

Who Shall Control Alaska's Land?

By GOVERNOR JAY HAMMOND

Most Alaskans recognize, as I do, that ever closer to us swirl forces that will change our land forever. We do not dispute the fact that change is foreordained. Our concern is whether change will bring with it more contentment than concern, more comfort than calamity.

How land in Alaska will be used by local residents and by all Americans is a key issue at this time.

On December 18, 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The purpose of the act was to provide a land and monetary settlement of aboriginal title and claims based upon title of Alaska natives. However, this went far beyond the settlement of native claims.

Section 17(d)(2) of the act directed the secretary of the interior to place 80 million acres in national parks, national forests, wildlife refuges, and wild and scenic rivers. The secretary complied with this mandate by introducing H.R. 6089, which would set aside 83.47 million acres.

A variety of other bills proposing vastly different acreages to implement this section have since been introduced, and it is absolutely clear that Congress will set aside d-2 national interest lands in 1977 or 1978.

Many members of Congress would find it an easy vote to carve up a maximum of Alaskan acreage into slices for federal parks, refuges, or forests. They could thus do penance for environmental sins committed in their own backyards by demonstrating their willingness to "protect" Alaska. However, most responsible land managers realize Congress is not the proper body to make land classification decisions. Congress is simply too large and involved in too many varied issues to expect all 535 members to know the details necessary to make land use rulings for specific areas.

In Alaska today, state and private lands surround national interest lands. What occurs on each domain, of course, has significant impacts on the other. What good does it do, for example, for us to impose maximum protection for fisheries at the upper end of the river on state lands if the federal government builds a high-reach dam on its lands downstream. Conversely, if the state fails to assure some protection of fringe-area habitat, federal agencies will take the land they control and lock it up forever to save remnant habitat.

It would seem far better to have the state and federal governments enter into a cooperative management system. Without such a system, nothing but the most chaotic management is likely to occur. Adjacent landowners, in paranoia, will attempt to gain the vantage.

My concern, which is shared by most Alaskans, and I hope most Americans, is with the manner and means, the pace and the prudence with which our resource wealth is parcelled out.

Quality should be our credo, not quantity on credit. We want to avoid placing needless restrictions upon the land if it can be used without harm to the land itself or to the life it nurtures.

We want flexibility to revise management decisions to meet changing circumstances, without the limpness that bends to every special interest pressure of the moment or that changes radically with each new administration.

We want maximum cooperation between state, federal and private landowners. We want a continuing voice in policy-making for federal lands within Alaska.

Therefore, we have proposed a new federal-state land management plan that we think builds on land use experiences in other states as well as Alaska. Our tentative d-2 plan incorporates four basic proposals: First, we propose that 36.6 million acres be placed in the federal park, refuge, and forest systems. We recognize the importance for Congress to place some acreage in such systems, and we have pointed out those that we consider most appropriate.

Our second proposal call for an entirely new system of "Alaska resource lands." These 62 million acres of federal lands with high national interest would be under joint state-federal management. When we speak of classifying 62 million acres as Alaska resource lands, bear in mind this is not a proposal to place this acreage into a restrictive federal management system but rather to remove it from such systems and place instead the state into the management process from which it otherwise would be excluded.

Our third proposal is for a new concept of cooperative management areas called "comans." Lands within the comans could belong to either government but would be managed jointly. Private landowners could elect to join the comans if they wish or remain excluded from them. In Alaska, with its crazy-quilt pattern of federal, state, and private lands interspersed with each other, only cooperative management could preclude chaos.

Our fourth proposal is to establish an Alaska Land Commission. This commission would be a policy-making body located in Alaska and exercising broad cooperative authority over Alaska resource lands and designated federal and state lands within the comans.

On the commission would be three state members and three federal members with co-chairmen. The state co-chairman could veto decisions on federal lands. In this way, the essential interests of both parties would be protected when differences arise. Further, in order to assure that local interests and needs are fully accounted for, the commission would establish area advisory boards comprised of local residents.

Why would anybody choose to cooperate if they don't have to? Simply because by joining they could gain the use of adjacent lands that otherwise might be denied. Moreover, there is little doubt that the desire of some for excessive federal restrictions on federal lands could best be offset by adoption of cooperative constraints on adjacent lands. For example, in exchange for being able to hunt on what otherwise might become a federal park, Alaskans might be willing to provide for additional habitat protection upon adjacent state and private lands. On the other hand, the more lands placed into a park, the less inducement there is for state or private owners to enter into cooperative management.

