

State Drops Plans To Sell Estates On Lake George

The State has dropped plans for promotion at the New York World's Fair of the sale of Alaska "wilderness estates" along beautiful Lake George in the Tanacross area, according to Roscoe E. Bell, director of Alaska Division of Lands.

The action came after controversy arose over an Indian lands claim by the Tanacross Indians and a protest was filed by the native group with the Bureau of Land Management involving 44,363 acres of land in the George and Healy Lake areas.

In Fairbanks last week Bell said the federal government has received a protest from a group of Tanacross area Indians regarding the Bureau of Land Management approval of the State land selection in the Lake George area.

The State made land selections in the George Lake area in 1961, and
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Lake George . . .

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the Bureau of Land Management gave tentative approval of the sale in the fall of 1963.

Bell said the State takes over management of lands on tentative approval and proceeds to market these lands in many cases.

"Millions of dollars have been received in the past on tentatively approved land sales," Bell said. "There was nothing unusual in the proposal to sell land in the Lake George area," he added.

"The lands are sold after tentative approval to avoid long survey delays," Bell explained.

However, Bell pointed out that it was the responsibility of the federal government to determine the availability of the land before turning it over to the State.

The Tanacross Indians filed a claim on the Lake George area in the 1950's, but an error in plotting the claim resulted in the Lake George area being left out of the claimed area.

The mistake was discovered by former Division of Lands employee Richard Mueller, following a lead that the Tanacross Indians had chased a white trapper out of the area.

Mueller determined the error that had been made, but later resigned and then attempted to withdraw his resignation in a controversy that saw him charge that the State was attempting to "push aside the rights" of the Tanacross natives.

In Fairbanks Bell said that at no time was the State committed in any way to the New York World's Fair promotion of the "wilderness estates" in such a way that they could not have dropped them at any time.

Bell said the lot survey at Lake George was conducted last summer at a cost of about \$20,000.

"We'll delay disposal pending clarification as we don't want to deprive anyone of their rights," Bell said.

Bell indicated the Indian protest was a matter for the BLM, but said that the state is anxious to see that native rights are upheld.

Bell said normally any protests are smoked out during publication and advertisement, but that in this case they were not.

The director of lands said individual claims could easily be taken care of by the State, but the blanket claim was another matter.

He explained the idea of promoting the sale of "wilderness estates" at the World's Fair was designed to popularize Alaska's wilderness recreation resources.

However, he pointed out that buyers would have to come to Alaska to participate in the actual sales.