

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

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## INTERIOR TO DISCUSS NATIVE CLAIM PLANS WITH ALASKA OFFICIALS

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton said today that he has asked Harrison Loesch, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Public Land Management, to go to Alaska and discuss with Governor William A. Egan, members of the State's Congressional Delegation, other State Officials, and representatives of the Native Associations Interior's plans to implement the transfer of public land under the Alaska Native Claims Act.

"The Alaska Natives Claims Settlement Act is going to have a profound effect on Alaska and its people, both native and non-native, for the foreseeable future," Secretary Morton said.

"I believe that it provides us with an opportunity to bring about far-reaching social changes to improve the lot of the individual natives, and to show the world that the American people are concerned with the issues of justice and fairplay. Now that the bill has passed, it is highly important that Interior makes every effort to implement selections and to transfer titles to selected lands to the native associations in an orderly and timely manner. To do this, we need the opinions and advice of the Governor and State Officials, the Alaska Congressional Delegation, and officials of the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Native Regional Associations."

"I am sending Harrison Loesch to Alaska to listen to what these people have to say, to explain our present thinking, and to assure them of our deep interest in the welfare of the State and its peoples."

Secretary Loesch said that he plans to hold two days of meetings in Anchorage. He will meet with Interior Officials from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Land Management on Monday morning, February 7.

On Monday afternoon Secretary Loesch will meet with Governor Egan, Attorney General Havelock, Members of the Alaska Congressional Delegation, and officials of the Native Associations.

If sufficient public interest develops Secretary Loesch will explain Interior's plans for implementing provisions of the Native Claims Bill at a public meeting in the Sidney Laurence Auditorium on Monday evening. He will also receive public comments at this time.

On Tuesday, February 8, Secretary Loesch will meet with various interest groups in individual meetings.

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