



the Jane Goodall Institute

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Dear Secretary Vilsack, Secretary Jewell and Secretary Pritzker:

This letter requests your leadership to meet the historic opportunity that is before you to conserve the Copper River watershed in Alaska, and in doing so to protect jobs and ways of life that are directly dependent upon the remarkable and natural resources of that region.

The Copper River flows through the Chugach National Forest and the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve and into the Gulf of Alaska east of Prince William Sound and provides fisheries resources for commercial, subsistence and sport fishing as well as for nourishment to fish and wildlife habitat throughout the region including the annual migration of over 20 million shorebirds and migratory waterfowl.

This large intact ecoregion also encompasses the Department of the Interior's Bering Glacier Research Natural Area, the Yakataga State Game Refuge, the State of Alaska's largest "Critical Habitat Area", along with the largest wetland complex in the Pacific Flyway, as well as unique habitat resources that were conserved through the far-sighted efforts of the federal-state *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council.

The essence of this conservation challenge and opportunity stems from the presence of a bituminous coal deposit in this watershed region, including the Bering and Martin Rivers, which could only be mined through mountain-top removal mining. Such coal, were it to be mined, would not be for U.S. domestic use but rather for export to the Pacific Rim for a relatively short span of time since it is a relatively modest deposit compared to what is much more easily available elsewhere in Alaska and other coal-producing areas of the U.S.

I have supported the conservation of the Bering River coal deposit for more than a decade. My life's work as a primatologist and conservationist has instilled in me a deep respect for all living things. My work has taken me to some of the most remote parts of our world. It is often clear, as in this case, that the degradation of an ecosystem will have adverse local, regional and even global implications.

The mining of that resource in this biologically sensitive region would cause serious and adverse injury to the fish and wildlife resources and therefore the long-term viability of a multitude of uses of those critical resources. To intentionally harm such resources through mountaintop removal mining would be an indefensible folly. It would insure harm to flora and fauna while threatening existing livelihoods and ways of life that I know your agencies and your country seek to protect.

The private sector owners of this coal deposit, as I understand it, are currently willing to work to have the deposit acquired and retired. So, the time is propitious now for a remarkable and productive conservation achievement to be attained for the greater good of all. This window of opportunity is closing, however. And, if that historic opportunity is not met with resolve, creativity, and commitment, it will likely be lost forever. As we know, history is not kind to us when we fail to meet such challenges and not take advantage of having such opportunities.

Among many others who have been working on this noble effort are Ted Roosevelt IV, Gifford Pinchot III, and Peter Pinchot. As you know, these three gentlemen are descendants of your President Theodore Roosevelt and your nation's first Forest Service Chief, Gifford Pinchot, who together helped give to your country, and to the rest of the world, an historic conservation legacy of national parks, wildlife refuges and national forests that continue to inspire and rejuvenate people everywhere and have been such an inspiration for me all of my life.

Each step toward ecosystem health protection and promotion of sustainable livelihoods in local communities is vitally important for us all sharing this planet. Such conservation is usually best assisted and promoted when those who are direct beneficiaries of protecting local habitats assert their support, which they have done in this instance as local fishermen, fish marketing people, hunters, indigenous peoples, those in the tourism industry and conservationists have expressed their strong commitment to and support for this effort.

The rainforest and mountains, rivers and wetlands of the Bering River, Martin River and Copper River Delta watershed region have been home to indigenous people for millennia and to non-Natives since first contact; both groups have always depended on the resources of the rivers and lands and coastal areas for sustenance. And with your help and that of local residents, including sportsmen, hunters, fishers and indigenous as well as non-indigenous peoples, this region can continue to sustain the region economically and biologically.

I deeply appreciated the letter, Secretary Vilsack, which you sent to me in 2012 in response to my entreaty to you at that time in support of initiating this effort. Your letter read, in part: **"This region is one of the largest and most biologically intact places on Earth, and it merits the highest level of protection for the benefit of Alaska's and the Nation's natural and cultural heritage."**

I fervently urge each of you to embrace the spirit of far-sighted and responsible stewardship of this priceless region of your nation. I implore you to do all that you can to help protect this genuinely unique and biologically rich, but fragile, habitat that is home to wild Copper River and Bering River salmon runs, shorebirds and waterfowl in numbers rarely seen anywhere else on Earth, and diverse wildlife on which people rely for their livelihoods and subsistence today and will into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Goodall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jane Goodall, Ph.D., DBE
Founder, the Jane Goodall Institute &
UN Messenger of Peace