearings and without consideration of the federal government's unique obligations to Native Americans and the economic benefits that federal contracting has provided to Native communities. The General Accounting Office is currently studying Alaska Native participation in the 8(a) program. AFN calls upon Congress to hold hearings both in Washington, DC, and in Alaska, after the publication of the GAO report and to examine the economic and social needs of America's Native communities and the success of federal programs intended to address those needs. We strongly oppose any congressional amendment, regulatory changes or other means to diminish or abolish the current rights established in the federal procurement system allowing Native Americans to create economic opportunities in their communities.

**Economic Strategies for Rural Communities:** The increasing cost of fuel is resulting in higher



and higher costs of transportation and shipping to rural and coastal communities, causing some providers of transportation and shipping services to stop providing services to these communities. The higher costs and the lack of competition are driving the cost of living in rural and coastal communities to levels that are not sustainable in the current rural economic environment. These higher costs further restrict small businesses and hamper efforts to increase economic opportunities. The spiraling high cost of living is resulting in the outward migration to Alaska's urban areas, which puts higher demands on urban area infrastructure and services. It is in the interest of all Alaskans to have economically healthy rural communities. For that reason, AFN urges Congress to work with AFN and rural and coastal communities to develop local and regional strategies to bring economic growth and sustained job creation to Alaska's rural villages.

**9. Education.** Studies show that Native students achieve academic success when their culture, knowledge, history and language are incorporated into their curricula and education. Schools in Alaska are not uniformly promoting academic success among the Alaska Native population as reflected by the fact that while Native students represent 24% of the total Alaska student population, they represent over 40% of the total number who drop out between grades 7 and 12. Solutions must be identified and implemented in order to improve the academic success of all Native students and to ensure healthy Native families and communities. Indigenous people throughout the world are assuming a more active role in education. AFN encourages Congress to expand funding for the development of culturally inclusive educational curricula at the elementary and secondary levels. AFN also calls upon Congress to create a federally-funded Alaska Native Education Commission to assess and make recommendations on how the *No Child Left Behind Initiative* can best be implemented in rural Alaska communities; to develop mechanisms to ensure Alaska Natives have a voice in the potential restructuring of their educational system; and to recommend how the educational standards of excellence for Native youth can be achieved.

**10. Native Allotments:** AFN requests that the 1998 Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment Act and the 1906 Alaska Native Allotment Act be amended to allow more allotments for Native Veterans and to reopen the allotments closed in Southeast Alaska under the decision in *Shields v. U.S.*, 698 F.2d 987 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1983). To date, not one Native allotment applied for by an Alaska Native Vietnam Veteran has been certified by the BLM due to restrictions in the current law and the lack of available land. Amendments to the Alaska Native Vietnam Veterans Allotment Act to make some corrections in the situation are contained in HR 1811, but that bill does not reopen the allotments closed under *Shields* and no similar legislation has yet been introduced in the U.S. Senate. The amendments to reopen the allotments closed under *Shields* is necessary to serve basic justice by correcting the unfair distribution of allotments in Southeast Alaska which occurred by actions of the federal government. AFN urges Congress to amend HR 1811 to address the allotments closed under *Shields*, and to act on this important legislation during this Congress.

**11. IRS Levy of ANCSA Corporation Dividends:** AFN strongly opposes the recent policy reversal and subsequent efforts of the IRS to levy individual shareholders' ANCSA dividends/distributions and the adversarial position it has adopted toward ANCSA corporations, and hereby requests the assistance of the Alaska congressional delegation in addressing the issue. The IRS, consistent with the purposes of ANCSA, had long agreed that Native corporation dividends were exempt from IRS levies. Last year, however, the IRS reversed this policy, relying on 26 USC



6334(c), a provision added to the IRS Code in 1954, 17 years before the enactment of ANCSA. That section of the Code provides “no property or rights to property shall be exempt from levy other than the property specifically made exempt by subsection (a).” Subsection (a) does not list Native Corporation dividends. It is on that basis that the IRS has taken the position that Native Corporation dividends are not exempt from federal tax levies, even though the federal government conceded in a similar context that property not listed in Section 6334(a) is exempt from IRS levy. We strongly believe that levying ANCSA Corporation dividends or causing a forfeiture of shares of ANCSA Corporations is contrary to Congress’ intent when it enacted ANCSA. AFN requests assistance in addressing this issue, including consideration of legislation that would exempt ANCSA Corporation dividends/distributions from levy by the IRS.

