

Create Permanent PLUC

WASHINGTON — Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, recently proposed creation of a permanent federal and state Planning and Land-Use Commission that would function as a statewide planning agency.

The Alaska lawmaker announced his proposal as the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee prepared to open hearings on the disposition of up to 80 million acres of federal land within the State of Alaska.

Section 17 D-2 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provides that up to 80 million acres are to be considered for inclusion in the four federal systems: national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests and wild and scenic rivers.

Gravel said he believes it is

impossible for one person or body to determine now the "highest and best use, in perpetuity, of such a sizable portion of Alaska."

He said if any substantial portion of land is immediately placed in the four national systems, "its use and its categorization would remain inflexible to what might prove to be a warranted change." He said Alaska would have to return to Congress for a resolution.

Gravel said the commission he proposed "would have the power and authority to determine, on a continual basis, the highest and best use of all lands in the State of Alaska, both private and public."

Under terms of the settlement act, Congress is required to act on the so-called D-2

lands by Dec. 18, 1978. Gravel said he is confident that Congress can "meet the full measure of the challenge."

He said the commission's concept would provide for cooperative land use planning and management on a statewide basis and would transcend federal and state ownership.

He tentatively suggested a permanent commission of 10 members, five appointed by the President and five by the governor of Alaska.

Gravel said there are areas in Alaska which should be immediately included in the four systems. He said the areas and their sizes should be the subject of direct committee investigation and he urged the Senate committee to travel to Alaska for that purpose.

The Alaska lawmaker said in his statement that the proposal he was offering is a concept rather than concrete legislation. He said it was an innovative approach which must be considered because "the alternatives are staggering."