

Sheffield announces land exchange agreement with Eklutna, Inc.

Gov. Bill Sheffield has announced that the state and Eklutna, Inc. have reached a preliminary agreement that brings the state closer to adding valuable recreation lands in the Eagle River Greenbelt to Chugach State Park.

The proposed agreement that was signed in the Governor's office in Anchorage spells out the process through which the state would exchange state lands in downtown Anchorage for Eklutna, Inc. under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The downtown Anchorage property under consideration is block 112A of the original Anchorage Townsite, and lies between Fourth and Fifth Avenue and Cordova and A Street.

"This proposed agreement is good for both the development and the environment of our community," said Gov. Sheffield. He added that the proposal would benefit the public by returning up to 4.39 downtown acres to the private sector to develop and it will provide an east-end anchor to downtown Anchorage that will also connect Calista's development to the downtown core.

The Eagle River greenbelt land described in the proposal would, if exchanged, link the existing boundaries of Chugach State Park with the State Park's Eagle River Campground. It would also bring to life the municipal commitment to establish a greenbelt along the corridor of Eagle River for public recreation and to protect habitat and wetlands.

Gov. Sheffield says that this agreement sets in motion a process to establish land values, identify existing uses on lands being considered for exchange, and then to prepare a package that will go to the public for review.

"The public will continue to be a vital part of this process," the governor said. This winter, the state's Department of Natural Resources will consult with citizens, the Chugach State Park Advisory Board, Community Councils and other interested groups at a series of public meetings. If, after the final exchange is agreed to, the total value of state land offered by the state exceeds \$5 million, legislative approval would be required.