**12. Offshore Ground and Fin Fish Farming in North Pacific Federal Waters:** AFN strongly opposes legislative or administrative actions that would legalize the development of offshore ground and finfish farming in North Pacific federal waters. The coastal villages in Alaska rely upon the fishing industry to meet their subsistence needs, provide jobs and sustain many community and regional economies. The economic performance of the entire state is intrinsically connected to the economic performance of Alaska’s coastal communities. In the fall of 2004, Governor Murkowski asked the U.S. Department of Commerce for a 5-year moratorium on new finfish farming before considering any changes that would encourage aquaculture in federal waters. Nevertheless, S. 1195, the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005, was introduced in June 2005 and referred to the Senate Commerce Committee. The bill would give the Secretary the authority to establish and implement a regulatory system for offshore aquaculture. Alaska banned fish farming over 15 years ago over concerns that aquaculture could damage the state’s wild salmon stocks and directly and adversely impact coastal communities that rely upon the viability of the Alaska’s bountiful fish resources. Offshore finfish farming poses significant threats to livelihoods and consumer confidence in Alaska wild salmon. AFN opposes S.1195. No new finfish aquaculture operations should be approved until we have adequate scientific research to assess the environmental and socio-economic impacts of farm fishing on Alaska’s coastal communities and Alaska’s wild salmon.

**13. Erosion and Flood Control.** As many as 213 communities in Alaska have been identified as being affected by erosion from coastal or river flooding, many of which are in imminent danger and will be forced to relocate. The sheer number of villages identified as possibly in need of aid serves to discourage agencies from making resources available to address the problem. AFN recommends that the agencies charged with addressing this issue solicit regional and local input in establishing priorities for assistance. Erosion, accelerated in recent years by a series of near-catastrophic storms, has given rise to public health, safety and welfare concerns in many communities. In more graphic terms, erosion has exposed sewer and septic systems, jeopardized community water lines, and rendered unusable road systems that serve as escape routes. The impacted communities are in need of assistance to rebuild/restore infrastructure and to undertake preventative measures to mitigate erosion damage from future storms. AFN urges Congress to consider and act upon the recommendations provided in the GAO report on flooding and erosion in rural Alaska. Further, we strongly support passage of S. 49, the Alaska Floodplain and Erosion Mitigation Act, but urge Congress to include a tribal organization as a voting member on the proposed federal-state Commission that would be created to study the feasibility of alternatives



for assistance and to develop policies for infrastructure investments.

**14. Cuts to Federal Programs Benefiting Alaska Native Villages.** President Bush's FY 2007 budget request includes a number of cuts and the elimination of some programs that are essential to the well-being of Alaska Native villages. The need for infrastructure in rural Alaska -- whether for schools, health centers, housing, detention facilities, courts, water and sewer systems -- is dire. Yet a number of programs that provide this necessary infrastructure development in Alaska Native communities would suffer significant decreases in FY 2007 under the Administration's proposed budget. AFN strongly opposes cuts to these programs, and urges Congress to continue funding for village infrastructure needs at least at the level funded in FY 2006.

**15. 2007 Farm Bill and Private Lands Wildlife Management.** The Department of Agriculture (USDA) is currently developing the 2007 Farm Bill. The *Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002*, which authorizes the programs operated by the USDA, expires at the end of FY 2007. USDA conducted public forums across the United States, including in Alaska, to obtain input on the bill. Recommendations from the public forum in Alaska included the recommendation that the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provide Alaska Native private landowners outreach, technical assistance and equitable access to its programs as required by Congress. Many rural communities throughout the country, and more so in Alaska, depend heavily on subsistence resources for their economic and cultural survival. Competition for wildlife resources from urban users and recreational tourists is growing faster than the restorative capacity of Alaska's public and private lands. We support changes to the Farm Bill clarifying the conservation program's applicability to all privately held lands in Alaska important for conservation and subsistence, as Alaska's lands have fallen far behind the rest of the Nation in providing productive wildlife habitat for grazing harvest animals such as moose, elk, deer, goats, caribou, musk ox, buffalo and sheep. Alaska ranks last among all states in USDA average funding per-acre and, not surprisingly, Alaska's production of grazing wildlife animals per acre, especially by Alaska Native landowners, has fallen far behind as well. The creation of Tribal Conservation Districts in Alaska holds great promise for providing equitable access and meeting the goals of subsistence, recreational, energy and economic self reliance in Alaska. The 2007 Farm Bill must include an equitable funding formula that insures that Alaska's private landowners, and in particular Alaska Native landowners, receive an equitable share of USDA program funds and that the 44 million acres of ANCSA lands are considered eligible for USDA programs.



