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The Department of the Interior announced today publication of final regulations in the Federal Register for designating public easements on lands conveyed to Alaska Natives under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The regulations are designed to carry out the terms of the Federal District Court decisions in Alaska by Judge James von der Heydt in July and subsequent policy decisions on ANCSA by Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus in Marc of 1978.

"One of the early objectives of this Administration," Secretary Andrus said, "was to improve substantially the way in which the Settlement Act was being administered with the central theme of speeding up the conveyance of land. I have reconfirmed the objective of faster land conveyances again recently to Governor Jay Hanunond, and this is a part of that ongoing program."

"The easement policies of the Department are intended to carry out the intent of the Act to protect basic public rights of passage and access over lands conveyed to Natives under the Settlement, but to do so in a manner which recognizes the basic rights of private land ownership which the Act also intended for Natives.

The final regulations reconfirm the intent of the proposed regulations published last May to create a limited, non-duplicative system of easements which allow access across Native lands to public lands and along major waterways. The final regulations respond to public comment by clarifying several issues, including definitions.

The definition of a "major waterway" which involved a three factor standard involving transportation use, resource value and commercial use, has been modified in the final regulations to a standard which is simpler and intended to meet communities which argued for a more usable and understandable test The new standard requires "significant use" for access to public lands or between communities.

Copies of the regulations and additional information are available from: Don Argetsinger, Office of Assistant Secretary for Land and Water Resources, Department of the Interior Room 6629, Washington, D. C. 20240; Beaumont McClure, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior Room 3070, Washington, D. C. 20240; and Robert Arnold, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior 555 Cordova St., Anchorage, Alaska 99501.