

NANA land exchange approved by Senate committee

WASHINGTON--The U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee today unanimously approved a proposed land exchange between the NANA Regional Corporation and the National Park Service, which will allow for the development of the largest known zinc deposit in the United States and a significant amount of lead, gold and silver in the Red Dog Mine in Northwest Alaska.

The land exchange, which was sponsored by Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski, will provide NANA with a corridor to build an access road from the Red Dog Mine to a port site located in the northwest corridor of the Cape Krusenstern National Monument.

Under the agreement, NANA is to receive about 95,000 acres of monument land and will relinquish about 103,000 acres it could have claimed under the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act.

Murkowski said the exchange will permit the road to be constructed on the most economically

and environmentally sound route. The exchange was supported by the National Audubon Society, the National Parks and Conservation Association, the National Park Service, the Interior Department, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and the State of Alaska.

It was opposed by the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society.

"It's unfortunate to see some of these groups, like the Sierra Club, oppose virtually every project that is proposed," Murkowski said. "Alaskans are much better served by those organizations that are willing to work for reasonable compromise that accommodate our dual requirements for resource development and protection of the environment. My legislation, I believe is a very reasonable compromise, and I was pleased to get the support of the entire committee—Democrats and Republicans alike—based on the merits of this needed project."

During today's committee action, Murkowski stressed the important economic justifications

for the land exchange.

"This area has an unemployment rate between 60 to 70 percent with no major economic base to provide permanent employment," Murkowski said. "By allowing this project to become reality, we will be providing some 400 permanent jobs in this economically depressed region."

Murkowski said about 4,700 people live in the region which is the size of the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined.

Currently, there is only one other mine in operation in Alaska.

"The Red Dog Mine will produce about 300,000 tons of zinc each year, which will almost double our nation's annual production," Murkowski said. "Making this more important is that our nation's domestic mines now produce less than one-third of our annual zinc requirements. When the Red Dog Mine goes into full production, we will increase our an-

nual production to two-thirds of our requirements.

"This mineral development will not only decrease the area's unemployment rate, but will also allow NANA to provide for the social and economic need of its shareholders," Murkowski said.



Washington, D.C. - Senator Frank Murkowski testifies during the June 13th Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on the North Pacific Fur Seal Treaty.