

# *FAA authorizes island's use for treatment center*

The war on drugs in Alaska has gotten a boost from the Federal Aviation Agency, according to the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corp.

The FAA has announced it is granting the Sitka-based Adolescent Residential Treatment Center a permit to use a section of Biorka Island, 13 miles south of Sitka, as the location for its wilderness challenge program. The island was formerly the site of an FAA navigation facility.

"We're extremely pleased to receive this timely support from the

FAA," said Art Willman, vice president of SEARHC, which operates the treatment program. The program provides substance abuse treatment for at-risk Native youths from throughout Alaska.

The Adolescent Residential Treatment Center is currently using a remote Forest Service facility at False Island in Peril Strait for its wilderness program. Earlier this year, the Forest Service revealed plans to open False Island to logging activities by the Alaska Pulp Corp.

As a result, the site will no longer be suitable for youth programs, said Willman. However, it is still unclear whether the program will be able to move soon to Biorka Island, he added.

The bunkhouses and other buildings on False Island, which were at one time a Forest Service Young Adult Conservation Corps camp, have served as ideal facilities for the treatment program, said Willman. SEARHC would like to see the buildings moved to the new Biorka Island site, he said.

The program offers 60-day sessions for groups of 12 to 16 youths. The first part of the program takes place at the main treatment center facility near Mount Edgecumbe Hospital in Sitka.

After several weeks, the group moves out to the remote site for the wilderness part of the program, which incorporates adventure-based counseling in which youths experience personal growth through overcoming outdoor challenges.