

# Alaska land bill heads for mark-up

## Subsistence low on land bill totem pole

The great Alaskan land game is about to begin its second major round.

Right now, Congress is preparing for the debate over what to do with millions of acres of federal land in Alaska not selected by the State of Alaska and the Native corporations.

When Congress passed the land claims act in 1971, it set a deadline of December, 1978 to decide what federal land should be left open for resource development and what land should be protected for recreation and subsistence use.

*Last fall, after several weeks of public hearings all across the nation, including Alaska, the House Subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands adopted a draft bill on the Alaska National Interest (d) (2) Lands for use as a mark-up tool.*

The phrase "mark-up" means the Subcommittee will go over the draft line by line and arrive at an agreement on how federal land in Alaska should be classified and managed. The final Subcommittee draft must then be reviewed by at least one other House committee, then by the full House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, and eventually, the full House of Representatives and the Senate will pass an Alaskan land bill.

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# ● Land bill

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Although the leadership of the Subcommittee had hoped to vote on a final draft before Congress recessed for the holidays, it finally agreed to postpone mark-up until Rep. Lloyd Meeds, a Democrat from Washington, drafted what he predicted would be an Alaska land bill more acceptable to everyone, from Natives to conservationists and developers.

Tundra Times sources report that although the issue of subsistence use of federal land in Alaska has begun to receive greater attention from Congressmen, the "big fist fight" is still between developers and conservationists over mineral development on federal land and how much acreage should be set aside in parks, refuges and forests for recreation and wilderness protection.

One source gloomily reported that subsistence is "a recognized problem in the bill, but it is not a problem of national concern."

To date, three major approaches to the management of subsistence resources have been proposed for adoption in the final Alaska land bill approved by Congress.

The first approach, advocated by Senator Ted Stevens, would continue complete State authority to regulate the taking of fish and game on federal lands. Subsistence would be designated the priority use of these resources, with a preference for local residents.

The second approach, proposed by Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus, would permit the State to continue its control of fish and game on federal (d)(2) but subject to a set of loose federal guidelines. The guidelines would include a priority for subsistence use of federal lands and a system of subsistence advisory boards. However, Andrus proposed no method for federal oversight of State management performance.

The third approach, adopted by the House Subcommittee, calls for continued State management of fish and game on all federal land (not just new parks and refuges as proposed by Andrus). However, the State must first submit a plan to the Interior Secretary which would be reviewed to make sure it fits federal standards. If the State refused to go along with changes proposed by the Secretary, the federal government would reassume management authority so that subsistence users would be protected.

Guidelines under the Subcommittee proposal include a local/regional/statewide system to allow user input into subsistence policy.