

# STATE SEEKS GRAVEL PERMITS

## 131 Applications Asked For 'Free Gravel' on Or Near Pipeline Route

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The State of Alaska has applied for free gravel along the proposed route of the pipeline access road apparently in preparation for building the 336-mile road from the Yukon River to Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope.

Gov. Keith Miller asked the State Legislature Tuesday to appropriate \$120 million for the construction and to contract the work to the Trans Alaska Pipeline System in order to take advantage of mobilization already done by TAPS.

TAPS had planned to build the road at its expense but has refused to do so because it has not yet received the permit for the pipeline. As explained by Miller in his address to the Legislature, the State has undertaken the road project in hopes that it will expedite the pipeline project, which, he said, is so vital to the economy of Alaska.

The applications for free gravel were filed in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office in Fairbanks by the State Division of Highways and run from a point near Stevens Village up to the vicinity of Prudhoe Bay.

They range in size from 40 to 240 acres with the average being about 80.

According to a spokesman of the BLM, none of the applications have been approved. They will not be signed, he continued, until the office of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior gives the Fairbanks office the go-ahead.

The BLM, which is an agency of the Dept. of the Interior, has not been informed that the State of Alaska has the authority to build the road, he added.

In January, the spokesman explained, the land freeze in Alaska was modified to allow for that

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which was necessary to the construction of an oil pipeline system for transporting oil from the North Slope to Valdez in the south. Under this modification, normally the BLM would approve the State's applications for free gravel.

However, the picture has been obscured by two preliminary injunctions issued by the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. barring Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel or his agents or employees from directly or indirectly issuing construction permits for the pipeline or access road.

Hickel has said the State must have his approval before it can construct the road, but Miller says that the State itself has the authority under an 1866 law.

While awaiting some clarification from the Secretary, the BLM spokesman said that from 50 to 75 applications have been tentatively approved, about 12 shot down, and about 40 to 50 await reexamination due to revisions in the applications.

Each application, he explained, must be examined to insure that the land, environment and wildlife will not be endangered if the gravel is extracted.

The inspections, he continued, are being made by a team composed of representatives from the BLM and the Department of Fish and Game. Also, on some of the trips a hydrologist with the

Corps of Engineers, who is familiar with factors such as stream flow and dangers of flooding, has gone along.

The Department of the Interior has a book full of stipulations that the State will be required to follow in the extraction of gravel, the spokesman said. For one, he continued, the gravel pit must be screened from the road as much as possible by vegetation or some other means.

None of the areas involved in the applications are more than one half mile from the center of the road, he said, but vary in size and shape along the route of the road. The spokesman added he was unable to estimate the total amount of gravel that would be extracted.

Some of the gravel will be taken from lands claimed by the Arctic Slope Native Association. When Secretary Hickel in March asked the Senate and House Interior Committee to further modify the land freeze supposedly to sell gravel to TAPS for the haul road, the Eskimos from the North Slope strongly objected to the plan. They claimed that the action would take 13 million cubic yards of sand and gravel free of charge from lands held by North Slope Eskimos under Indian title.

It is not known what action the group will take in light of the State's applications.