

Alaska National Interest Land bills

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Native interests are treated favorably in some of the new Alaska National Interest Land bills, slated to come before Congress again this year; and points of difference should be readily resolved in the bargaining process.

The lands issue has dragged on for more than seven years since December 1971 when the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was approved by Congress to clear the way for the trans-Alaska pipeline. Section d(2) of the act mandated the Secretary of the Interior withdraw under four classifications public domain in Alaska to be confirmed by Congress by December of 1978.

The battle over the number of acres and manner of land classification in the withdrawals has been on a congressional hold since last October after a compromise version of the Senate and House bills failed to make it to the floor for a full vote.

Alaska lands bills were immediately introduced in both houses of Congress when it convened in January. And, it appears that Alaskan natives should get what they want, particularly through the Senate version.

The three main areas of concern are settlement act land conveyances and exchanges, state control of fish and game resources with subsistence the priority use, and technical amendments to ANCSA.

Of the 44 million acres to which natives are to receive title, only about 7 million acres have been conveyed so far. The new House bill which builds on the national monuments already withdrawn by Pres. Jimmy Carter, does not include a provision conveyance as did last year's version. However, according to John Katz, special counsel to Gov. Jay Hammond, some benefits of the former title are now spread elsewhere in the revised bill.

Those benefits include an extended tax moratorium on un-

developed native land which will run from the date of conveyance, rather than the date of enactment. Katz says the house bill doesn't include the conveyance mechanism because sponsor Rep. Mo Udall (D-Arizona), figures the transfer can be taken care of administratively, through the recent reorganized Bureau of Land Management. However, native corporations may want the legislative conveyance process included in any new land bills.

Steve Silver, legislative assistant to Sen. Ted Stevens, says the Senate version ignores the monument status of withdrawn lands and is based on the bill marked up by the senate energy committee last year. Silver says the Senate bill prioritizes and speeds up native land transfers and confirms areas that have to be selected, such as acreage adjacent to villages.

The Senate bill is preferable when it comes to authorizing land selections and exchanges. It lists specific site amendments, while the House version fails to consummate exchange rights.

However, language affecting the Goldbelt and Shee Atika land swaps in Southeast is included in HB 39.

A preference for subsistence resource users is codified in both bills. The House measure requires federal monitoring of fish and game management, whereby a state plan must be approved by the Secretary of Interior. This section is less restrictive than last year's version and appears to have the support of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The Senate proposal does not unleash a federal watchdog, but provides for regional fish and game boards set up by state or federal government. Only under the Senate version could the courts intervene if subsistence users feel they are slighted.

About 20 ANCSA amendments agreed to among AFN, the federal-state land use planning commission, the state and the Interior department are covered in both measures. But HB 39 excludes amendments which authorize land convey-

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ance and exchange. Sen. Stevens has introduced the list of amendments as a separate bill to ensure they'll get looked at by Congress even if the d(2) effort fails again this year.

The state is clamoring to grab the reins of the d(2) band wagon as it maneuvers toward a "unified" stance. The d(2) parade started in Juneau last week with Sen. Mike Gravel telling the legislature he'll support a state lobbying effort at a compromise bill this year. But he warned he'll stymie the legislation of guaranteed access across federal land is not provided.

Then Friday House and Se-

nate committees gave initial approval to a \$1.5 million d(2) warchest, \$1 million less than requested by Gov. Jay Hammond. A final vote on the appropriation is expected this week. Hammond wants to hire a top notch lobbyist, establish an office in Washington, and set up an extensive information network in a massive effort to persuade Congress to overturn the Antiquities Act under which Carter withdrew 56 million acres in national monuments.

Sen. John Sackett (R-Galena) and Rep. Jack Fuller (D-Nome) travelled to Anchorage late last week seeking AFN endorsement of legislative action on the federal lands issue.