

Morton Protects Native Options

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton said today that a recently published withdrawal order affecting 1.5 million acres of public land in Alaska would protect the options of that State's Native people to select land under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

The land affected by the withdrawal had once been a part of the 2.7 million acres that had been set aside earlier in native reservations, but none lies outside areas designated specifically by the act of 1971 for native selection.

The native claims act simultaneously lifted withdrawals affecting certain reservation land and gave native villages having reservation land the option of retaining such land in lieu of settlement provisions under the act.

Secretary Morton said that until the new order was published there was the possibility that mining claims might have been filed on reservation land before the villages could reach a decision.

This might have complicated the granting of titles to those villages wishing to exercise this option provided by the act.

The withdrawal closed former reservation lands to selection by the State of Alaska and to the filing of mining claims until December 18, 1973.

It was published in the federal register February 11, 1972.

"This action is in accord with President Nixon's expressed desire to protect Indian rights fully under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act," the Secretary said.