

# Agriculture Department opposes Chugach land selections

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Chugach Region Inc. once again is facing almost unanimous opposition to proposed land selections the region has designated as lands entitled them in accordance with the 10-year-old Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Opposition this time included the U.S. Department of Agriculture which sent a letter to Secretary of the Interior James Watt stating "We do not support any selections from the Tongass National Forest. Except for mar-

ine parks, as indicated herein, we do not support any other significant selections from the Chugach National Forest. We feel that the public interest demands a continuing viable National Forest Program in Alaska."

The letter also was strong in opposition to Chugach selections in the Lower 48.

"Selections of National Forest System lands in the Lower 48 states are unacceptable. We believe that use of such lands for satisfaction of such Alaska claims would establish a precedent for the use of these reserved public lands to a number of

other non-indigenous Indian claims."

The letter was written by Deputy Department of Agriculture Secretary Richard E. Lyng and it asked Watt to support the agriculture department's position.

At a recent press conference, Watt was unaware of the letter and his assistant, William Horn said the Interior Department was watching the review process.

The traditional Chugach area runs from English Bay, around the Gulf of Alaska including Prince William Sound, and to south of Cape Yakataga. More than half of the region is includ-

ed in the Chugach National Forest which contains forests of Sitka spruce and western hemlock. Little commercial timbering operations have been conducted in the region.

Under the ANCSA bill, the Chugach region is entitled to 339,000 acres of lands. The corporation also has the option of accepting a monetary settlement but that option has generally been discounted because of the traditional age-old ties to the lands.

Speaking for the proposal was Alaska Federation of Natives chairman Nelson Angapak who

told the study group "Concerns of the Chugach Natives must be satisfied. The land entitlements must be fulfilled. I am alarmed at looking at an official recommendation from the forest service. On the one hand they are opposed.

"The Forest Service should reconsider their position such that they (Chugach Region Inc.) can select and in Alaska. Reconsider that position such that forest service land be made available. We all agree that time is of the essence." Angapak said.

(Continued on Page Thirteen)

# Chugach land selections opposed

(Continued from Page One)

Chugach Region Inc., president Lionel Dredge said "The whole purpose of D-2 bill was so Chugach would get land from Chugach Forest. Chugach obviously took the lead by throwing five options on the table. Now we're back to point zero. Every piece of selection haas been vetoed."

Dredge later said, "Let's proceed vigorously backwards and see where we can go."

According to Dredge, "We

(Chugach) could pick junk land and say 'that is our number one priority' and someone in this room would say you cannot have it."

Carl Propes, Chugach Lands Director said, "They're (Forest Service) not very favorably inclined toward any of our out-of-state selections."

Opposition also came from a longtime Cordova resident.

"I want to go on record as being in support of the testimony given by Mr. Dick Shellhorn, Dr.

Oliver Osborn, and Dr. Larry Ermold. I whole-heartedly agree with what they have stated, and do not believe that the Chugach Natives should be allowed to select any more land in the Chugach National Forest or in this area."

In later testimony housewife and high school teacher Patricia Jones said, "I certainly do not believe in giving additional lands from this area or from the Chugach National Forest," to the Chugach Natives.