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1990 RDC accomplishments

RDC is ending 1990 on a very good note, thanks to its members, its hard-working staff and its state- wide board of directors. Success in this business is hard to measure. RDC does believe it takes many small successes to help build a solid foundation for the continued economic health of Alaska. RDC uses many avenues to educate and advocate for sound resource development. Taking a long-term view about education, RDC sows many seeds and reaps a harvest every time one more citizen recognizes the importance of domestic production of natural resources from Alaska.

To give our members a glance at the breadth of RDC's programs, as well as some specific results, I've summed up the 1990 accomplishments as follows:

Materials for distribution:

*ANWR Facts brochure — The most current pro-development brochure available on ANWR, with post-spill perspective. Results: Already in its fourth printing, approximately 50,000 in circulation. Used extensively outside of Alaska, in classrooms and available for other organizations to distribute.

*Wilderness brochure — Best synopsis of land ownership and use in Alaska. Very current statistics presented in easy-to-grasp "buzz facts" style. Makes case for ANWR from different perspective, i.e., no more federal Wilderness. Results: Most widespread use, from Governors office to Congressional offices, trade-shows, conferences and sent to every Governor, all Congressmen, every Alaskan legislator and key opinion leaders. Presently in third reprint, approximately 72,000 in circulation.

*Money-map postcard — Key component in effort to educate America, and therefore Congress, on national "enlightened self-interest" aspects of oil production in Alaska. Results: Many reprints. Best economic lesson for those outside Alaska. Widespread distribution by RDC and others.

*Wildlands brochure — Written from an Alaskan community perspective, this brochure played an instrumental role in bringing the Alaska situation to national attention. Results: The brochure has been distributed widely throughout the state and the lower-48 to better explain the impact "no net loss" will have on the communities of Alaska. Reprinted twice, over 20,000 in circulation.

*Resource Review newsletter — RDC's monthly member- ship publication. Besides statewide, it is additionally mailed to all Congress and legislature, all 50 Governors, a variety of newspapers and over 400 Alaska communities. Results: Quoted and reproduced extensively, used in libraries and regarded as the definitive publication on Alaska resource issues, politics and economics.

Continuing programs:

*Thursday breakfast issue forums — RDC's weekly public education activity which brings resource issues to forefront, offers pro-active agenda and provides excellent networking opportunities between all sectors. Results: Receives consistent newspaper coverage, definitely increases public intelligence, well-attended by legislators and public officials, as well as private sector. Multi-industry approach builds consensus, respect and support.

*Visiting Dignitary program — Offers environmental in- couraging and coordination of trips of influential dignitaries, opinion-makers, and politicians to the state, and in providing them forums, field trips and other outreach opportunities. Results: Involves key staff members of Congressional committees of jurisdiction on Alaska issues such as wetlands. ANWR, energy and natural resources took the state as RDC guests. RDC also invited the Domestic Policy Council to hold hearings in Alaska to gather public opinion for formulating the national wetlands policy and the Dept. of Energy to hold national energy security hearings in Alaska.

*Alaska Wetlands Coalition — Spearheaded in late 1989 by RDC, concerned Alaskans who feared the sweeping implications of a national "no net loss of wetlands" policy joined the coalition to fight for an Alaska solution. Due to the concern, efforts were advanced in several directions - from public education through a multi-colored brochure on Alaska wetlands; community briefing papers on the issue; a variety of media articles and interviews (state and national), debates, speeches, notifying communities on hearing schedules, etc.

Resource Review is the official monthly publication of the Resource Development Council, Box 100515, Juneau, Alaska 99810. RDC is located at 105 W 6th, Suite 200, Anchorage.

The Resource Development Council has watched with great interest the recent elections around the state, and has been preparing legislation - some new ideas along with some timeworn favorites - to present to the 17th Alaska Legislature and Governor Hickel in the coming weeks.

