

Park facilities built on Native allotment

The Associated Press

The Bureau of Land Management has decided that hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of tourist facilities at the popular Katmai National Monument have been built on Native land.

The ruling is being appealed by the National Park Service, which manages the monument,

and by the concessionaire who operates Brooks Camp.

The BLM determined the facility is on land claimed in 1971 by the late Palakia Melgenak under federal law that allows Natives to claim up to 160 acres in Alaska if they can show they traditionally used the land on a regular basis.

Melgenak died in 1972, but the claim has been pursued by

her heir, Trefon Angason, 74, of King Salmon. He's being assisted by Alaska Legal Services Corp., and his son, Trefon Jr., a commercial fisherman who lives in Anchorage.

Angason claims Melgenak began using the land before the turn of the century when she lived near the former village of Savonosky. The 120 acres sit astride the Brooks River where it empties in Naknek Lake.

"I don't think it will happen in our lifetimes," the 36-year-old son said of the prospects

of gaining control of the land. "I think the Park Service has given us a raw deal.

"We grew up there. We went there every fall. Now we can't go in there," he said.

Ray Petersen, who with his son operates Katmailand, stressed that whatever happens, it will be business as usual this summer.

"We negotiated a contract in good faith," Petersen said. "Our only complaint is that the Park Service never informed us that this was going

on. I'm the bird in the badminton game."

The Petersens bought the camp from Wien Air Alaska and Household-Alaska Properties, Inc. last fall.

The Park Service and Katmailand have until mid-June to file appeals. The BLM then will have 30 days to respond. The case is likely to end up in federal court.

"Whichever side loses will probably appeal," said Roger Hudson, who is handling the case for the BLM.