

Interior Dept. Quickly Solves Kake Problem

The southeastern community of Kake, Alaska, faced a land crisis recently when it found out that the land on which it sits was subject to townsite elimination from the Tongass National Forest.

Kake residents, up to that

time, had thought that their community was under protected status when they found that Bureau of Land Management can indeed declare the area for various forms of entry by people other than the Indians of the

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Kake Land Crisis . . .

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area.

The Kake land crisis was quickly smoothed over by a fast protest by the residents led by Kake Mayor Phillip Carlson and by the surprisingly swift action by the United States through the offices of the Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall and his deputy assistant secretary Robert Vaughan.

When the crisis arose, Mayor Carlson immediately contacted John Borbridge, president of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians.

Borbridge immediately consulted with Ted Bingham and townsite trustee George Gustafson of the BLM. The two men told Borbridge that the most feasible course might be to ask for immediate withdrawal of the area from all forms of entry.

Borbridge and Kake residents sent a request for such action on November 29 and the Interior Department acted on the matter on December 3.

"The situation was resolved with a dramatic suddenness with the announcement by Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior Robert Vaughan on Tuesday, December 3, that Secretary Udall had exercised administrative authority to withdraw the Kake townsite areas from all forms of appropriation for settlement,"

said John Borbridge.

"Kake," Borbridge continued, "which anticipates the visit of a townsite planner in the spring, will now have the time to plan for the orderly development of the area in a manner consistent with optimum land use."

Along with the request for action by Secretary Udall, the assistance of the Alaska delegation in Washington, D.C. was asked by Borbridge and Kake residents.

These included Sen. E.L. (Bob) Bartlett's staff, Congressman Howard Pollock, and Senator-elect Mike Gravel.

Also asked was Central Council I.S. Weissbrodt of Washington, D.C., and officials of the Anchorage Bureau of Land Management.

Borbridge said that the Central Council was doing more research on the subject of townsites and the results of these will be made known at a future date.