

Extension Service Districts—

Yuko—Kwim and Tanana Valley to Be Consolidated

FAIRBANKS — The Yuko-Kwim and Tanana Valley Cooperative Extension Service districts will be consolidated July 1 to form one district generally corresponding to the geographic area of the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

The consolidation was announced by James Matthews, director of the Cooperative Extension Service, a public service program of the University of Alaska.

The Yuko-Kwim and Tanana Valley district offices, both at different locations in Fairbanks, will be merged at one location (1514 S. Cushman St.) in Fairbanks, Matthews said.

The North Star Borough, City of Fairbanks and Tanana Chiefs Conference are forming an economic development corporation "and it makes a lot of sense to have our staff linked to these kinds of developments," Matthews said.

The Cooperative Extension Service plans eventually to realign all nine of its existing Alaska districts so they will be "fairly congruent" with the native regional corporations authorized by the Native Claims Settlement Act, he said.

Merger of the Yuko-Kwim and Tanana Valley districts will result in one district extending roughly southwestward from Northway and Fort Yukon to McGrath on the Kuskokwim River and Holy Cross on the

Yukon River.

Creation of the new district, Matthews said in a staff memo, "will remove an unnecessary boundary and allow us to serve our native Alaskan residents particularly more effectively if they reside in a rural community or if they move back and forth between such a location and urban areas in the district.

"It has a high potential for allowing us to focus staff resources more effectively on needs of all residents in the areas concerned. Several economies will be effected in the use of office facilities including space, secretarial services, and conference facilities. These are important factors in today's economic climate. More importantly, however, we will have one district office in the region as a focus for requests for educational service."

Matthews added that he is attempting to obtain federal and private foundation grants "to secure additional staffing in the areas of government education, leadership, and community development," areas in which there are "some existing opportunities and challenging needs."

Creation of the new larger district "will allow broader opportunities for staff specialization and much greater strength at the district level to meet broad educational program challenges," he said in his memo.

Matthews has named district

agents Ray Morgan and Virgil Severns as chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of a team responsible for total program development in the new district.

In the village areas, the university extension service (through publications and personal contacts) offers expertise on such things as gardening, food preservation, housing construction and repair, the making of clothing, tanning and marketing of furs, and local government functions.