

Sealaska receives Fort Tongass site

JUNEAU — Sealaska Corp. recently received conveyance to the 11.4 acre Fort Tongass site located on Tongass Island on Nakat Bay near the southern tip of Alaska's panhandle, according to Sealaska spokesmen.

"We are very pleased to have secured this historic site because of its importance to our Native people, particularly the members of the Tongass Tribe," said Marlene Johnson, Sealaska board chairman.

Robert W. Loescher, Sealaska senior vice president for resource management, said the conveyance was particularly significant because the Fort Tongass site was originally selected by Sealaska under Section 14(h)(1) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, but was subsequently rejected by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Land Management.

"Sealaska appealed those decisions, and we were successful in securing this parcel of property which is important to the heritage of our Native people," Loescher said.

Loescher gave credit to Ernest Hillman Jr., Sealaska land manager, for his work on the successful appeal.

A member of the Tongass Tribe also said he was pleased.

"I know it was a tough battle with the BIA and the BLM, but to the Tongass Tribe, which has been reorganized, it was a real breath of fresh air," said Don Hoff, a tribe member. "On behalf of the tribe I would like to thank Sealaska Corp., for acquiring the title for the village island.

Hoff noted that the site has great value to the tribe because many of their totems were taken from there for storage.