**From:** Lewis Sharman <[coastwalk@hotmail.com](mailto:coastwalk@hotmail.com)>   
**Sent:** Sunday, January 7, 2024 21:02  
**To:** Liesl Barker <[liesl.barker@gustavus-ak.gov](mailto:liesl.barker@gustavus-ak.gov)>; Kathy Leary <[kathy.leary@gustavus-ak.gov](mailto:kathy.leary@gustavus-ak.gov)>  
**Subject:** Possible transfer of TNC lands in Gustavus to HIA

Hi Liesl and Kathy,

Please see my slap-dash letter below.  I didn't even know about this until 2 or 3 days ago!

I'll be at tomorrow night's Work Session, but I cannot ask questions or make comments.  But Council Members can, and I want them to ensure that the 8 questions in my letter below are addressed during the meeting.

Could you please forward this to each of them?

Many thanks!

Lewis Sharman

**From:** Lewis Sharman <[coastwalk@hotmail.com](mailto:coastwalk@hotmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 7, 2024 8:47 PM  
**To:** [alaska@tnc.org](mailto:alaska@tnc.org) <[alaska@tnc.org](mailto:alaska@tnc.org)>  
**Subject:** Possible transfer of TNC lands in Gustavus to HIA

Ms. Ivy Spohnholz

State Director, TNC Alaska

The Nature Conservancy Alaska Program

715 L St., Suite 100

Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Ms. Spohnholz,

I am writing to comment on the possibility that TNC is considering transferring the Gustavus TNC lands to the Hoonah Indian Association (HIA).

First, I have a few questions. I understand that a central TNC mission is to protect, often through initial acquisition, lands important for conservation. I also understand that TNC prefers not to be in the long-term land ownership and active management business, and that an ultimate goal is often to transfer title and/or management (with appropriate protective caveats, legally-binding and in perpetuity) to like-minded entities.

1) Is HIA one such entity?

2) Did TNC approach HIA, or did HIA approach TNC?

3) If the latter, what was their motivation(s)?

4) What is your understanding of how HIA would like to manage the lands? Please provide as much detail as possible.

5) How would this management differ from current management? Again, please provide as much detail as possible.

6) Somewhat separate from this particular discussion, I understand that TNC “owns” the lands, but that the State of Alaska retains “development rights”. Does TNC have fee simple title? If so, how can the State retain development rights? Can you tell me more about what rights the State has, your understanding of their plans for future management, and the “worst-case” possible management actions (in the context of conservation) the State could legally take at any time in the future?

7) If HIA acquires the lands, what rights would they have re. land management? What “worst-case” possible management actions (in the context of conservation) could HIA legally take at any time in the future? Could the lands, and activities undertaken on them, be in any way taxable by HIA or the community of Hoonah?

8) Has TNC approached the City of Gustavus re. accepting ownership/management of the lands? (Not that I would necessarily be supportive of such a move.)

Pending answers to the above, I am at this time opposed in principle to transferring the lands to HIA. I was here when (and decades before) the lands were initially acquired from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. The residents of Gustavus were key (and core) movers and shakers of the idea. I actually think it was our idea in the beginning! We raised money amongst ourselves, and obtained other funds from outside entities to acquire the land and protect it for our and others’ mental health in perpetuity. We sold cookies, washed cars, made personal donations, and wrangled contributions from other folks and organizations outside of Gustavus. WE did this. WE did this. I hope you can understand how we may feel as if the rug is now being pulled out from under us.

We like the current management of these lands. Our understanding has always been that the current management regime will continue in perpetuity. We are naturally suspicious that an outside entity may be acquiring the lands and the management of them.

Sincerely,

Lewis Sharman

P.O. Box 21

Gustavus, AK 99826