

Corporations blast DNR's ANWR stand

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Native corporations attempting to trade wildlife lands for oil rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge have issued a blistering statement, charging state officials with releasing "misleading and self-serving analyses

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• Corporations charge 'shoddy' tactics

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regarding the proposed land exchanges."

The Dec. 14 statement was released by Akhiok-Kaguyak Inc., Doyon Ltd., Gana-A'Yoo Ltd., Koniag Inc., the Native Lands Group and Old Harbor Native Corp. The corporations are seeking to trade 891,000 acres of their inholdings in seven Alaska National Wildlife Refuges to the government in exchange for certain limited oil and gas rights (similar to those granted by federal leases) on 166,278 acres in ANWR.

Gary Gustafson, chief of land management for the state Department of Natural Resources, called the corporations' statement "outrageous."

"I challenge them to substantiate what's here," he said. The Native corporations' statement comes after recent criticism of the proposed land trades made by DNR Commissioner Judy Brady. Brady has been sharply critical of the process for some time.

Gustafson stressed, however, that it is Gov. Steve Cowper who has serious concerns.

"This was a calculated move by the governor himself," Gustafson said of Brady's most recent comments.

The Native corporations are charging that the state made a "monumental mistake" last February that could cost it substantial revenues if not rectified soon.

"And now the Department of Natural Resources is engaged in a major cover-up to divert public attention from that mistake," the Native corporations' statement said.

"Instead of waving misleading and self-serving analyses regarding the proposed land exchanges, which are creating an atmosphere not conducive to the opening of ANWR itself, the state should be answering one key question. It is a question every citizen of Alaska should be asking his/her governor and elected representatives: Why is the State of Alaska not participating in the land exchange process?"

The corporations' statement points out that the State of Alaska was an active participant with Native corporations in land exchange negotiations for many months before the spring of 1987.

They charge that "in February, DNR Commissioner Judy Brady and her staff convinced the governor that even with its unique access to proprietary data, DNR did not know enough about the subsurface resources and was thus unable to select desired oil and gas tracts in ANWR, and the state abruptly pulled out of the exchange negotiations.

"In October after Native groups had made their tract identifications in ANWR, and with no new data available, Division of Oil and Gas Director Jim Eason made a startling about-face.



"He suddenly produced a geological structure map and report and announced that the tracts identified by the Native corporations were on the most prospective structures."

The statement asks why the Division of Oil and Gas did not provide that information to the governor in February before the decision was made to withdraw from the exchanges.

"The answer appears, in hindsight, to have been a failure in judgment by the Division of Oil and Gas in citing . . . inability of anyone to select desired tracts, not just the state. . . How is it then that the Native corporations were able to make selections that the state now considers so valuable?"

The corporations charge that DNR used "shoddy and frankly embarrassing tactics" in its attacks on the ANWR land exchange process.

"We are shocked and appalled by DNR's deliberate attempts to manipulate and mislead the Alaskan public. The two DNR papers regarding the valuation of ANWR tracts and

the Native refuge inholdings to be exchanged for those tracts employ what can only be characterized as disingenuous, misleading and skewed analysis in an attempt to justify DNR's position and cover up the state's decision to withdraw from the exchanges."