

# SEALASKA SEEKS NEW PRESIDENT

By Laury Roberts

The new president of Sealaska won't come from the ranks of the state's largest Native corporation, and probably will not be an Alaskan, at all.

"My personal opinion is that that person is not available in the state," Byron Mallot, chairman of Sealaska's board told the TUNDRA TIMES. "We're looking for someone with substantial business experience with financial management and business operations, someone who has had hands-on experience with a

company with sales exceeding \$100 million per year."

Sealaska, based in Juneau has been without a president since February when board member, Sam Demmert, resigned. Demmert had replaced John Borbridge who was fired by a vote of the board of directors last summer after a botched business deal which eventually cost the corporation \$1.5 million in losses for 1978. Borbridge had been at the helm for six years.

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Sealaska board chairman Byron Mallott observes (seated right) as BLM's Bob Arnold (center) signs documents conveying 158,183.17 acres to Sealaska. Looking on, also from BLM are Art Conforti and Ramona Chinn, Land Law Examiners, Judy Kammins, ANCSA Division Chief, and Sue Wolf, Adjudication Branch Chief. Other conveyances within the region to date have been to Kake 21,712.89 acres; Saxman, 10,717.33 acres; and Yakutat, 20,104.01 acres.

## • SEALASKA IS SEEKING NEW LEADER

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"We have grown to the point that we do not have the needed executive ability (for the presidency) within the corporation," said Mallot, a Tlingit from Yakutat. "While there may be people of that caliber in the state, a substantial number of candidates are from out of state."

He added that while a few Alaskans are among the final prospects, none are from Sealaska's 15,000 shareholders. The announcement of a new president will likely be made before the annual shareholders meeting, set for October 27 in Juneau.

The board of directors employed an "executive search" organization to comb the nation for likely candidates. The service "cost less than" \$50,000 according to Mallott. "We didn't want to solicit applications," he said. "We wanted to approach someone who already has a job and lure him away."

Mallot would not reveal the number of candidates left in the narrowed field or prospects, other than to say they are "principally from outside."

Whoever the new leader is, however, he (not likely

she) will head a corporation which now has control of nearly 500,000 acres of land in Southeast Alaska.

Last week, seven years after the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, Sealaska was granted interim conveyance of 158,154 acres of the Tongass National Forest. The corporation's total entitlement is approximately 200,000 acres. But the corporation also has subsurface rights to another 200,000-plus acres soon to be in the hands of Southeast village corporations.

Interim conveyance means that specific boundaries have not been surveyed but the corporation can go ahead and utilize the resources. Most of the acreage is near villages in the regions, including Hoonah, Kake, Angoon and Saxman.

"Within four years shareholders will see profits from the timber," predicted Mallott. While the corporation is planning to sell 20 to 40 million board feet of timber from south Prince of Whales Island next summer, "we don't intend to be a stumpage company he said.

The board chairman anticipates possible construction of a sawmill to employ rural shareholders, and maybe cannery and hatch-

ery sites. None of the just-released entitlements conflict with national monument boundaries or other federally classified land.

"We will be conducting a mineral assessment," said Mallott, "Southeast is one of the most highly mineralized belts in the world, period."

However, not all profits will go to Sealaska shareholders, he reminded the TUNDRA TIMES. An ANCSA provision mandates that 70 percent of all corporation profits be shared with the 12 other Native Regional corporations.

Mallott said the conveyance from the federal government took so long because of "huge resistance."

"The government didn't want to give up public domain to private sources. The government hates to give up anything it's got. They used the easement issue (aimed at providing public access across Native lands) to hold things up," said Mallott. "The delay cost us millions in legal fees and staff time."

"While the land is our principal asset and we in-

tend to stress the economic potential of land, we're just as strongly committed to preserving the historical, cultural and natural beauty of those lands for our shareholders," said Mallott.