



# A Road Through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is a “Terrible Idea”

---

**Diverse voices speak out against the road through the Izembek refuge.**

**A bipartisan group of senior government officials** calls the road “a terrible idea.” Former Department of the Interior officials from the George W. Bush, Clinton, Ford and Nixon administrations expressed their views on the road in a letter to the Secretary of the Interior:

*“Put bluntly, the Izembek road was a terrible idea in 1998, it was a terrible idea when you heroically rejected it last December, and it still remains a terrible idea today.”*

— March 14, 2014, letter to Secretary Jewell from former Department of the Interior officials

**A taxpayer watchdog organization** blasts the cost of the road. Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW), named Senator Lisa Murkowski “Porker of the Month,” for her perpetual advocacy of this pork-barrel project that will cost the federal government an estimated \$75.8 million to serve the less than 1,000 residents of King Cove:

*“It does not take a particularly discerning eye to deem the Izembek road unworthy of funding.”*

— April 20, 2014, CAGW blog post, “Murkowski’s Folly”

**An Alaskan medical expert** speaks out against the road for public safety reasons. Dr. Peter Mjos, the former U.S. Indian Health Service medical director for the King Cove area, says even in calm weather the proposed road through Izembek would be MORE DANGEROUS and take more than three times as long to evacuate patients as the alternative hovercraft option:

*“Combined with darkness, avalanche conditions, and ice-glazed roads, an attempt to travel the proposed road would be foolish beyond any reason, regardless the emergency or business. Any attempt to maintain the road for travel in such conditions would clearly jeopardize life.”*

— February 24, 2013, *Washington Post*, “Interior secretary nomination becomes embroiled in fight over Alaska refuge”

**Native Alaskans** oppose the road through Izembek. The Association of Village Council Presidents, which represents 56 rural villages in Alaska reaffirmed a resolution in June 2014 to oppose the building of a road from King Cove to Cold Bay. Myron Naneng, president of the Association wrote in an Alaskan opinion-editorial:

*“The Pacific black brant and emperor geese... are an important food source for villages throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and the proposed road would harm the refuge and destroy habitat that is vital for these and other species that feed Alaska Native families.”*

— June 5, 2014, *Anchorage Daily News Compass*: “Stopping Izembek road protects villages and subsistence resources”

# TOP REASONS TO OPPOSE THE ROAD THROUGH IZEMBEK

---

## Cost to taxpayers

- Taxpayers have already spent over \$50 million (more than \$50,000 per resident of King Cove) to cover the cost of improved medical facilities, a road expansion and a medical evacuation hovercraft that was said to be “a lifesaving machine” by the Mayor of Aleutians East Borough.
- The total projected cost to taxpayers is \$81.5 million, with the federal portion being \$75.8 million, if the entire road from King Cove to Cold Bay is completed. That’s almost \$100,000 per person for the less than 1,000 people in King Cove who have already been given other more reliable means of responding to medical emergencies, including getting to Cold Bay.
- Road maintenance costs are expected to be high. The proposed route covers low lying wetland terrain subject to flooding and freezing. The issue of whether the state or the Federal government will be responsible for this expensive and ongoing maintenance cost is unresolved.

## Safety

- High Risk Road - The proposed route is remote and would be subject to frequent snowstorms, avalanches and extreme high tides, coupled with winds exceeding 100 mph. All of which would pose a serious threat to anyone sent out to clear the road, or anyone traveling on the road in an emergency. Normal winter conditions along the proposed route will also significantly delay emergency evacuations.
- Longer Travel Times - The trip across Cold Bay takes only 20 minutes by hovercraft; with the vehicle reaching a top speed of 58 mph. Estimated travel on a road between King Cove and Cold Bay is 1 hour, 50 minutes, in calm weather. (Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2004, Army Corps of Engineers).

## Native Alaskan interests

- In June 2014 the Association of Village Council Presidents, which represents 56 rural villages in Alaska reaffirmed an official resolution opposing the building of a road from King Cove to Cold Bay.
- A road would harm an important food source for villages across western Alaska—birds that rest and feed in the Izembek refuge wetlands during their annual migrations.
- Native Alaskan communities have sacrificed years of subsistence hunting and egg gathering since 1984 to allow Pacific black brant and emperor geese (listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act) to recover. Virtually the entire world populations of these waterfowl depend on the Izembek lagoons for building fat reserves during critical times in their migratory cycles. After decades of restoration work, a road through this important bird habitat in Izembek National Wildlife Refuge would be a major setback.

## Wildlife and wilderness resources

- A road would destroy internationally recognized and nationally prized wilderness, wetlands and wildlife resources.
- The Izembek and Kinzarof Lagoons complex that would be impacted by the road was the first wetlands in North America to be placed on the *List of Wetlands of International Importance* and has been recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) of global significance since 2001.
- The Izembek refuge is also home to wolves, brown bears, caribou and a host of marine mammals many of which rely on the fragile lagoon system and narrow isthmus between King Cove and Cold Bay for winter forage.
- The road is not compatible with the established purposes of the refuge and would be a terrible precedent for road construction and motorized use in designated wilderness.