

State to release \$163 million for public projects

Gov. Steve Cowper announced recently that the state would release \$163 million in public works projects and municipal grants approved by the 1986 Legislature.

The money, which will fund projects across the state and create a number of jobs for Alaskans, will be released on a schedule as the projects

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• Cowper releases funds

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are readied for construction.

"Alaskans can be assured that their communities will get some sorely needed public works projects and money for the operations of local government as a result of this action," Cowper said.

Release of the funds was prompted by the Alaska Supreme Court, following a suit pressed by the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Former Gov. Bill Sheffield impounded the money last summer as part of an effort to save funds after the price of oil dropped drastically.

The Fairbanks borough challenged Sheffield's authority to withhold the money and the court agreed. But the Legislature late in the session approv-

ed a bill affirming the action on the operating budget, including municipal assistance, revenue sharing and education funds.

The Legislature's action did not affect capital projects or municipal grants, which fund local public works projects.

Most of the projects being released address life, health and safety needs, such as improvements to the Wrangell Hospital, Juneau water and sewer repairs, statewide road repairs, the Eklutna water project near Anchorage, school construction and rural erosion control.

Cowper said release of the money will not affect his decision on whether to call a special session of the Legislature to write a 1988 capital projects bill.