

Senator Ted Stevens asks easement extension

The June 1 deadline for filing of recreational easement applications should be extended and an advertising campaign begun to let Alaskans know of the need to file if they require such an easement, Sen. Ted Stevens has told Secretary of Interior Thomas Kleppe.

"In effect, easements not asked for by June 1 will be lost forever since the terms of a conveyance cannot be changed after it is made. That deadline is totally unrealistic since it occurs less than five months after the policy was announced," Stevens said in a telegram to Kleppe.

Under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, provisions were made to reserve recreational easements across Native lands. Recently the Bureau of Land Management set June 1 as the cut-off date for easement applications.

The senator asked that a media campaign, including newspaper and electronic advertising, speakers and meetings with Alaskan groups, and direct mail

should be used to inform Alaskans of the filing requirements.

"The BLM has a well-developed relationship with the Native groups but does not have that kind of contact with those whose rights were to be protected by easements. Therefore, the old ways of communicating are not enough," he said.

Stevens also asked that the BLM staff be made more responsive and that the staff assigned to the easement filing procedure be increased.

"Alaskans, as you know, are very outdoor-oriented and make a great deal of use of the public lands. I think it is vital that the BLM do more to make them aware of their rights and do more to help them exercise their

rights. But most important, more time must be provided," Stevens said in his telegram.