

Technology council has funds

Introducing advanced technology to small Alaskan communities can have disastrous results. Bureaucracies which sponsor large scale projects are in many cases distant, slow moving, and unfamiliar with the peculiarities of life in the North.

According to a July 18 article in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner, the Indian Health Service, a federal agency based in Maryland, began work on a water and sewage treatment plant for Kotzebue in the early 1960's. Apparently federal funds were only made available in small amounts over the years. It took 17 years to get the plant built.

Kotzebue's mayor says IHS employed a different supervisor during each of the 17 construction seasons. The result: a system that mingles sewage with drinking water, and every spring floods the yards of many residents with human waste.

Water and sewer rates have doubled to cover increased operation costs, but the city cannot afford to pay for repairs due to deterioration and poor workmanship. And though IHS has already turned over to the city a portion of the system, Kotzebue may try to give it back.

Is there any alternative to using large scale, expensive technologies to solve Alaska's problems? The Alaska Council on Science and Technology (ACST) thinks so.

The council was recently established within the Office of the Governor as an advisory body that has the authority to award grants. ACST plans to award \$50,000 this year in small grants to Alaskans who propose to develop small scale and low cost technologies. Proposals are being solicited now in the areas of power generation, waste disposal, recycling, food production, or any other residential or industrial enterprise which may be more efficient, less costly or less energy-intensive than methods now in use.

Appropriateness to the Alaskan environment, including the utilization of locally available resources, materials and labor skills will be a key factor in judging applications to the "Northern Technology Program."

According to Christopher Noah, ACST Executive Director, the council has already received proposals on diverse topics, including alternative means to generate power and how to deal with permafrost. But he emphasized that there is still time to submit proposals and that ACST would like to see many more submitted before judging begins in mid-August.

One refreshing aspect of the Northern Technology Program is

that it is designed to reduce the biggest of bureaucratic pollutants: paperwork. "The council intends to conduct this program with minimum of administrative effort and paperwork," says Noah. "Proposals, award documents and reporting requirements are to be kept simple."

Proposals may be typed, hand written or recorded on cassette tape. They should simply state the basic problem, the approach taken, the funds needed and how they will be spent, the expected results and how other Alaskans can benefit, and finally a brief biographical sketch. Proposals or information requests may be sent to: ACST, Pouch AV, Juneau, Alaska 99811.