

# It's time to evaluate land use panel

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On Dec. 2, 1980, the president of the United States signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Title XII of ANILCA established the Alaska Land Use Council, which is directed by state and federal co-chairmen.

The state co-chairman is the governor; the federal counterpart is appointed by the president. Members of the council include the heads of the Alaska offices of the National Park Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, Forest Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of Transportation.

State members include the commissioners of the Alaska Departments of Natural Resources, Fish & Game, Environmental Conservation and Transportation and Public Facilities.

Alaska Natives are represented by two members selected from the regional corporations pursuant to the Alaska Natives Claims Settlement Act.

The Alaska Land Use Council makes recommendations and advises the following entities on land and resource uses. Specifically, the council makes recommendations on proposed regulations, management plans and studies, conservation system units, wild and scenic rivers and wilderness areas.

It also makes recommendations on proposed regulations drafted by the State of Alaska. In addition, ANILCA provides for a committee of land use advisors representing a cross section of people and organizations in Alaska who use public lands to advise the council.

ANILCA authorizes the council to recommend ways to ensure orderly and planned economic development that is compatible with state and national goals. Therefore, the council can recommend changes to laws, policies, programs and plans, land classification and conservation system unit boundaries. In addition, the council can provide assistance to corporations, review agency budgets and propose land exchanges.

Unless reauthorized by Congress, the council will go out of business on Dec. 2, 1990, 10 years from the enactment of ANILCA. The act requires the co-chairmen to submit a report to Congress by Dec. 2 this year, listing the accomplishments of the council as well as recommendations concerning extension of the council or other legislative proposals.

Anticipating this requirement, in 1988, a council and advisors joint subcommittee authorized a study through the independent consulting firm of Barry Lawson Associates. The report, *Alaska Survey Report*, documents the opinions of many Alaskans concerning land and resource management in the state.

These opinions were gathered through responses to a questionnaire distributed to more than 400 people throughout Alaska in December. Of those Alaskans who received the questionnaire, about 25 percent responded, and nearly half of them characterized themselves as "resource users."

More recent interviews with selected decisionmakers and knowledgeable observers in Alaska and Washington, D.C., provided additional insight on anticipated land and resource management issues during the 1990s.

None of the respondents were under the illusion that the difficult intergovernmental resource management issues that have characterized the past

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will disappear as Alaska enters the 1990s. Determining rights and routes of access, pursuing state and Native land selections and ensuring coordinated land management plans and practices, were just a few of the issues resource users (primarily miners, hunters, Natives and oil and gas industry representatives) expect to address in the coming years.

More than 60 percent of the resource users surveyed indicated that issues such as obtaining access to public lands, being prohibited from certain lands because of land use classifications and coping with inconsistent or conflicting management practices were major problems that will need to be addressed.

More than 45 percent of this group indicated that uncertainty over land ownership and obtaining federal and state permits were also major problems.

It is clear that most Alaskans see day-to-day land management issues as the kind of problems that will dominate the future. Respondents conceded that many of the sweeping policy issues raised by recent Alaska lands legislation have been or are in

the process of being resolved.

According to respondents, issues still requiring consideration include:

- Development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

- Tongass National Forest management reforms.

- Oil and gas leasing.

- Subsistence protection and Native sovereignty.

- Resolving rights-of-way uncertainties.

- Land ownership boundary adjustments and exchanges.

- Revision of state and federal mining laws.

- Improvement in state and federal government coordination.

With respect to improvements in state and federal government coordination, there is still a perception that improvements need to be made even though considerable progress has been made between and among agencies and interest groups.

While some issues are currently being addressed by Congress, it should be noted that many of the issues identified are not necessarily those that respondents believe should be addressed by the Alaska Land Use Council or a successor group.

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The Barry Lawson study, together with other information developed by the council and its advisors, will be used to draft the ANILCA report. One of the principle issues is the need for an organization such as the Alaska Land Use Council to coordinate the various land management interests in Alaska.

Intermingled land ownership may be a convincing reason to have a forum where the principle land managers can discuss issues and coordinate programs. It would certainly serve those who use public lands, both state and federal, if there is to be consistency in government policies and programs.

This is particularly significant when addressing land use by Alaska Natives and rural residents, as well as the general public, to reduce the amount of regulations and inconsistencies between governmental agencies.

The draft report required by ANILCA will be available for review this summer. The Alaska Land Use Council proposes to issue notices of its availability in the *Federal Register* and the local news media for public comments.