

# Gravel: economic disaster

WASHINGTON—Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska, told a joint hearing of two Senate committees recently that interim legislation is necessary to avert an "economic disaster" in Southeast Alaska while Congress works on long-term national forest management legislation.

Gravel endorsed permanent legislation to approach national forest management using multiple use guidelines to assure that all resources are considered in management decisions.

He testified as the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee and the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee continued the second day of joint hearings on legislation to write new national forest management policy in the light of two recent court decisions upholding the Organic Act of 1897.

A federal district court ruled that clearcutting on the 1897 law restricting cutting to only dead and mature trees. A similar ruling by an Alaska federal district judge applied the clearcutting ban of the 1897 act in a case involving a timber contract in the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska.

Gravel told the committees that the Alaska decision last December, which noted that congressional action was necessary to spell out forest cutting practices, is "already effecting the economy" in Southeast Alaska.

Gravel said that any delay in enacting interim legislation to allow the timber industry to continue cutting on the Tongass Forest until new guidelines are developed, would mean "a loss of jobs and human hardship" in Southeast Alaska.

The Alaska lawmaker is a co-sponsor of permanent legislation, with Sen. Hubert Humphrey, D-Minn., that would give new management direction to the Forest Service upholding multiple use and sustained yield concepts.

Gravel said that forest management policy must be addressed on a long-term basis, but that the comprehensive long-term forest management legislation, is "complex and controversial" and will take time. He said even if the Senate could act on legislation by May, the House would still have to act and any differences in their bill would have to be worked out in conference before going to the White House.

Gravel said since this is a presidential election year and there is much campaigning, he does not anticipate that long-term forest management legislation could receive thorough consideration soon enough to take care of the immediate problems in Southeast Alaska.

Gravel said that the interim bill he has co-sponsored with Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, would place a moratorium on the Alaska court decision until Congress can enact nationwide long-term legislation.