

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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INTERIOR OFFICIAL TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL NATIVES IN ANCHORAGE MEETING NEXT TUESDAY

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Harrison Loesch will hold a public meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, in the Sidney Laurence Auditorium on Tuesday, February 8, from 8:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., A.S.T. (Anchorage time).

The public meeting, Secretary Loesch said, will give individual residents the opportunity to ask questions concerning the Department of the Interior's plans for administration of the enrollment and the corporate organizations under the new Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Secretary Loesch said that the discussions in both private and public meetings during his visit to Alaska, February 7, 8 and 9, will focus on two major administrative matters: first, the plans for developing Native enrollment and, second, the organization of the regional and village corporations. He further stated that Departmental positions concerning State land selections and Federal land withdrawals have not been sufficiently developed to discuss at this point.

"I feel that many Natives will want to ask questions that we may not cover in our talks with State and Native leaders," Loesch said. "Public understanding of this landmark legislation is crucial and this Administration from President Nixon on down the line is committed to make the Act work effectively in the interest of all."

Secretary Loesch will meet with Alaska Governor William A. Egan and other State officials in Juneau on Monday, February 7. He will spend Tuesday and Wednesday meeting with Federal officials and Native leaders in Anchorage. He will speak to the Anchorage Press Club at noon on Wednesday, February 9.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provides for each Native Village to select as much as 7 townships from nearby public lands and for additional selections to be made by corporations made up of regional native associations, for a total of 40 million acres of public land to be granted in settlement of all Native land claims.

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