When one considers the alternatives, I think concepts embodied in our d-2 proposal better meet the concerns of both Alaska and the nation.

We propose:

A flexible joint land management system for a large portion of d-2 lands... rather than a rigid system of exclusive use dictated by Congress.

An equally balanced Federal-State Land Commission with teeth based in Alaska to make land decisions... rather than Congress trying to make the decisions from Washington.

Local input into land decisions ensured by area advisory boards... rather than no local input.

Daily management of lands by the federal agency best suited for the job... rather than creating new bureaucracy.

Flexibility to continue inventory of lands and adopting to changing times, technology, or circumstances... rather than lands cast into a rigid system ordered by Congress.

Checks and balances provided that assure neither national nor state interest could run roughshod over the other... rather than remaining at the whim of the moods of Congress to make future modifications as required.

However, our work on the d-2 issue is nothing but a thin whistle in a thick wind unless these concepts are supported by Alaskans, by other concerned Americans, and by Congress.

Too often when people speak of the manner in which land should be managed, they get hung up on labels. Terms like multiple use versus single use mean different things to different people. Strip off the labels, however, and I have found an astonishing accord among otherwise antagonistic groups of people.

I find that persons of seemingly disparate interests, be they environmentalists or developers, can substantially agree insofar as many specific parcels of land are concerned as to what should be considered the prime use of those lands. Occasionally they will differ, of course. But surely there is sufficient land to accommodate the needs and interests of all, be they wilderness aspirants, miners, developers, subsistence users, Alaskans, or Iowans. To the wilderness aspirant, once pristine wild lands that fall to the bulldozer are just as surely "locked up" from his point of view as are lands designated wilderness areas "locked up" from the developer's point of view. It's hard to believe we don't have room for both. It's harder yet to think we're not intelligent enough to tell which lands are best suited for which purposes.

We believe we have a proposal for land use and land management in Alaska that will meet the needs of all Americans. We hope it is a proposal that will receive the support of Congress when it makes a final determination on d-2 national interest lands in Alaska.

State Museum receives grant

A pilot project in the conservation of Alaskan artifacts will be launched this fall by the Alaska State Museum.

The State Museum received a grant to carry out the nine-month project from the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with the Alaska State Council on the Arts.

Conservation in this sense entails stabilization, preservation and restoration of historically valuable objects that are being stored in museums, according to museum chief curator Alan Munro.

Mary Pat Wyatt, a conservator currently working with the Smithsonian Institution at Wash-

"Northern Change" conference

A chance for Alaskans to share the Canadian experience in the North... to hear Canadians from a broad range of backgrounds discuss their Northern problems, programs and goals... and to explore the implications for Alaska—that's the purpose of NORTHERN CHANGE, a conference November 18-19, at the Anchorage Westward Hotel.

The two-day session is sponsored by the Arctic Institute of North America in cooperation with the Alaska Humanities Forum. It follows last year's ALASKA IN THE 70's conference in Toronto.

Proposed addresses/preliminary only:

Thursday, Nov. 18, The Goals of Canadian Resource Development and the Evolution of Policy, The Implications of that Policy for Land Management, The Implications of that Policy for the People, The Implications of that Policy for Political/Social Institutions, Canada/Change in the North, The Dynamics of Implementing Policy. Respondents: Land Use Planning and Management, Participatory Democracy: Role of the People.

Friday, Nov. 19: Equity in the Land: Who Has What Rights of Use/Ownership?, Global Village, What are the Implications in the Canadian Experience for Alaska?

The conference will be open to the public without charge.

SUBSCRIBE

ington, D.C., will join the State Museum staff in September. She will concentrate on lending technical assistance to local museums throughout Alaska.

Munro said that although the State Museum is also in need of a conservator, the major thrust of Wyatt's services will be to the local museums. "Even though we are in need of it ourselves, our feeling is that we have a responsibility to determine exactly what is out there (in the local museums) and what things are in such a state that any further inattention will result in their deterioration beyond the point of being significant or meaningful anymore," said Munro.

Conservation is a very technical and difficult process of physically preserving objects, Munro pointed out. The process "runs through a large spectrum of simple stabilization of an artifact in its present condition all the way to extremely delicate restoration and preservation—as an example, repairing the flaking of an ivory artifact," he said.

Simple stabilization of artifacts will the major project in the local museums.



Energy Company of Alaska
An Earth Resources Company

P.O. Box 1070, Fairbanks