

# Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission Meets Here

By JACQUELINE GLASGOW  
Staff Writer

The star of the show was Land. With an excellent technical crew and a fine supporting cast, there was drama, tension, schmaltz, and conflict but in the end, the star walked away with the show.

Against a backdrop of soft green, earth-colored maps, another act in the continuing drama of land in Alaska unfolded on the stage at the Alaskanland Theatre in Fairbanks, May 17 and 18.

The Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission heard testimony in that city to guide in the planning of 80 million acres of national interest lands, the vast D-2 withdrawals made in conjunction with the Settlement of the Alaska Native Land Claims.

The hearings drew a small but vocal crowd of interested parties and private citizens. Speakers included geologists, trappers, oil men, native leaders, glacierlogists, engineers, guides, students, conservationists, law-

yers, and just plain people.

The Commission panel, dwarfed by the giant jigsaw maps set on the stage behind them, listened with incredible patience and courtesy to a hodgepodge of testimony that would task the mind of Solomon.

With many weeks behind them and more weeks in front of them, the Commission is conducting hearings in major communities of Alaska, many small, remote villages, and will also journey stateside to garner testimony from the other Americans in whose interest these lands have been set aside by the federal government.

Object of the hearings is to gather information from all segments of the population on suggestions for distribution of the lands into one of the four federal land systems: National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, the U.S. Forest Service, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Two points seem to be emerging out of the series of hearings throughout the state—one, that scarcity of accurate

knowledge and data makes it difficult to assess the correct long-range usage of these lands; and two, that there may be more than four options.

John Sackett, Athabaskan leader, asked that the Commission pay special attention to views expressed by villagers in Alaska, to the "voice of the Native people."

Sackett called 80 million acres an "excessive amount" and questioned whether the D-2 lands are to be "planned for the full spectrum of man's use."

Gregory Nicholas from the Ahtna Corporation reminded the Commission that rural Alaskan natives still "depend on source of life — hunting and trapping. Therefore protection is very important to us."

Sackett and the Commission exchanged thoughts on how protection of native subsistence is to be achieved. This responsibility was given to the Secretary of the Interior by the Congress as part of the Settlement of the Land Claims.

How much land and how

much protection is needed to preserve the game and subsistence hunting was a subject on which there was little agreement.

Wilbur Mills, photographer and advisor to the Commission, opposed mining or development on any D-2 national interest lands.

"It's hard to put into words what this kind of (undeveloped) country does for man," he said "to explain the value of a vast herd of caribou, the value of a of a native culture."

In attempting to explain it, Mills called it "the Spirit of the North."

On the other side of the picture, speakers for the Alaska Oil and Gas Association urged that the Commission not bar mineral exploration and development on D-2 lands. John McKeever reminded the Commission that the financial health of both the State of Alaska and the new native regional corporations are dependent on oil and gas revenues.

"I urge that the Commission look 3-dimensionally at the surface and the sub-surface of D-2 lands," said McKeever.

Several speakers endorsed multiple use but there was debate about what agency should administer it. Each federal bureau had its supporters, with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management the most frequently mentioned possibilities.

Whether or not either agency had the structure, manpower and the needed regulations to function effectively in administering the lands in Alaska was questioned.

A few speakers called for a unique Alaskan agency and/or policy of land-use Alaska land managed and planned by Alaskans, rather than by beauracrats in Washington, D.C.

The large, shiny map segments are packed up at the end of the day and shipped along with the Commission to the next hearing. The maps follow them wherever they go.