Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Herndon (202) 343-5717 (202) 343-3171 (907) 277-1561
For Immediate Release: May 25, 1978
Print PDF

The Department of the Interior is seeking public comment on regulations proposed for establishing public easements across Native lands in Alaska. The proposed regulations are published in the May 25 Federal Register. They carry out the policy decisions which were announced on March 6, 1978, following months of work by the Department with the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission, Alaska Natives and the State.

In announcing the proposed regulations, Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus said, "We have eliminated major roadblocks here which halted previous efforts to transfer title of land from the Federal Government to Alaska Natives under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

The proposed regulations are designed to provide a minimal, non-duplicative set of easements across Native lands which will protect both Native property rights and the public right of access to public lands. The proposed easement regulations are designed to simplify the easement reservation portion of the land conveyance process.

The easements across Native lands are necessary to guarantee reasonable public access to public lands and major waterways. The easements, though, are not designed as recreational areas themselves, only as passage-ways between public lands and waterways.

"These proposed regulations," Secretary Andrus said, "protect the rights of all parties. They allow access to public lands while giving Native land owners the same basic right of control over their lands that is enjoyed by all other private landowners in other states. The early adoption of these regulations will end years of inaction and speed transfer of land to Alaska Natives."

Copies of the proposed regulations are available in the Federal Register or may be obtained at BIM offices throughout Alaska or by writing to the Bureau of Land Management at 555 Cordova Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501, Telephone: 907-277-1561.

Comments must be received by the Bureau of Land Management in Washington by June 26, 1978. They should be addressed to: Director (210), Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 20240.