T SSP'S RDC priority list will both for legislation and policy will be the ANWR issue. Other concerns include an equitable wetlands solution for Alaska; a stable tax policy for business; a multiple-use policy, along with a variety of industry-specific bills designed to create a more positive atmosphere for responsible resource developers.

RDC is looking forward to working with its new and old friends in the legislature and the administration. In particular, congratulations are due to long-time board member Dick Phillips, a new member of the House of Representatives, and past-president Caryl Stastny, the new director of the Office of Management and Budget. It is gratifying to see the talents of hard-working RDC board members tapped for public service.

On the ANWR front, there is considerable discussion regarding a state appropriation to supplement the ongoing effort. Industry has committed to a multi-million dollar campaign beginning in January, and numerous grassroots groups hopes the state will consider proposals previously discussed to fund an educational program on the importance of opening ANWR.

In addition, a consistent policy on ANWR must be written for state officials, to ensure that Alaska does not contradict itself in the national arena when presenting the oil development case.

RDC is urging the new administration to appeal the recent federal court decision on the "no net loss of wetlands" policy, as well as file an amicus curiae brief in the Leslie Salt case presently being elevated to the U.S. Supreme Court. The administration should press for an exemption from the "no net loss" policy and should support the efforts of the Alaska Wetlands Coalition.

The governor and legislature should enact a state multiple use policy that allows Alaskans access to state lands for the purpose of recreation and resource development. Presently, a large share of state and federal lands are locked in restrictive land designations, however, state lands could be utilized to a fuller extent if a more extensive multiple-use policy was enacted. RDC urges the administration to actively pursue this definitional change during the coming legislative session, and would support and assist in any way possible. Hand-in-hand with a broader multiple use policy is the need for a policy precluding further land withdrawals. Alaska is the repository of more than 56 million acres of federally designated Wilderness, numerous state and federal parks and refuges. Nearly every year, the Alaska Legislature sets aside further land into a restrictive land use designation. Given the significant acreage already set aside for preservation, RDC believes that development and recreation would be hindered by further land withdrawals.

The concept of Forest Management Agreements (FMAs) has long been an RDC priority - one that has yet to receive approval of both houses of the legislature. FMAs would allow the state to issue long-term timber harvest contracts with reputable, owners who would be required to reforest the lands they harvest. In addition, the legislation supported by RDC, would allow smaller loggers the opportunity to access timber. The loggers would be required to properly reforest and reclaim their harvests in order to continue the long-term contracts.

One major problem that will require immediate attention when the new governor and legislature arrive in Juneau is resolution of the Mental Health Trust Lands stalemate. The administration is in a good position given the involvement of Lt. Gov.-elect Jack Coghill, who worked on the issue in the Senate. RDC believes the two branches of government should aggressively pursue a solution that provides the mental health trust lands state that reasonably values the land and equitably compensates the mental health trust beneficiaries.

There are a myriad of other topics that RDC and its members are working on and will be forwarding through the legislative arena, as well as at the administrative level. The board and executive committee of RDC will be meeting in Juneau on Tuesday morning, 29, to talk with lawmakers and administrators, and meet with the local assembly. We hope this will be a successful session for RDC!
Southeast Alaska loggers not celebrating over Tongass package

The million-acre settlement that resolved the multi-year battle raging in the Tongass National Forest has brought both relief and disappointment to Alaska's timber industry, according to RDC board member and Alaska Loggers Association Executive Director Don Finney.

"Although we're happy to have begun this battle over again in January, we're very disappointed in the outcome," Finney said. "We felt the timber industry's opportunity to participate in strategic hearings in Fairbanks. A technical advisor and staff assistant were hired to assist the group with technical and legal positions. Testimony has been given to Congress and the President. The effort continues with meetings at City Councils or Borough Assemblies. Results: BIG increase in RDC's statewide community support, financially, programmatically and legislatively. Read into the Congressional record due to DPC testimony.

