Native Village Of Port Heiden
2200 James Street
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**Congressional Testimony of John Christensen, President, Native Village of Port Heiden**
Representative Dexter, Representative Huffman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today at this hearing. My name is John Christensen, and I serve as the President of the Native Village of Port Heiden.

**Summary**

Year-round reliable and affordable energy is a big problem for us in Port Heiden, Alaska and I'm glad this committee is addressing Alaskan's energy needs during this hearing, "*Unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential*". Like most native communities in Alaska, more development of oil and gas or the building of the liquid natural gas pipeline won't help us. These are not options for our communities because we aren't close enough to the LNG pipeline to benefit from it and oil must be refined outside Alaska, then imported back, before it's usable for us. Most of our communities are still using expensive and difficult to maintain diesel generators, with fuel shipped up from refineries in the lower 48, charging $7.49 or more a gallon. Barges to deliver that diesel only come to Port Heiden a couple of times during the summer, and sometimes they run aground and we never see them. In Port Heiden, we have wind year round, plenty of solar in the summer months, and fast moving creeks and rivers nearby. These are the resources we can harness to generate the energy we need, locally and cheaply, like solar, wind, and hydro, to help heat and provide electricity for our homes, tribal buildings, clinic, airstrip, drinking water and sewage systems, municipal lighting, and households. We've done studies that show that about 75% of our energy needs can be satisfied with wind, solar, and hydro. But Congress is cutting the funding for these clean, cheap forms of energy and that endangers our ability to fish, hunt and remain on our traditional lands, where we've lived for many generations. Money for solar, wind and hydro projects that we have already won in competitive grants and funded from the federal government are being taken away from us. Contracts and promises have been broken and the very existence of our community is at stake as a result.

Despite these setbacks, the community continues to be committed to finding clean, sustainable energy sources to power and heat village residences and buildings, while enabling commercial expansion to provide revenue streams for community residents. The tribe's mission reflects the existential challenges it faces.. "The vision of our Tribe is that our Community is growing, living and thriving as we have for thousands of years. The mission of our Tribe is to still be here."

**Native Village of Port Heiden background**

The Native Village of Port Heiden is a highly remote, off-grid community in Southwest Alaska, on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula on the rich fishing waters of Bristol Bay (Fig. 1). Port Heiden is not connected to the road system, and has no access to a marine highway or ferry service, no interconnection to any other community via electrical intertie or gas transmission pipeline, and no access to existing hydropower or biomass energy resources. The community is only accessible by air, and during ice-free summer months by boat and infrequent freight barges.

Figure 1. Port Heiden, Alaska's location on Bristol Bay

Port Heiden is a traditional Alutiiq community of 100 people, with a commercial fishing and subsistence lifestyle.

Despite being in a location that boasts abundant wind, solar, and hydrologic resources, Port Heiden faces an energy crisis. It is currently dependent on imported diesel for its energy generation. Because of transport costs to the remote community, diesel averages $7.49/gallon. We spent $900,000 on fuel in 2024 alone. Delivery is unreliable and limited to 2 barge loads per season which have occasionally run aground and not been able to deliver their load. The generator itself is difficult and expensive to maintain. In the 2024-2025 season, for example, the generator broke down and cost more than $350,000 to repair.

The Native Village of Port Heiden urgently needs alternatives to diesel generators because of the high cost of fuel, unreliable delivery schedule and the major challenges to the generator's upkeep and maintenance due to the remoteness of the community. Using diesel to create power puts our Base Rate for electricity at $.75/kWh compared to $.23/kWh in Anchorage, 428 air miles away.

We view our need for renewable energy options as an issue of **energy security, energy sovereignty, and energy affordability**. Implementing solar, wind, and hydroelectric power projects to enable cheap, local power generation, may well be what allows us to survive in the coming decades. Everything costs more. Electricity goes up, diesel goes up, every year. And wages don't. We live on the edge of the world. And it's just tough.

