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For Alaska



"THE ANDRUS PLAN"

Recently, Secretary of the Interior, Cecil Andrus announced the Administration's position on D-2 lands. Andrus advocated the establishment of 92 million acres of D-2 lands, the vast majority of which would be National Parks and Wildlife Refuges, in Alaska. The Administration's position is actually two proposals, one dealing with wilderness designation and the other with parks and refuges. In addition to the 92 million acres advocated for immediate inclusion in the different management systems, the Secretary recommended to the Congress the establishment of approximately 43.31 million acres of "instant" wilderness, including 19.2 million acres of wilderness designated in already existing parks and wildlife refuges in Alaska. Thus, what is touted as a 92 million acre proposal, is really a 111 million acre proposal.

More importantly, such large designations of park, wildlife refuges, and wilderness do not serve the national interest, because these designations prohibit reasonable and necessary exploration and development of hard-rock mineral resources, oil and gas deposits, agricultural potential, and other uses which have yet to be fully explored in Alaska.

The Alaskan lifestyle will be greatly hindered by this proposal, if it is enacted into law. Sport hunting will not be permitted in over 90% of the parklands proposed by the Secretary.

The future of surface travel by motorized vehicles on the areas designated as wilderness and on certain park and refuge lands remains a question mark, as does the use and landing of aircraft in these areas. Even if allowed, Alaskans will find themselves required to obtain permits to continue activities which they have traditionally carried on.

Further complicating matters, Andrus proposed the designation of 33 rivers, or segments of rivers, as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The effect of wild rivers on the Alaskan lifestyle could be immense, with motorcraft, including barge and river boat travel, being prohibited. Additionally, the construction of hydroelectric powersites could be precluded, and the routing of pipelines, highways, and means of access across rivers would be limited.

However, the Secretary's proposal is not completely negative. It rejects the revocation of State and Native selections proposed by the Udall/Metcalf bills, and affirms the right of the State to continue management of fish and game on these lands. The Secretary also tacitly endorsed the concept of cooperative management proposed by the Governor, Congressman Young, and I, in the bill which I introduced earlier this year in the Senate.

But in summary, the Secretary's proposal was very disappointing and represents a step backwards. While exhibiting a real knowledge of the issues involved in the D-2 consideration, the Secretary declined to endorse the unique management concepts which are necessary to provide for a reasonable and thoughtful decision on Alaska's D-2 lands. As I have maintained in the past, flexibility and balance remain the key to a responsible decision to the D-2 lands question. I will continue to seek that balance and flexibility as Congress proceeds in its consideration of this issue.