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September 7, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ahtna, Inc. Rejects Brenwick-Craig Road Settlement with State of Alaska
The Ahtna, Inc. Board of Directors votes not to enter into settlement

Glennallen, Alaska – Ahtna, Incorporated (Ahtna, Inc.) announced today that they have rejected a proposed settlement with the State of Alaska regarding lands along Brenwick-Craig (Klutina Lake) Road and near the Historic Gulkana Village off the Richardson Highway. The Ahtna, Inc. Board of Directors voted not to enter into settlement after taking into consideration comments from the affected villages in the region, as well as reviewing the comments submitted to the State during the public comment period. While the parties made an earnest effort with the proposed settlement, the compromises to its private land use rights that Ahtna, Inc. would have made in order to settle the case were simply not worth the certainty and other benefits of a negotiated resolution. The parties therefore will move forward with litigation on the Brenwick-Craig Road issue.

“The Ahtna Board felt that it was important to explore every possible option other than a litigated solution,” said Ahtna, Inc. Chairman Nicholas Jackson. “Ultimately, the decision was made that settlement is not in Ahtna’s best interest at this time.”

The proposed settlement also addressed long-standing impacts to the Gulkana historic cemetery and townsite, which Ahtna will continue to work with the Native Village of Gulkana and the State to resolve. Those who attended the public comment meetings heard the history of a thriving village that was bisected in order to realign the highway, forcing families to resettle across the Gulkana River without warning. Broad support for the return of the sacred lands to the Native Village of Gulkana was heard throughout the State of Alaska’s public comment process. But both commentators to the State and the Native Villages of Gulkana and Kluti-Kaah felt that the issue of correcting this historical injustice needed to be separated from the resolution of the Brenwick-Craig Road issue. Ahtna, Inc. is grateful to the State for attempting to find an expedient and creative resolution to the matter, and stands ready to cooperate and assist in facilitating the return of land to the Native Village of Gulkana.

Ahtna, Inc. is not available for any further comment on these matters at this time due to pending litigation.

Background on Gulkana Historic Cemetery and Townsite

In 1943, prior to Statehood, the Federal Government bisected what was a thriving village on the Gulkana River in order to realign the highway and build a new bridge. Families were forced to resettle across the Gulkana River and the historic village cemetery has experienced decades of grave desecration. The federal trustee who granted the land to the state later admitted he had no record of having followed the law or obtaining the consent of the village before giving away its land. The Native Village of Gulkana, with the assistance of Ahtna and other compassionate organizations, has been working to clear up the title to land in the area ever since.

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Background on the Brenwick-Craig Road Proposed Settlement

The settlement sought to resolve a long-running dispute between Ahtna, Inc. and the State of Alaska over land near the Klutina River and Lake. The Brenwick-Craig Road is a 60-foot-wide public easement that follows Klutina River from the Richardson Highway to Klutina Lake, a distance of about 25 miles, and then turns into a 25-foot-wide undeveloped trail along Klutina Lake for a distance of approximately 5 miles. The entire route is within a Federal Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) 17(b) easement. In 2007, the State cleared certain portions alongside the western part of Klutina Lake Road, removing Ahtna signs and a fee station in the process. Ahtna sued the state for exceeding the scope of the easement, both in terms of its width and the uses it permits. The parties have been working to resolve this dispute since it was filed.

About Ahtna, Inc.

Ahtna, Incorporated is one of 13 Alaska Native Regional Corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, and is based out of Glennallen, Alaska. The company currently has nearly 2,000 shareholders, the majority of whom are of Ahtna Athabascan descent, and employs more than 1,400 people worldwide. A premiere Alaskan-owned business, Ahtna, Incorporated is guided by its vision statement: "Our Culture Unites Us; Our Land Sustains Us; Our People are Prosperous."

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