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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD RESTORES RURAL COMMUNITY STATUS TO SAXMAN VILLAGE

After ten years of arduous effort, the Organized Village of Saxman is filled with gratitude today at the recent announcement by the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) to remove Saxman from the list of nonrural communities, thereby recognizing Saxman as a rural community. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), rural community members enjoy a priority to harvest wild fish and game on federal public lands and waters. In 2006, however, the FSB wrongfully classified Saxman as a non-rural community, thereby denying its citizens the subsistence rights they had exercised since time immemorial.

“The importance of being recognized as a rural community is acute for Saxman and is crucial to survival. Subsistence is an essential cultural practice, a traditional worldview that is at the heart of surviving and thriving in Saxman,” said Lee Wallace, Tribal President of the Organized Village of Saxman. The preference for take of fish and wildlife resources for subsistence uses on federal public lands and waters in Alaska, when these resources are sometimes scarce, is profoundly important to a traditional culture that has lived and breathed this lifestyle for millennia. The affirmation of being classified as rural means the retention and sustenance of natural resource harvest will remain for generations into the future. “In Saxman, subsistence is a meaningful traditional cultural practice and a way of living and prospering in this world,” added President Wallace. “All those days, all those doubts of the last ten years, are behind the Tribe now. I praise and thank the Federal Subsistence Board for recognizing that Saxman is indeed rural, thank you to Alaska Federation of Natives, Sealaska Corporation, and Cape Fox Corporation for assisting, give praise to Dr. Daniel Monteith for his support, give praise to the Native American Rights Fund, who were a source of strength, give praise to the Tribes who bolstered Saxman up, give praise to the faithful tribal citizens and community members who gave moral support and testimony, and especially give praise to God the Creator, who indelibly oversees all good.”