*Annual resource conference — RDC's main public event for the last decade. The 1990 conference is entitled "Energy Gridlock: The Politics of the Environment" and includes a section on wetlands, as well as the mental health lands, transportation, and a media panel. Critical debates on allocation issues, global trends and energy outlooks by international experts are scheduled. Attended by 250-400 opinion-makers to Alaska in the winter, opens discussion on vital issues between private and public sectors, co-opts peer interest, mentioned by Congressmen and displayed in legislatively. Read into the Congressional record due to DPC testimony.

*Community resources — RDC's community liaison includes soliciting pro-active testimony and/or resolutions, as well as consulting on and appearing at City Councils or Borough Assemblies. Results: Big increase in RDC's statewide community support, financially, programmatically and legislatively. Read into the Congressional record due to DPC testimony.

*Testimony and comments — RDC keeps abreast of resource plans, land plans, legislation on state and national levels and other critical decisions affecting Alaska's resources. Some examples of proposals RDC commented on include BLM withdrawals for 13 water bodies into National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems, EPA region X decisions, Tongass withdrawals, state working group on the spruce bark beetle epidemic, Forest Practices Act revisions, Susitna Valley resource allocations, funding for fire breaks and road maintenance, state working group on the Chukchi Sea, sales restrictions in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, hearings on the sale of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

*Adopt-a-Congressman campaign — Public effort to encourage direct Alaskan contact with Congress is aimed at generating grassroots letter-writing. Certificate awarded upon action such as letter or information transmitted to elected Congressmen/Senators. Results: Excellent participation by individuals, certificates awarded publicly to generate peer-to-peer interest, mentioned by Congressmen and displayed in offices in Alaska and Washington, D.C.

RDC accomplishments in 1990

(Continued from page 2)

A realistic look at Alaska energy development

Thoughts from the President

by William E. Schneider

The 1990 salmon catch in Alaska was the second highest on record. Caribou are thriving in the oil fields of the North Slope and in Prince William Sound an abundance of wildlife continues to delight visitors and residents alike. Yet millions of people of the United States believe the Sound and the North Slope are ecological disaster areas, devoid of life. They have this wrong impression, given the gloomy misinformation campaign waged by the national environmental lobby. For heaven sakes, digers were held in Anchorage by those claiming the Sound was dead. The press hasn't helped with its endless reports on the spill. Yet the rapid recovery in beaches and the thriving waterfowl, otter, and fish populations have largely been ignored. This summer fishers harvested more fish from Prince William Sound than in any other year. Many of these fish were hatched last year in waters affected by the spill, but escaped harm as they exited the Sound deep beneath the surface. And, obviously, and thank goodness, the effects of the spill are less deadly than the dire predictions made by the preservationists.

This is not to suggest that environmental concerns should be ignored, but really — not emotion — has shown that environmental impacts arising from energy development and production in Alaska are frequently exaggerated. Given the major advances in arctic energy technology, petroleum operations today pose a far less serious threat to the environment than the critics claim.

Their target remains the Coastal Plain of the 19 million acres Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The oil industry is seeking permission from Congress to drill in an area spanning 1.5 million acres of the Coastal Plain. Geologists believe the arctic plain may contain the richest undeveloped oil field in North America. If such a field is discovered, energy operations would consume less than one percent of the refuge.

Although the Coastal Plain itself is not a protected wilderness area, preservationists are adamantly opposed to drilling, claiming such activity would threaten caribou and other wildlife.

Those objections fly in the face of modern energy development on the North Slope where the industry has learned a great deal from the early days of Prudhoe Bay development. Since the initial discovery of Prudhoe Bay in 1971, there have been no discernible adverse effects from energy operations on caribou, waterfowl and other wildlife. And while the oil spill was a very regrettable incident, Prince William Sound's steady recovery has shown nature's incredible ability to restore itself from manmade disasters.

