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TO: USDA
REGARDING: 2007 Farm Bill

On behalf of Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association, we welcome the Deputy Secretary and Undersecretary to our beautiful state.

Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association is an association of owners of reindeer herds which are located on the Seward Peninsula.

Several reindeer herds on the Seward Peninsula in the Bering Straits region, benefit from the 2002 Farm Bill, through financial support. In over a three year period in a total amount of \$607,050 will be obtained through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Tom Gray of White Mountain, Native Village of St. Michael, Stebbins Community Association and Ted Katcheak signed contracts to voluntarily do conservation practices on their permitted reindeer ranges.

EQIP, funded by the Farm Bill, is a voluntary conservation program that promotes agriculture production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP, agricultural producers may receive financial and technical assistance to employ management practices on agricultural land. Our association members received information and technical assistance through the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The practices to be implemented by the herders are aimed at protecting and improving the ground cover on grazing lands. Secondly, to conserve local identified species of concern, namely sensitive lichen forage species and regionally valuable wild-berry species. Lastly, the practices will involve the use of satellite telemetry in which collars are placed on reindeer. The access to instant access of reindeer locations saves herders' time, fuel, and wear and tear on motorized vehicles, thereby reducing emissions that could impair air quality.

The funds will assist the herd owners in tracking and manage their herders. Individual reindeer ranges typically encompass 1 million acres or more on the Seward Peninsula. These areas are vast, remote and difficult to transverse. Satellite telemetry has proved to be an ideal tool for reindeer management. The herders will also be able to improve forage quality and subsistence resource quality on the lands they are permitted to use. The contracts assist with the remote and traditionally underserved clients in addressing high priority natural resource concerns.

The EQIP program will assist the Kawerak Reindeer Herders Association fulfill their purpose which is to provide assistance in the development of a viable reindeer industry, to enhance the economic base for rural Alaska and to improve the management of the herds.

The association also benefits from the Farm Bill through the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, of which RHA is a member. The Alaska coalition is composed of representatives of organizations who are concerned with the wise use and conservation of grazing land in Alaska.

RHA is a 21 member association whose staff provides assistance to the members who are reindeer her owners and managers. RHA, a program of Kawerak, Inc., offers administrative, logistical, advocacy and field support toward the development of a self-sustaining reindeer industry.