

Villages of Allakaket, Bettles Are Denied Townsites by BLM

The villages of Allakaket and Bettles have both been denied townsites in an action by the Bureau of Land Management. The move, made at the instruction of the Director of the BLM in Washington, D.C. is described

as a result of the land freeze. William H. Mattice, Realty Officer in the Fairbanks District of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, attacked the BLM decision Thursday.

Referring to Public Land Order 4582, Mattice said, "If it is subject to existing rights, how can it be determined that an existing village has no right to be there. Are they trespassing?"

"This is another example of the natives getting the short end of the stick because of bureaucratic bungling," Mattice charged.

The application for withdrawal of the lands for townsites was made in the Fairbanks land office on April 12. It was filed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in a move to protect Indian land rights.

Allakaket and Bettles are the only two villages in the Fairbanks District which had not filed for townsite withdrawals when the land freeze came into effect. When they did file their petitions, they were rejected because of the freeze.

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BLM DENIES . . .

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Mattice stated that the Alaskan Natives are suffering as a result of the action. "Their rights are being protected so much that they don't have any," he said.

It is expected that an appeal may be filed on behalf of the villages by the Fairbanks BIA Office. The appeal would have to come within 30 days of the rejection.

Mattice indicated that he hopes to travel to the villages and assist in the appeal so that it may be filed before the deadline.