

Edgecumbe may open in 85

By Mark Baumgartner
The Associated Press

Juneau — A legislative compromise has been reached opening the door to operation of the Mount Edgecumbe school in September 1985.

Sen. John Sackett, R-Ruby, said he softened his opposition to operation of the school after a decision was reached to delay the opening one year and to study how Edgecumbe can be integrated into Alaska's rural education system.

Sackett had opposed state takeover and operation of Mt. Edgecumbe, saying his constituents fear the school robs rural school districts of students and funding, which is based in part on enrollment.

The federal Bureau of Indian Affairs operated Mount Edgecumbe for 35 years, but closed the boarding school last year because of expansion of state high schools into rural Alaska and federal budget cuts.

Officials with the state Department of Education have worked to reach a compromise to keep the school open, said Larrae Rocheleau, Mount Edgecumbe project director.

"It's too valuable of a facility to give up," Rocheleau said.

The University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research will examine rural education needs, including how Mt. Edgecumbe can fit in.

Sackett said the study allays
(Continued on Page Twelve)

Mt. Edgecumbe

(Continued from Page One)

much of his concern that the Sitka school operates to the detriment of rural post-secondary schools.

The ISER study will consider what kind of curriculum and programs should be offered at Mt. Edgecumbe, Sackett said.

Rural students need vocational training, he said, and Mt. Edgecumbe possibly could include facilities to provide such training.

Proponents of Mount Edgecumbe say the school offers a diverse range of programs that can't be equalled in smaller, rural schools.

Opponents say it draws the best village students away from home.

Harold Raynolds, commissioner of the Department of Education, was scheduled to leave

Juneau on Friday for Washington, D.C., to deliver a letter signed by Sackett and Rep. Al Adams, D-Kotzebue, to BIA officials and Alaska's congressional delegates.

The letter indicates the state's willingness to operate Mt. Edgecumbe beginning in 1985, instead of 1984, as was intended when the state initially considered assuming control of the school.

The state has received \$22 million from the federal government to make fire, safety and utility improvements at the school.

Rocheleau said the money was given to the state on condition that it operate the school beginning this year. State officials hope the BIA won't object to the one-year delay, he said.