

Both Interior Committees Work on Claims

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Congressional action on Alaska Native Land Claims legislation continues here this week with Interior Committee meetings scheduled for both the House and the Senate.

The Senate Interior Committee will meet Wednesday in executive session to mark up land claims legislation. According to a Gravel spokesman, Alaska Senators Mike Gravel and Ted Stevens have communicated closely with Senate Interior Chairman Henry M. Jackson (D-Washington) in recent weeks, in order to minimize differences. Claims votes taken in Wednesday's session are expected to decisively shape the bill which that committee will send to the Senate floor. The two Alaska Senators have both committed support to the 60 million acre settlement asked by the AFN.

Senator Jackson is reported to have given private indications of support for a claims bill which would provide between 25 and 40 million acres of land.

The amount of land in the Senate bill, according to reliable

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sources, will probably be decided on Wednesday.

Other major claims issues expected to be acted upon during that meeting include a decision of whether to accept the

regional concept adopted by the AFN and provided for in the land claims bill which was reported out of the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee on August 3.

Senator Jackson has indicated dissatisfaction with the concept of regional corporations and is reported strongly in favor of statewide corporations with extensive federal controls.

Legislative aides to Senators Gravel and Stevens will meet next Tuesday with Interior Committee majority counsel William Van Ness in an effort to work out a proposal acceptable to both the Alaska Senators and Chairman Jackson.

Senate bill 35, the original Jackson bill, is expected to be endorsed by the committee with probable modifications in the land selection formula and the amount of lands provided.

The House Interior Committee is scheduled to begin markup sessions on Tuesday. The Claims bill to be reported out of the full committee is expected to be the same basic bill reported out of the Indian Affairs Subcommittee.

Representative John Saylor (Rep. Penn) is intent on introducing two amendments to the subcommittee bill which would require enactment of a five year freeze similar to the land freeze currently in effect while a comprehensive land use plan is developed.

The second amendment may require Congressional approval prior to the issuance of federal land use permits for oil development.

Action on both the Senate and House sides is expected to follow nearly the same schedule. Bills should be reported out of both committees before the end of September, for votes in the House and Senate on or about October 1, and deliberations in a joint conference committee by approximately October 15.

Members of the Alaska Congressional delegation remain hopeful that early action will be taken on a bill acceptable to the natives, the state of Alaska and to the Congress.