

House passes d-2, Title VII intact

by NANCY HARVEY

One hundred and twenty-seven million acres of Alaska land was included in the final version of the d-2 bill approved by the U.S. House of Representatives Friday, by a vote of 277-31. Despite a series of procedural moves intended by opponents to weaken the bill or delay passage, the compromise measure includes a provision for 65 million acres of wilderness. To the delight of Native lobbyists, a section protecting subsistence use was retained. The bill faces a possible filibuster in the Senate.

The bill, H.R. 12625, represents a consensus forged by Rep. Morris Udall (D-Arizona), who chairs the House Interior Committee and who is a prime mover behind the d-2 legislation, and Rep. Robert Leggett (D-California), chairman of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. Both committees held hearings on H.R. 39 before it was sent to the House floor for consideration.

Amendments and Compromises

The crucial vote came last Friday at 1:00 p.m. (Washington time) following two days of intense debate on the House floor. Action by the Rules Committee earlier in the week approved sending H.R. 39 to the floor, but opened the bill to debate on any amendments to give full consideration to Udall's compromise bill (H.R. 12625) and a substitute bill to be offered by Representatives Lloyd Meeds (D-Washington) and Don Young (R-Alaska). Both Young and Meeds have been strong opponents of H.R. 39.

When debate on the bill began last Wednesday, it appeared that opponents of H.R. 39 might filibuster to delay a final vote on the legislation. A routine motion usually approved by unanimous consent to dispense with reading of the bill was defeated, requiring two House clerks to read the lengthy legislation.

Arctic Wildlife Range Left Intact

Thursday's session saw chief opponents of the bill Young and Meeds lose two key votes on controversial issues.

Young introduced a series of 14 amendments asking that an additional 5 million acres of land be opened for State selection, but he lost in a lopsided 251-141 vote of the full House.

Meeds in turn attempted to cut the proposed "instant wilderness" areas from 65 million acres to 33 million and, additionally, to open the Arctic National Wildlife Range to exploration and development. Alaska Natives and conservationists have continually fought against opening the Arctic National Wildlife Range to development because of the potential threat to the survival of the Porcupine Caribou herd. The Meeds amendment was defeated, 240-119.

Young termed the 18 months of deliberation in the U.S. House a "long battle," saying "we started out with a piece of real terrible legislation."

"It's not exactly what I want—a long ways from it—I've put all my effort and time and I think we've come out with a bill that, in the direst time, we can still be proud of as far as State use of our lands," Young said.

Subsistence Uses Get Preference

Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. spokesman Roger Lang expressed pleasure at passage of the bill and said he was "fantastically pleased with Title VII."

Title VII of the compromise bill deals with subsistence and represents a position wholeheartedly supported by AFN and the Rural Alaska Community Action Program. The bill acknowledges that the continuation of the subsistence way of life is essential to the physical, economic and cultural existence of both Alaska Natives and other residents of the State; and further says subsistence use of wildlife and other renewable resources shall be the first priority consumptive use of those resources on public lands of Alaska. Where it is necessary to restrict the taking of fish and wildlife in order to assure its continued viability, the taking of the resource for subsistence purposes will have preference on public lands over recreational, sport or other consumptive uses.

Under terms of the d-2 bill passed Friday, the State of Alaska must institute a subsistence management program through the establishment of no fewer than five management regions and a system of local and regional fish and game councils within those regions. Among the duties of the regional councils, the following are included:

- review, development and evaluation of proposals for regulations, policies, management plans and other matters relating to the conservation and utilization of fish and wildlife within the region;
- provision of a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any phase of fish and wildlife conservation and utilization;
- taking of appropriate action to ensure local and regional participation in the decision-making process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on public lands within the region for subsistence uses; and,
- the preparation of a recommended subsistence management plan for the region.

The d-2 legislation now moves to the Senate where the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Senator Henry Jackson (D-Washington), will hold hearings next week in Washington D.C.