

Interior Bill On Land Claims Expected Soon

The Interior Department has confirmed that the Department will complete drafting of legislation aimed at resolving Native land claims in six to eight weeks.

Robert E. Vaughn, deputy assistant secretary for land management, made the announcement in Juneau this week during a work session with State administration officials and legislators.

Rep. William Hensley of Kotzebue said that the plan would include both land and cash settlements, determined on a village by village basis. No specific details were given.

Hensley added that, from Vaughn's statements that the matter would be settled quickly; he assumed that no court action would be involved.

He said he received the impression that there was still

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disagreement within the Interior Department over alternate proposals.

State Attorney General Donald Burr said, "We think the solution lies in Federal legislation which would permit Native people to mitigate their claims, and still allow the State to go ahead with its land selection program."

Hensley, however, questioned whether the land selection program could be carried out full scale without infringing on the Natives' claims.

Hensley commented, "I think we made it clear that we wanted the State and Native peoples to be consulted as often as possible before the final draft is completed."