

Gov. Views D2

Today Governor Hammond announced he will recommend to Congress a new and innovative approach to the issue of Federal D-2 lands.

The key to this approach is the establishment of cooperative management systems he calls "Comans." There would also be a new category of Federal D-2 land classification called Alaska Resource Lands.

Months ago the governor created a D-2 Task Force and conveyed to them these concepts which he directed be incorporated into a suggested piece of legislation.

In keeping with his policy the governor stressed that these state proposals be subject to thorough public review before a final state position is consolidated.

Hammond said, "I am proposing this new Alaska Resource Land category because we do not want most D-2 lands locked up for all time in one classification or another."

Under Hammond's proposal, Congress would designate these federal lands as Alaska Resource Lands and indicate their dominant resource values. Then an Alaska Land Commission composed of equal numbers of federal and state appointees would provide for the management of such lands to permit all usages compatible with such dominant resource values.

For example, if Congress set up a Resource Land area and recognized waterfowl as its prime resource, the commission would set forth a plan showing how waterfowl habitat would be protected while other compatible uses of the area are pursued.

The emphasis is on what is possible, not what is prohibited. Area advisory boards would be established under the commission so that landowners, managers, and local interests would be able to participate in planning and management decisions affecting specific areas.

The advantage of this approach is that federal lands would not be frozen into a rigid system by Congress unnecessarily excluding some uses for the protection of others.

"What it boils down to," Hammond said, "is that Alaskans would have a proper voice in the management of federal lands."

"In return for meaningful Alaskan share in management, we suggest the possibility of pooling state lands and federal lands adjacent to D-2 lands into what we call Cooperative Management Areas or Comans. Private landholders would be invited to participate voluntarily should they wish.

"In Alaska, which has such a crazy mixture of federal, state and private land side by side, it is absolutely essential for sound resource planning that decisions on the use of such adjacent lands be made through cooperative planning by all landholders if at all possible. The desire of some for excessive federal use restrictions on the D-2 lands will be best offset by adoption of cooperative constraints on adjacent lands. Each owner would have the incentive to cooperate knowing he might have more to lose through non-cooperation.

"For example, in exchange for being able to hunt on what otherwise could become federal park lands, Alaskans might be willing to provide for additional habitat protection upon adjacent state lands.

"I agree there are some key areas in Alaska that should be designated as federal parks, refuges, forests and wild and scenic rivers. While the Settlement Act authorized 80 million

acres for such designation, the Task Force has recommended substantially less acreage. Their maps presently under my review include less than 40 million acres in the four federal systems.

"Task Force recommendations would place 62 million acres of federal land into the Alaska Resource Lands category under cooperative management permitting broader, responsible usage.

"Lands within Alaska Resource Lands classification should not necessarily be precluded from state selection. Neither the boundaries nor the amounts of acreage are fixed in granite. They will be subject to modification following full and open public meetings over the next few months.

"These recommendations recognize as a proper use the retention of some lands in their natural state for the enjoyment of all Alaskans and all Americans, but at the same time provide for proper development and management of Alaska's resources by Alaskans.

"We believe that if our Comans system is adopted, relatively small amounts of land should go into the four traditional systems. The greater the area in which proper management is provided under the Comans system, the less land should be rigidly locked up."

"Similarly, the less willing Congress or Alaskans are to participate in cooperative management, the greater the threat that unnecessarily large amounts of federal land will be placed into more restrictive classification."

The Task Force, at the governor's direction, will shortly announce a series of public meetings across the state so the final position on D-2 lands will incorporate the best information available from those who live in Alaska and from those most intimately familiar with federal, state and private lands in their own areas of residence.

Hammond said, "I told my D-2 Task Force to look for progressive approaches to land use systems which allow for more flexible management to meet the needs of Alaskans. At my direction, the Task Force has avoided getting locked into any acreage numbers games or conventional federal land agency jurisdictions.

"They have followed my directions and have produced a set of proposals I believe most Alaskans will support. The federal D-2 lands management I am proposing to the people of Alaska will require approval of the Alaska Legislature and the U.S. Congress.

"This, I believe, will insure the additional public input I feel is absolutely necessary to produce a land management system which will finally provide a basis for reasonable land use in Alaska for the future."

Maps now under review by the governor showing specific boundary recommendations proposed by the Task Force will be available for public review and recommendations by mid-November.

"I am announcing the Task Force's basic recommendations today because they represent new and innovative concepts of cooperative land management for Alaska that, to me, are far more important than any acreage numbers game or lines drawn on a map.

"If these concepts are not adequately supported in Alaska and at the national level, then we would have to take a wholly different approach to acreage and boundary proposals."