

Goldbelt offers Admiralty timber settlement

The dispute over what should happen to Admiralty Island timber land is still a long way from settlement, but a new step toward a settlement has been made by the Goldbelt Corporation.

Goldbelt announced last week that it has made its "fourth and final" proposal to the U.S. Department of Ag-

riculture for selections off Admiralty Island.

Goldbelt is the Native corporation for Juneau residents. In its effort to find land which could provide the corporation with a sound economic base, Goldbelt and Shee Atika, the Ketchikan urban Native corporation, attempted to select land on Admiralty Island which

looked good for timber harvesting. Admiralty is part of the Tongass National Forest. The village of Angoon is located there, with an economy based on commercial fishing and subsistence food gathering.

Goldbelt and Shee Atika are both faced with a need to make a profit without a good financial base, since as urban Na-

tive corporations, they did not receive large cash awards under the Land Claims Act.

However, Angoon representatives and the Sierra Club both objected to the prospects of large-scale logging on Admiralty, which is in a relatively undisturbed natural state. The dispute over Admiralty selections is now in U.S. District Court in Anchorage.

The statement by President Joe Wilson stated that Goldbelt "doesn't want to engage in a conservation controversy over where and to what extent units of the wilderness system should be established in Alaska. History has recorded the Tlingit

people as the first conservationists in this area and that they have been prudent managers of the lands for centuries."

Wilson also expressed Goldbelt's consistent willingness to entertain any reasonable proposal for shifting its land selections either on or off Admiralty Island, as long as the firm's basic economic interests are not adversely affected. The company cannot, however, afford a compromise which threatens its very existence as a profit-making enterprise.

Negotiations among the many parties to the dispute will continue in a meeting set for June 27 in Juneau.