



Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas

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Dear Reader:

The Citizens' Advisory Commission on Federal Areas was established in 1981 by the Alaska State Legislature to protect the rights of Alaskans to continue the traditional uses of federal lands throughout the State. The need for an official State agency to oversee the management of federal lands in Alaska was created primarily by the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. ANILCA placed 124 million acres of land in Alaska into federal conservation units, and outlined specific use requirements and restrictions for those areas.

The changes in land status and the statutory requirements for the use and management of federal lands at times come into conflict with the traditional activities to which the people of Alaska are accustomed. The Commission is charged with the responsibility of researching issues and determining the impact of federal statutes, regulations and management decisions on the citizens of Alaska in order to minimize or resolve those conflicts. Through the development and maintenance of a good working relationship with the various federal agencies, the Commission has been effective in assuring that land management decisions are consistent with both statutory language and Congressional intent and in protecting the rights of Alaska's citizens. This letter represents the Commission's annual report as required by AS 41.37.080(f).

COMPOSITION

The Commission is composed of sixteen members, eight appointed by the Governor and eight by the Legislature. The Commission officers for 1984 were: Chairman- Phil Holdsworth (Juneau), Vice-Chairman- Representative Ramona Barnes (Anchorage). The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Senator Bettye Fahrenkamp (Fairbanks), Dorothy Jones (Talkeetna), and Lew Williams (Ketchikan), comprise the Executive Board.

STAFF

There are currently four staff members: an executive director, an administrative assistant and two researchers. The office is located in Fairbanks.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1984 was the second full calendar year of operation for the Commission. The year's objectives were divided between extending public awareness of the Commission, reviewing and commenting on agency planning documents and investigating citizen complaints.

Federal agency planning document drafts which were reviewed and commented on by the Commission include:

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

General Management Plans:

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve

Statements for Management:

Kobuk Valley National Park

Noatak National Preserve

Alternatives Workbooks:

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve

Wild and Scenic Rivers Studies:

Study Recommendations for Koyuk, Kanektok, Yukon
(Ramparts Section), Sheenjek and Squirrel Rivers

Proposed Regulations:

36 CFR, Part 13

Cabins and other structures

36 CFR, Part 9

Minerals Management: Mining and Mining Claims

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Resource Management Plans:

Steese National Conservation Areas

White Mountain National Recreation Area

U. S. FOREST SERVICE

Admiralty Island National Monument Boundary Adjustment
Quartz Hill/ U.S. Borax EIS

Coronation, Warren and Maurelle Islands Wilderness Plan
1985-Resource Planning Act Program

Misty Fiords National Monument EA & Management Direction
West Chichagof-Yakobi EA

Russell Fiord Wilderness Area EA

South Prince of Wales Wilderness EA

Tebenkof Wilderness EA

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Comprehensive Conservation Plans

Kenai National Wildlife Refuge

Becharof National Wildlife Refuge

Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

OTHER

Proposed Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Plan and Revised
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Plan responsibility: Alaska Land Use Council and
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

One of the major projects undertaken by the Commission during 1984 centered around the proposed National Park Service regulations for the use and construction of cabins and other structures on National Park lands in Alaska. The regulations were released in April with a 60 day review and comment period. The National Park Service held public comment meetings in Juneau, Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Public concern arose late in May when it was discovered that many rural residents throughout the State were unaware of the regulations and would not have an adequate amount of time to comment on them. The Commission immediately requested an extension of the comment period. The U.S. Department of the Interior then set August 3 as the close of the review period. However, no additional public meetings were scheduled by the National Park Service. At this point the determination was made to hold a series of Commission sponsored meetings in those areas of the State which would be directly affected by the proposed regulations.

Through existing contact lists, Commission staff distributed approximately 200 copies of the proposed regulations. During the month of July, the Commission sponsored meetings in Eagle, Coldfoot, Kotzebue and Glennallen. A total of 72 people attended the four meetings. Many valuable comments and insights on how the proposed regulations would impact cabin users and occupants were received at the meetings. Another dozen letters and written comments were also received, many from remote areas in the bush. This information was used during the Commission's review of the regulations and incorporated into the formal written comments submitted to the National Park Service.

Specific public concerns or complaints were received and investigated by the Commission regarding problems with:

- cabin use permits in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge;
- public airstrip use in Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P;
- commercial lease applications in Denali National Park and Preserve and Tongass National Forest;
- log transfer facilities in the Tongass National Forest;
- mining claims in Denali NP&P and Wrangell-St. Elias;
- commercial use permits in Kobuk Valley National Park and Noatak National Preserve;
- wilderness boundary adjustment and access in Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P;
- other private inholder complaints in Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and Wrangell-St. Elias NP&P;
- and subsistence resource commission appointments and traditional subsistence use area maps for Gates of the Arctic NP&P.

During the public review period for the Kenai NWR Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan the Commission was contacted by a group of refuge inholders. Their concern centered around language in the draft plan which stated that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would move to acquire all inholdings within the boundaries of the refuge. The Commission determined that such action was contrary to the provisions of ANILCA, its legislative history and previously stated Fish and Wildlife Service policy. Working with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Inholders Association and the National Inholders Association, the Commission succeeded in having the Fish and Wildlife Service agree to adhere to the statutory provisions in ANILCA as well as their own policies in the final version of the plan. These policies state that acquisition of private property is to be used as a final resort, not a primary management tool.

The Commission was also involved in working on other topics of interest to the public. These involved the issue of RS-2477 rights-of-way across federal lands, the administration of the local hire program authorized by section 1308 of ANILCA and the question of ownership of "trespass" cabins on National Park lands in Alaska.

GOALS

The Commission objective of working to "assure that Alaskans' rights are protected from federal encroachment, and that the stated congressional intent of refraining from interrupting

traditional Alaskan activities (fishing, hunting, mining, camping) be continued to the best extent practicable" has been carried out by meeting the past year's goals as stated in the 1983 annual report. These same goals are projected for 1985. The Commission will function as a vehicle for citizen input to the Executive, legislative, and local/municipal decision-making processes concerning federal management areas in Alaska.

Specifically:

The Commission will continue to monitor federal agency planning, management activities and implementation efforts. Review of any federal/public lands proposed for exchange will also be continued.

Commission research on special projects mandated by ANILCA will continue.

The Commission will seek to increase its involvement at the earliest stages of planning activities for the conservation system units established or expanded by ANILCA.

Commission efforts to resolve conflicts between land managers and land users will be emphasized.

The Commission will help to assure that the best interests of the State of Alaska are brought into the decision making process.

The Commission will continue to work with the congressional offices and monitor federal legislation and regulations which have an impact on the administration and management of federal lands in Alaska.

The Commission has maintained its credibility with federal and State agencies, and with individual and organizational contacts, by thoroughly analyzing issues before submitting comments and recommendations in a timely manner. Although the Commission's primary role is advisory, it has the authority to recommend suit by the State's Attorney General against any federal agency which fails to act within the bounds of congressional intent or within the limits of the law.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act is a far reaching law which has had and will continue to have an enormous impact on the citizens of this State. Implementation of this complex piece of legislation is continuing at an ever-increasing pace as the 1987 planning deadline approaches. Only a relatively small number of management plans have been approved to date. With so much planning left to be done, it is essential that citizen involvement remain at the highest possible levels and that participation in that process be encouraged by all levels of government. The Commission was created to assure that maximum opportunity for public involvement exists and will continue to place this issue at the top of its priorities for 1985.

Sincerely,



Phil R. Holdsworth
Chairman