

Freeze Could Be Extended 90 Days

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Senator Mike Gravel (D-Alaska) said he has received reports that the Interior Department plans to renew the Alaska land freeze for only another 90 days when the current extension expires on June 30th.

"I believe this would be the proper step to take," Gravel said. "It is in line with my feeling that a Native Land Claims Bill can and will be approved by Congress sometime this Fall."

Gravel said "there had been talk of renewing the land freeze

longer. I have strongly recommended against this, however, because I do not believe it is necessary."

Gravel pointed out that the House Interior Committee has scheduled a week of executive sessions on the land claims issue, beginning June 21st.

"That should provide the committee members with sufficient time to determine what provisions they want included in the legislation. Once that is accomplished I anticipate a speedy markup of the final bill by the full Committee," he said.

"As soon as the House position becomes known, the Senate can proceed with its own version, armed with the knowledge of what the House proposal will contain."

Since time consuming hearings already have been held, I believe both the House and Senate Committees can report its land claims bills out to their respective chambers within the following month.

"A 90-day extension of the land freeze would take us to September 30th," Gravel noted. "I am optimistic that a bill will be approved by that date or very shortly thereafter."