Port Heiden is located on Bristol Bay, renowned for having the largest sockeye-salmon fishery in the world, with over 130 years of sustainable harvesting practices. In 2015, The Port Heiden tribal community built a fish processing plant so we could process fish close to home and save money over the commercial processing plants. It takes enormous amounts of diesel to run the filleting and gutting machines, separators and grinders, washing and scaling equipment, and even to store all the fish the village catches every summer in freezers and refrigerators. We just couldn't afford the cost of diesel to power the plant so the building's just been sitting there for the last 10 years. We can't afford to operate it with the raising costs of diesel.

With enough cheap, local power, we could finally start operating the processing plant. We have titanium sitting on the beaches coming from the Aniakchak volcano just a few miles away. Cheap and abundant electricity could power collection and processing of these resources adding to NVPH's revenue stream.

**Battery, Wind and Solar Development in Port Heiden threatened by Canadian tariffs**

While there has been a decades-long effort to develop local, renewable energy sources, and grants have been obtained from the federal government to aid in these projects, in each case, implementation has been blocked.

In 2024, the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribal Community Resilience program awarded Port Heiden funding to add a 1 MW (megawatt) storage battery along with 100kWh solar and 200 kWh wind generation. These new energy sources would help Port Heiden to maintain power to tribal buildings, its clinic, airstrip runway lighting, communication systems, community heating, refrigeration, and water supplies.

The equipment needed for the project has already been purchased from a Canadian supplier. However, due to recent tariffs imposed on Canadian imports to the US, it would cost an additional $1.5 million to deliver the battery, wind and solar equipment to Port Heiden for installation. Port Heiden does not have these additional funds to allow them to ship the equipment that has already been purchased and is sitting in Canada waiting to be delivered.

**Run of river hydroelectric power generation project**

The Native Village of Port Heiden teamed with 10Power to submit and win a $300,000 grant from the Climate United NEXT fund in March, 2025 for planning, feasibility, and siting studies for a Run-of-River hydroelectric project near the Native Village of Port Heiden. Run-of-River hydropower has the potential to provide baseload (24/7) power for the majority of the year with significantly lower damage to the natural ecosystem than traditional large reservoir hydroelectric power projects.

Climate United is a national nonprofit coalition that invests in solutions that tackle tough economic and environmental problems. Climate United lowers financial barriers to clean technologies so every American benefits from good-paying green jobs, lower energy bills, and better public health.

Climate United's NEXT Program is a pre-development grant program designed to help underserved and low-income communities deploy the next generation of clean energy projects. The inaugural cohort of the NEXT Program would have provided grants of up to $300,000 to Native-led projects, for a total of over $5 million across 18 states. These investments are

intended to support tribal communities in diversifying local economies, achieving significant energy cost savings, and ensuring energy independence and grid resilience across the nation.

However, before we could begin the work, the funding was frozen by the EPA when they announced that they had terminated the awards. Climate United, believing EPA's grant termination was unconstitutionally and unlawfully frozen, sued EPA and Citibank (where the funds are held) to release the funds. This included termination of legally binding contracts with the EPA.

A federal district judge ruled that EPA broke the law by abruptly freezing and terminating $20B in awards from two Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund programs that provided the funds for the Climate United NEXT grants. While a federal judge ordered a preliminary injunction barring EPA and Citibank from clawing back the funds in April 2025, On September 2, 2025, the US Court of Appeals for DC issued a 2-1 ruling in favor of the EPA. The latest ruling is focused on the government's jurisdictional claim, and sides with the EPA's claim that the case needs to be heard in the Court of Federal Claims, not the District Court. The opinion reaffirms that despite the government's claims otherwise, the funds remain obligated to Climate United and other awardees. On September 10, Climate United and other GGRF awardees filed a rehearing petition, appealing the D.C. Circuit Court panel ruling. The petition asks the full Circuit Court to hear the case, after the panel ruled 2-1 that the lower court lacked jurisdiction. The petition argues that the panel erred in its ruling by dismissing Constitutional and APA claims, which warrants review by the full court.

That is all i have, thank you for your time