

'No Way to Amend' After Dec. 18—

BLM Reminds Villages on Land Selection Deadline

The deadline for Alaska Native villages to select their lands is December 18, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has received relatively few land selection applications from villages to date.

Curtis V. McVee, BLM Alaska State Director, said, "We're asking all villages certified eligible

under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to get their selection applications to us as early as possible, instead of waiting for the December 18 deadline."

With less than two months until the deadline, BLM has received selection applications for only 5 million out of 22 million acres for village selection.

"Native Claims regulations call for lands to be contiguous and compact, among other things," said McVee. "When we have found deficiencies in village land applications, we have sent applications back to the villages so they could correct the problems."

"But after December 18, there is no way for villages to amend their applications," he said. This could mean that villages with land selection applications that did not meet the regulations would have that part or possibly all of the application rejected.

McVee said that because there is no way for a village to change its application for lands after December 18, a village could have rejected part or all of the total

acreage it is legally able to claim under provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

"BLM regulations say that eligible villages may apply for more acreage than they are entitled to, and this may help in some situations," said McVee. "But villages that wait until the last minute to file their selection applications are taking a chance."

Information on how to file applications is available from BLM Offices in Anchorage and Fairbanks.