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Record highs for conveyances of Federal land in Alaska to both the State of Alaska and Alaska Native corporations were set in the year ended September 30, the Department of the Interior announced today. A total of 1.5 million acres passed to the State under the terms of the Statehood Act and 4.8 million acres were conveyed to Native ownership under the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

"The acreage conveyed both to the State and Natives was the result of a strong policy to emphasize conveyances, and a tremendous effort on the part of the reorganize

State and ANCSA divisions of the Bureau of Land Management," Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus announced. "Through the efforts of many people in BLM and the Department, the conveyance record has been turned around."

The conveyances to the State are the first major transfers of land since 1974 and bring the total acreage in State ownership to 38 million acres. Andru5 indicated that it is only the beginning of an accelerated process. The Bureau of Land Management is planning to increase its Conveyances to 13 million acres for FY 1980, and is prepared to continue at an accelerated rate until the total 104 million acres provided by the 1959 Statehood Act are in State ownership.

"Although the State selections have been slowed in the past by unsettled land patterns brought about by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the pending Alaska Lands (d-2) legislation, this renewed effort to convey as many acres as possible to the State is a high priority that is beginning to show results," Andrus said.

"We consider the work of the ANCSA staff a most promising sign that the conveyance process is on track," Andrus continued.

Since land conveyances began under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, a total of 10.4 million acres or almost a quarter of the total entitlement has been turned over to Native corporations with only 5.6 million acres of that figure conveyed before 1979. It is anticipated that at this rate, the bulk of Native and State entitlements will be realized within the next 3 years. "The process is in motion and the Department of the Interior's priority for conveyances is solid," Assistant Secretary for Land and Water Resources Guy Martin said.

Martin credited the progress to Secretary Andrus who was willing in 1977 to make the major policy decisions to expedite Native conveyances and in 1978 to give BLM essential funds and staff to speed up the State conveyance process and move towards faster resolution of the status of all Alaska's lands. "Clearly, the conveyance record indicates that the commitment made by the Secretary reaches throughout the Department of the Interior," Martin commented, "and the benefits are being realized by the people of Alaska."