

EIS on proposed gas pipeline

A final Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Alaska Natural Gas Transportation system has been completed and is now available from Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices in Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska State Director Curtis V. McVee announced recently.

"Copies of the EIS are available for public inspection at the Fairbanks District BLM office, The University of Alaska Library, the Fairbanks Environmental Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and in the near future at the Fairbanks City Library," said Richard H. LeDosquet, Fairbanks district manager. "Members of the public are invited to review the EIS at any of these locations."

A decision is not expected on the gas line prior to early 1977, Secretary of the Interior Thomas Kleppe commented when the EIS was filed last week with the Council on Environmental Quality.

Kleppe anticipated the delay because of pending congression action on legislation requested by President Ford, requirements to be met by the Federal Power Commission, and anticipated further analysis by the Interior.

The 11-volume EIS release is an evaluation of potential environmental effects of a proposal for a pipeline system to carry natural gas from Prudhoe Bay in northernmost Alaska, via Canada to terminals in California and Pennsylvania, a total of 5,580 miles. It also examines alternatives to this proposed action.

The EIS is the result of months of review and revision of a draft statement released last July. Comments from 450 reviewers in written responses, and written and oral testimony

for 11 public hearings were used in preparation of the final EIS. The Arctic Gas project, covered by the EIS, has been proposed for construction by a consortium of U.S. and Canadian companies at a cost expected to exceed \$9.6 billion.

El Paso Natural Gas Company has proposed a system to move natural gas through Alaska by pipeline to be liquified at Valdez for tanker transport to California, but has not applied to Interior for evaluation in the EIS as an alternative.

Both Arctic Gas and El Paso have applied for certificates from the Federal Power Commission (FPC), which has responsibility for issuance or denial of certificates of public convenience and necessity for projects that propose interstate transport of natural gas.

Interior and the FPC have maintained a close working relationship on the matter, and by agreement, Interior has responsibility for the EIS on the Arctic Gas proposal, and FPC for the EIS on the El Paso proposal.

FPC has proceeded through Phase I of its hearings process on the two proposals and plans to begin Phase II in mid-April. FPC has accepted the Interior EIS for inclusion in its hearings and decision process, and Interior has agreed to provide witnesses to testify on the document.

Before a decision on the proposals, both Interior and FPC will continue to work on the evaluate information through FPC's Phase II hearing process. FPC has announced the intent to complete its process by December, 1976.

Legislation submitted to Congress March 10, would

provide that President Ford make the decision on which system, if either, would be adopted. A decision would not be made before completion of the FPC review.

The proposed legislation would require a presidential decision by April 1, 1977, with a 60-day congressional review before it became final.

Following a decision the FPC would issue a certificate and the Department of the Interior would issue the necessary rights-of-way and permits to expedite that action.

Copies of Interior's final EIS will be on file for inspection in numerous cities throughout the United States. The statement may also be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20302.

Record set . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

back to the starting point and re-equip. Then in January, with a bit more caution, he started out again.

He arrived in Barter Island March 26 and, after a brief stop, pushed on to Barrow landing at 3 a.m. April 14. Mistaking the Arctic Research Lab for town, he camped there and awoke to encounter a sign reading: "U.S. Property, Restricted."

"I well knew what that meant," he says, still looking queezy, so he immediately pushed on.

His dogs are in bad shape, but perking up under the Neakok's supervision, and Uemura plans to continue down the coast on the 19th.

He's hoping to make Wainwright in three days, Pt. Lay in six and Point Hope in two weeks. His destination is Kotzebue, but it will be a race, the Barrow people tell him. Spring is coming—but slow yet, and the ice may hold all the way, or it might not.

"My dogs can swim. I can swim. I can make my sled into a boat," he considers. "But if the people of Point Hope think I should not go, I must give up."

During the course of his journey, Uemura has grown fond of Eskimo food and cannot now enjoy a meal without seal oil.

