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June 18, 2013

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
709 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

The use of public lands is an important component to the travel experience of many residents and visitors to Alaska.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) was created in 2004 to address public concerns about user fees and development. The Act provides a nationally consistent interagency program, on-the-ground improvements for visitor services and more public involvement. It also includes the recreation fee program which allows fees paid by visitors to certain federal recreation sites to be retained by the collecting site and be used to improve the quality of the visitor experience.

FLREA allows for individual public lands to charge fees to visitors for areas where increased visitation has resulted in an increased need for adequate facilities and services. Recreation fees allow the agencies to meet the visitor demand. Fees collected by guides and outfitters are retained at the local level to improve visitor facilities and services used by the guides, outfitters and their customers.

The Act has been valid for 10 years in order to allow the agencies enough time effectively put the Act into use through improved efficiencies and by providing better services and user experiences. The fees have been used to improve the visitor experience through trail maintenance, extended hours, interpretive displays, restroom facilities and more. The Act is scheduled to sunset in 2014.

With the significant amount of public lands in Alaska and their importance to many visitors, the Alaska Travel Industry Association supports the renewal of the FLREA. It is critical that fees paid by Alaska's visitors be used to improve the facilities and services within Alaska at the place where they are generated. The expiration of the Act would result in the loss of user generated funding and will have detrimental impacts to national public lands in Alaska.

Respectfully,

Kirk Hoessle
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Alaska Travel Industry Association