

Native Claims Opinions Turn To Optimism

Native land claims opinions from such sources as Sen. Mike Gravel and Congressman Nick Begich are becoming more optimistic recently that the claims legislation in Congress has a good chance to enact a bill possibly in October.

"Things look good in the Senate," remarked Sen. Gravel. "There's a good chance that the Senate will come up with a 40 million acre, billion dollar land claims package."

In Juneau, Rep. Begich said that the land claims dam "had cracked" and that he was confident that the claims settlement would "spill out" prior to the House adjournment date of October 15.

The Congress will reconvene on September 8 and the House Interior Committee is scheduled to meet on September 16 to consider the Indian Affairs Subcommittee version of the claims bill.

The significant thing about the scheduled meeting is that it will last for five days, something that is almost unheard of in that committee's habit of working.

"I think our bill is going to pass the first week in October," Begich stated in Juneau.