"In Japan you cannot eat raw meat but you must think, 'this is poison, no?'" Along the Arctic coast there is no pollution of any kind. The food is very nice. I liked very much whale meat. Seal meat. Best food!"

But although he has changed his style of eating, he still adheres to strict Japanese manners, and it's catching. Mrs. Neakok says she has to think twice to keep from bowing from the waist in the best of Japanese tradition and her baby granddaughter, who has been listening to Uemura's phone calls to Tokyo now says quite clearly, "Ah, so. Ah, so!"

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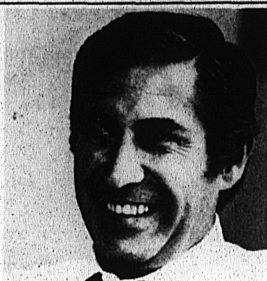
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Dateline

Washington

A weekly column

by Sen. Mike Gravel



Alaska Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4

The transfer of Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4, capping Alaska's North Slope, from the jurisdiction of the Navy to the Department of Interior will have great significance for Alaska.

I first introduced legislation in November of 1973 to effect a transfer of this vast piece of Arctic real estate to Interior for the simple reason that Interior has a history of managing land while the Navy's history has been, and should continue to be, in sailing ships.

Congress has finally seen the wisdom of this, and although the transfer will not actually take effect for another year, the Interior Department can immediately begin its management responsibilities as far as land and surface resource values are concerned. The two departments are supposed to work together during this transition period so that Interior will be ready to take over the Navy's operations, its equipment and facilities on June 1, 1977.

The reserve will continue to be a national petroleum reserve and no production of oil or gas can be undertaken (except to continue to supply gas to the Native village of Barrow and other communities and installations at or near Pt. Barrow) without the express authorization of Congress.

A key element of this law is the involvement of the State of Alaska and the Natives, who live and depend on the land, in all decisions relating to the petroleum reserve.

The law requires that the President direct the appropriate federal agencies to conduct a study, in consultation with representatives of the State of Alaska, to determine the best overall procedures to be used in the development, production, transportation, and distribution of petroleum resources in the reserve.

This study is to include alternative procedures for accomplishing the development and the environmental consequences of development. Congress will receive reports on the study at regular intervals, with a completed study and recommendations for implementation to be submitted no later than Jan. 1, 1980.

The legislation provides for the establishment of a task force by the Interior Secretary to conduct a separate study "to determine the values of, and best uses for, the lands contained in the reserve, taking into consideration the natives who live or depend upon such lands, the scenic, historical, recreation, fish and wildlife, and wilderness values, mineral potential, and other values of such lands."

This task force will be composed of representatives from the Alaska State government and the Arctic Slope Native community, together with Interior Department Agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines.

The task force will undoubtedly be working simultaneously, and coordinately, with the Presidential-directed study, since its recommendations on values and best uses of the lands are to be considered in the final recommendations to Congress.

Another benefit to Alaskans in the transfer of Pet. 4 to Interior is the provision for impact funds for the communities located on or near the reserve. These funds could be made available if the Interior Secretary determined that "there is an immediate and substantial increase in the need for municipal services and facilities in these communities as a direct result of the exploration and study activities currently underway or that will begin under terms of the legislation."

The impact assistance to meet the cost of providing increased municipal services and facilities will be provided through existing federal programs.

In my earlier legislation to transfer Pet. 4, a provision required that a study of the reserve also assess the socioeconomic impact on the people of the region. Although the provision for the payment of impact monies is in the legislation that has now been enacted into law, it fails to clearly spell out how the determination of impact is to be made. It would seem that this would be an appropriate area for the task force to study.

As we work under this new authority to determine the best use of more than 23 million acres of Alaska, it is important that Alaskans now have a say in how it is to be developed and/or protected. That has to be a whole lot better than the Navy proceeding full steam ahead.

Polar bears . . .

(Continued from Page 6)

equipment.

It's still in the experimental stage, he cautioned. "But we are getting a weak signal."

And hopefully, come the time of the federal hearing regarding polar bear hunts, we should have some good new material to work with.

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