

Goldbelt signs land exchange agreement

By LONE E. JANSON

Goldbelt, Inc., the Native corporation for Juneau, has signed an agreement with the departments of Agriculture and Interior exchanging 19,618 acres of land on Admiralty Island for 27,774 acres of land of roughly equal value in Hobart Bay, Houghton Bay and Berners Bay.

Goldbelt president and board chairman Joseph G. Wilson, and board member Robert Loescher

returned from Washington D.C. last week after completing the exchange.

Negotiations for the land swap began about four years ago after Goldbelt's selection of lands on Admiralty Island were challenged in court by Angoon's Kootznoowoo, Inc. and the Sierra Club. Admiralty Island is considered a prime wilderness area for future preservation, and Angoon residents, whose village

is located on the island, were greatly concerned about Goldbelt's plans for commercial development there.

The Juneau corporation is one of the "Four Cities" under ANCSA, which received no money other than a modest appropriation for organization. Their only settlement under the Act was land, so it was imperative for Goldbelt to select lands which had commercial possibi-

lities. Goldbelt hopes to develop timber, fisheries and recreation industries on their land.

Parties to the negotiations over the years have been the Department of Justice, Sierra Club, Kootznoowoo, Sealaska Corporation, and the departments of Interior and Agriculture. Wilson reported that the exchange creates no conflict with any of these Subsurface rights which to go Sealaska will be exchanged within the next

two years.

The Goldbelt land swap had been one of the amendments to the recent D-2 land bill which was scuttled in Congress. The swap was accomplished administratively under Section 22(f) of the claims act.

Wilson and Loescher both commended Washington Senator Henry M. Jackson for his encouragement and aid in accomplishing the land trade.