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Nooiksut Selections Left Intact by Withdrawals

Withdrawal lands of the recently resettled Village of Nooiksut on the North Slope will be unaffected by a federal-to-state land transfer made last week in the Prudhoe Bay area,

a Bureau of Land Management spokesman said.

The patenting of 3.1 million acres by the state, concluded last Wednesday, was one of three major withdrawals within a few

days by Alaska, the Kenai Native Association and the federal Department of the Interior.

K.L. Cartier, BLM, Anchorage, told the Tundra Times that the Prudhoe Bay state withdraw-

al is not within the townships surrounding Nooiksut, meaning that the village's rights under the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act were duly recognized.

The tiny Eskimo village, population about 100, lies on the border between state land and the Naval Petroleum Reserve No. 4. Abandoned in the early 1940s

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because of the lack of a school, the villagers moved to Barrow to ensure the education of their children.

Recent resettlement, however, makes Nooiksut eligible to participate in the land claims settlement. Education in the village is being supported by the Arctic Slope Borough.

"Those townships around Nooiksut are not being touched," said Cartier.

The transferred lands are rich in oil and lie east of the petroleum reserve and west of the Arctic National Wildlife Range.

Joe Keenan, state director of the Division of Lands, said the transfer is the first of a series of state-selected land from the federal government to be made under terms of the Alaska Statehood Act.

The state is privileged to select 103 million acres under the act, but so far has taken title to only about 6.3 million acres.

Another important land transaction involved the turning over of Wildwood, a former Air Force base three miles from Kenai, to the Kenai Native Association (KNA). The action marked the first transfer of land to Natives under the land claims settlement.

Transferred to Native ownership was 4,267 acres of land, plus other facilities valued at \$5 million. Touch-and-go negotiations for the base had been under way two years with the Natives and the Kenai Peninsula Borough teaming up to demon-

strate a good use for the facility to the Pentagon.

With the help of a federal grant, the two reopened the base for use as a school for secondary education of Native students, an adult vocational training center and an agricultural experiment station. The Pentagon was impressed.

A third withdrawal involves the biggest chunk of land — 15 million of unreserved acres taken by the Department of Interior for "classification and public interest." This means that the lands — in 13 areas of the state — will be studied to see what their future use should be.

Homesteading on federal land in Alaska will be curtailed under the transfer which was signed by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton last Monday and published in the Federal Register on Friday.

Some doubt developed over which date the transfer would become effective — the signature date of March 25 or the publishing date of March 29. Richard H. LeDosquet, BLM District manager, Fairbanks, said the first date is the effective one "as far as the BLM in Alaska is concerned."

All unreserved land has now been withdrawn. Most of the 15 million acres are located primarily in the Interior and Western Alaska. They were added to other land withdrawn under Section 17 (d)1 of the Native Claims Act.