

Editorial



Chugach Region deserves better

We find it incredible that land selections under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act by Port Graham, English Bay and Chugach Alaska Corp. are suddenly front-page news.

We refer to recent coverage of selections by the two village corporations and the Native regional corporation to about 75,000 acres inside the 669,000-acre Kenai Fjords National Park. The headline: "Natives claim most of coastline in park," is followed by a comment from a "former back-country ranger" that he is "horrified" by the selections. He also states his fear that there won't be too much of the park left after the Alaska Native corporations get through with it.

Whining by Park Service officials and sensation seeking reporters doesn't make sense because Alaska Natives were here long before these parks were established. Their land right and land use predate by tens of thousands of years these new boundaries.

Why wasn't it worth such coverage years ago when all Chugach Alaska got to select from was mountaintops and glaciers? Chugach — of all corporations — least deserves such criticism because the corporation had to wait years even to begin selecting much of its lands. Why wasn't that big news?

The long delays were thanks to poor selections the corporation was offered and lots of red tape created by the federal government.

Now, nearly 20 years after passage of ANCSA in 1971, Chugach finally may get down to getting this portion of its land. Suddenly, however, it's time for a big story and hand wringing by U.S. Park Service officials.

We believe Chugach and the villages in the region deserve better than this. We believe the Alaska Native people of Prince William Sound have faced one setback after another, and what they deserve now is what is rightfully theirs.

The news should be that finally, finally the people of the region may be getting a fair deal. They've been waiting for too long.

Congratulations to Bill Allen

We'd like to offer our congratulations to Veco's Bill Allen, who announced last week his purchase of the Anchorage Times. Veco has shown its social conscience on the pages of this newspaper by running anti-alcohol abuse advertisements.

Allen has pledged to offer a pro-development stance on his editorial page and balanced news coverage in the rest of the newspaper. We wish him well.

We bid farewell to the Times' Bob Atwood who has served Alaska for more than 50 years.

