

September 18, 2008

EDITORIAL

First a Bridge, Now a Road

First there was Alaska's Bridge to Nowhere, an infamous pork-barrel project that eventually succumbed to public derision. Now comes the Izembek road — some call it the Road to Nowhere — another Alaska boondoggle and a surefire environmental disaster.

American taxpayers should not spend a dime on this project and Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader, should make sure that they don't have to.

The road would connect the remote fishing hamlet of King Cove on the Alaskan peninsula to an airport 25 miles away in the village of Cold Bay. By all accounts, the hovercraft service on which King Cove's 800 or so residents rely to reach Cold Bay has met every evacuation need since it began in early 2007.

The problem is that the road would slice through the federally protected Izembek National Wildlife Refuge — an extraordinary preserve where millions of migratory birds congregate each fall before resuming their global travels. It would imperil not only the birds but rich concentrations of other animal life.

Congress, for good reason, designated the area as a wildlife refuge in 1960 and as permanent wilderness in 1980. When the road proposal first appeared in an appropriations bill 10 years ago, President Bill Clinton, at the urging of Bruce Babbitt, the interior secretary at the time, threatened a veto unless the project was removed.

Congress agreed, but not before the Alaska delegation — which rarely comes away empty-handed — extracted other projects worth \$37.5 million. These included a new medical facility, an upgraded airport in King Cove and the hovercraft.

Now, 10 years later, the Alaska delegation is perilously close to getting the road. The project has the enthusiastic backing of Gov. Sarah Palin, John McCain's running mate who supported the Bridge to Nowhere until it became insupportable.

As part of the careless horse trading that goes on near the end of a Congressional session, the proposal has been approved by committees in both the Senate and the House and could end up as part of a package of several hundred small public land bills. The task is to extract the proposal

from the House or Senate bills before they go to a conference committee. Mr. Reid should deny Alaska a piece of pork that it does not need.

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