

# 2100 BEFORE LAND SURVEYED ?

## BLM Report Indicates Could Be 22nd Century Before Alaska Surveyed

By MARGIE BAUMAN

ANCHORAGE — A survey report contained a new Bureau of Land Management publication indicates it could be the 22nd century before Alaska is completely surveyed.

The survey is prerequisite to issuance of titles to the land, so neither the state, the Native population or other residents are likely to find such a proposal satisfactory.

Lyle Jones, chief of the BLM's Division of Technical Services, said he wants to speed things up — but he's got a big job ahead — with less than 25 million of Alaska's 375,296,000 acres surveyed.

He can't say for certain where the funds or staff to beef up the program will come from either.

The problem, briefly defined in the new bi-monthly publication of BLM, "The Land," is this:

"At the 1.5 million acre per year survey rate which was typical before the enactment of the claims act, BLM could keep surveying until well into the 22nd century . . .

"So in the next 20 years, BLM's branch of cadastral survey will need to grow rapidly.

The rate of growth depends on the U.S. Congress, which appropriates the money for the survey program, and on any laws or legal actions such as "freezes" which limit manpower."

That statement alone posed an immediate question to a staff member of one regional corporation: does this mean the cadastral survey branch of the BLM will become a giant, essentially non-functioning bureaucracy?

"We would like to be in a uniform expansion rate of 25-30 people a year," he said. "This number we could recruit and train and move into the program without causing a loss of efficient use of funds."

But Jones has no guarantee of funds or staff. "There is a shortage of land surveyors nationwide," he said.

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In the early days of the United States, a massive survey program encouraged thorough training of surveyors, but as demands for surveys decreased, so did the number of schools offering survey studies. Only two universities in the U. S. presently offer a degree in surveying.

Jones said he is looking in state and outside for people to fill positions of temporary field assistants and professional surveyors. Inquiries on job opportunities in either field may be made to the personnel office of BLM, 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, or by phone: 277-1561.

In-house training is also offered to BLM surveyors, to update them on new surveying techniques. Whatever their training, the job is immense. The State of Alaska alone is entitled to 104 million acres, to be selected within 25 years of statehood.

"We have about 20 million of that surveyed," said Jones.

"The Natives are entitled to 40 million acres and we don't have any of that surveyed on the ground. The Natives are also entitled to approximately 8,000 Native allotments which might be composed of four tracts per allotment, which

means roughly 25,000 special surveys to put in."

When and where the surveys are done "depends a lot on when they are ready to go," Jones said. "If all the areas were ready to go at the same time, we still probably would distribute our survey program in all areas, because you couldn't show any one region favoritism over the other."

The Statehood Act provides for conditional sale or lease of lands that have been tentatively approved, in the interim period.

That means lands where the state filed application. The BLM reviewed it and determined there are no conflict of rights to the land then the tentative approval is given and the state may conditionally sell or lease the lands.

The state does not have fee title because it doesn't have patents in most cases, "but if tentative approval is proper, then the status of the land is pretty well cleared up," Jones said.

Meanwhile Jones acknowledges there are survey applications from one end of the state to the other and it will be a long time before some of these demands are met.