

letters

letters

● D-2 spectacle still goes on

Dear Editor:

"Piddle, Twiddle, and Resolve, but not one damn thing do we solve." Those lyrics from the musical "1776" summarize the legislature's debate over anti-H.R. 39 resolutions and funding for the D-2 Steering Council for Alaska Lands (SJR 41, SR 10, and HB 652).

The legislature's D-2 spectacle began when the Senate decided it did not want to fund the D-2 steering council until the legislature had approved a state position which the council would lobby for. The Senate linked the council's \$896,222 appropriation to a joint resolution which voiced opposition to: H.R. 39 as originally introduced; the Carter administration position, and the House subcommittee version of H.R. 39. The resolution and appropriation became bogged down in parliamentary maneuvering by rural legislators who objected to the resolution's statement in support of state, instead of federal, management of wildlife and subsistence hunting on federal lands.

All of the further modifications to H.R. 39 which the resolution calls for are already incorporated in the bill! Here are the six changes the resolution asks consideration of and how H.R. 39 was already amended to meet those concerns:

The resolution (SR 10) opposed passage of H.R. 39 without: "(1) a careful mineral inventory and guaranteed access provisions;" H.R. 39 provides for access and ongoing mineral surveys on all public lands in Alaska.

"(2) traditional environmental and economic impact studies;" the volumes upon volumes of studies and hearing testimony on the D-2 lands far exceeds the scope and depth of the "traditional" studies referred to. If the legislature likes, we could study it further, but that would mean a new federal land freeze during the studies.

"(3) provisions for future agriculture development;" the D-2 bill has very little to do with agricultural development because the state and Native corporations have already selected the best lands for agricultural potential in Alaska. Several studies clearly show that the state has already selected more than enough lands to develop a large-scale farming industry if it desires to do so.

"(4) completion of the selection process by the state and Natives;" H.R. 39 not only provides for expedited, legislative conveyance of state and Native land selections, it allows the state to make selections in some areas, such as D-2 lands in the Iliamna region, where the state previously had no legal selection rights. It was Congressman Seiberling who called a special hearing to investigate delays in land conveyances and find a way to expedite them.

"(5) state game management as guaranteed under the Statehood Act;" This section has been the focus of the controversy in the legislature. Title VII of H.R. 39 provides that subsistence hunting on national interest lands will be given priority over sport hunting. It also gives the management authority to the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, subject to federal oversight. This was a compromise solution to the rural subsistence hunter vs. urban sport hunter conflict that was agreed upon by all the interested parties—ADF&G; Alaska Federation of Natives; Rural CAP; conservation organizations, Congressman Young; Congressman Seiberling, et. al. Rep. Young introduced the amendment for the present Title VII language which the legislature objects to. Title VII gives the state an unprecedented federal statutory mandate to manage wildlife on federal lands. It is incredible that the majority of the legislators oppose this.

"and (6) cooperative federal-state planning and development." H.R. 39 provides for this and establishes a federal-state council to coordinate land planning. There are several other provisions, such as cooperative agreements and the Alaska Native Land Bank, to foster cooperative management.

Some have characterized a Lower-48 Congressman's pro-H.R. 39 vote as "Cheap pro-environment vote." It would be more accurate to describe Alaska state legislators' anti-H.R. 39 stance as "cheap anti-environment vote." It is clear from the debate and the resolution itself that very few, if any, of anti-H.R. 39 legislators have even read the most recent version of H.R. 39. With the exception of a few rural representatives who have been addressing the subsistence protection issue, the debate has been "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." One vainly hopes that the State legislature would put as much time and effort, albeit more constructively and with some research, into addressing the state land and wildlife issues that are subject to their jurisdiction.

Sincerely,
David Levine

letters

F & G mishandled request for subsistence zones

Congressman Don Young
Merchant Marine and Fisheries
Committee
Subcommittee on Fish, Wildlife
and the Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congressman Young:

The Association of Village Council Presidents has attempted for the past five years to participate within the existing regulatory system for fish and game within the State of Alaska. Using our own funding, we established fish and game advisory boards, charged Nunam Kitlutsisti, our environmental arm, to act as staff, and worked diligently to both inform and collect reasonable opinions from the villages in the forms of proposals, and comments on proposals. To our knowledge, we are the only rural region to have attempted this task, so I am speaking to you as the President of the only rural region with an established basis for commenting on the current game regulatory system.

For your information I am enclosing a detailed report on how the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Game and the Board of Game have mishandled legitimate rural requests for the implementation of subsistence zones for selective wildlife resources. The resource in question is moose. As a rural Alaskan you are well aware of the conflicts that have resulted in the overharvest of moose resources close to Alaska's urban centers, and the resultant spill over into rural Alaska by urban sports hunters. In addition to the fierce guiding and illegal private charter business that brings countless out of state and foreign hunters into rural environs, we in fact have an air war occurring each legal moose hunting season in rural Alaska.

The detailed report will make it plain to you that the current regulatory system of the Division, and the hostility of the Board of Game have hindered and made impossible the implementation of the unique Alaska legislative effort to eliminate competition in areas of high subsistence utilization, AS. 16.05.257, Subsistence Hunting Zones.

As Senator Stevens so often tells us, "the proof is in the pudding," and we feel that the major features of H.R. 39's Title VII force a re-examination of not only AS 16.05.257 by ADFG and the Board of Game, but would right the major wrong in the current regulatory system, the failure to objectively involve rural Alaskans in the decision making process. The State proudly points to AS 16.05.257 as a law on the books to make the complaints of rural Alaskans heard, but the cavalier method through which the Department and the Board have handled the proposals exposes the deficiencies of the current system that H.R. 39's Title VII would rectify.

We thank you for your continuing concerns on behalf of all Alaskans concerned with equitable and sound wildlife management in the State of Alaska.

Sincerely yours,
Carl Jack, President
Association of Village Council
Presidents