

Over Ancient Use—

Juneau Borough, Park Service, Tlingits Clash

The Greater Juneau Borough, the National Park Service, and the Auke Tribe of Tlingit Indians have met head on concerning the future status of Indian Point, near Juneau on the Glacier Highway.

The controversy stems from the boroughs plan to reclassify the area from public recreational to residential.

"The Tlingit-Haida Council goes on record as opposing the reclassification of Indian Point to a residential area," Mrs. Rodriguez stated in Juneau Wednesday.

"The Auke Tribe of Tlingit Indians have had the use of Indian Point since time immemorial," she said.

Mrs. Rodriguez continued, explaining that the Tlingits have traditionally used the area to harvest herring eggs. "In fact, although we have had no legal title to the land, the Tlingits have always thought of the land as their's.

"Many families have historically utilized the 24 acre area in the summer and spring, both for setting up smoke houses and harvesting herring eggs.

"We set leafy twigs on the beach. The herring come in to lay their eggs, depositing them on the leaves. Then, we harvest them." Mrs. Rodriguez also indicated that Indian Point is one of the few areas left which the Indians have been allowed to use.

The borough argues that the area will make ideal waterfront property for which there is a large demand. It feels that the sale of this property will bring increased revenues to the borough. Opening the land would also bring increased revenue from property taxes.

A public hearing was held on April 14 on the proposed zoning change. Some of the arguments in favor of the change cited the increased revenues from the sale of the land.

It was argued that Juneau would be able to compete with Sitka in attracting industry if the millage rate were lowered. The profits from the sale of lots on Indian Point would enable a reduction in the mill rate, it was theorized.

Objections to the sale of the land were also voiced. One person stated that the most important industry would be the tourism industry. It is important, he argued, that the borough retain the land for recreational purposes and development.

He continued, stating that the borough would only have to buy back areas at a much higher

price in the future to provide recreational sites.

Other area residents, not in attendance at the hearings, complained that there was little publicity for the hearing. They raised further objections, stating that added costs of police and fire protection would nullify any revenues the borough would receive.

Bob Howe, Superintendent of Glacier Bay National Monument, favors the designation of Indian Point as a natural area.

In favoring the designation, he cites the "spectacular seascape views" and the need for maintaining public recreational areas. "At low tide there is a wide beach area and there could be very attractive rocky trails developed down to the beach."

It was also noted that ANB and other native groups utilize the area for picnics and other recreational activities. One member of the Auke Tribe, who declined to be quoted, said that recently attempts have been made to close the area to their use.

One example cited was a 'no trespassing' sign which had been posted at the site. It wasn't known whether it was posted by the borough or some other agency.

There was an incident last summer of one member of the Auke Tribe who was shot with a salt-loaded shotgun as he passed the sign to gather eggs.

One further hearing on the proposed zoning change is to be held in the near future at a yet unspecified date. Differences may be resolved, but at present, all parties stand firm to their positions.