One lesson learned is, despite the best intentions, accidents do occur, but the effects are not necessarily lasting. The industry is doing things a way that will not harm nature. Its environmental awareness is genuine, not a public relations move. It's good business, and bad business to do otherwise. Accidents are costly as Exxon can testify after spending billions of dollars to accelerate the recovery process in the Sound.

Today the Coastal Plain of ANWR stands as an alternative to foreign oil imports from the troubled Middle East region. ANWR is this nation's best chance to curb its heavy dependence on Middle East production.

A big strike in ANWR could reduce imports by nearly one-fourth. This would roughly equal the amount of oil the U.S. imported from Iraq in the first five months of this year. Combined with other promising oil and gas prospects in Alaska's Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, ANWR will be the only area to offer the amount of oil imported from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait.

As Dr. Henry Schuler, Director of Energy Security Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, recently said, America must curb its growth in oil imports and reassess the costs and risks of domestic energy alternatives in light of the costs and risks associated with sending nearly a half million barrels of oil per day to foreign lands.
Rough road ahead for new national wetlands legislation

By Paula P. Easley

Before the U.S. House adjourned, eighteen members, including Alaska's Don Young, introduced H.R. 5968, the "Wetlands Conservation and Management Act of 1990." Two of the original sponsors were not re-elected and a third, Republican Congressman Larry Craig of Idaho, moved to the Senate to replace retiring James McClure. Congressman James Slattery, (D-Kansas) also signed onto the bill. Between now and the time Congress reconvenes January 21, the bill's sponsors are seeking comments and additional sponsors for this first major proposal to reform the beleaguered Section 404 program. It will be reintroduced in the 102nd Congress and most likely referred to its original committees, Public Works and Transportation and Merchant Marine and Fisheries.

Much improved over earlier drafts, the bill still doesn't address all of Alaska's concerns, but it's a good start. The national environmental groups won't like it at all; for one, it takes away the Environmental Protection Agency's veto authority over permits granted by the Army Corps of Engineers.

H.R. 5968's Major Features

(1) It classifies wetlands into three categories: Type A, B, and C, each having differing levels of management and regulatory control. Type A wetlands are the most tightly regulated, and not developable under most circumstances. Compensatory mitigation is required if development is unavoidable. If your wetland is designated "Type A," it is automatically considered a government "taking," which requires federal compensation to you of the property's fair market value.

Activities in Type B wetlands undergo significant agency review and also involve a degree of the minimization and/or mitigation. More flexibility is allowed than in Type A wetlands, and permit decisions must be made within six months.

Type C are the low-value wetlands that generally can be developed, after having been identified as such, without a permit.

(2) It increases the kinds of activities covered under Section 404 to include burning, draining and excavating activities in higher-value wetlands. (Major concession to environmentalists.)

(3) It requires that public and private interests (not just the wetlands values) such as need for the project, cost of alternatives, etc., be evaluated in determining if and how wetlands activity may occur.

(4) It excludes from classification any wetlands temporarily or unintentionally created by adjacent development activity, i.e., manmade wetlands.

(5) It mandates clearcut standards requiring that all three criteria — hydrology, hydrophytic vegetation and hydroic soils — must be present in wetlands delineations, not just one or two. It also clarifies that vegetation can't be called "hydrophytic" if it is more typically adapted to dry rather than wet soil conditions.

(6) It directs the federal agencies to assure that their delineation standards do not conclude that wetlands hydrology exists unless water is present at the surface for at least 21 days during the growing season, rather than seven as is now the case.

(7) It encourages creation of public or private mitigation banks within states and authorizes credits for Type A and B wetlands that are permanently protected in national conservation units in states that have lost less than 25% of their wetlands. (There will be bloody battles over this provision.)

The most pleasant aspect of this 41-page bill is that it truly attempts to clear up much of the regulatory morass that has caused so much confusion and frustration for entities seeking permits, and endless interagency power plays. One gets the distinct impression that the bill's sponsors are fed up with complaints by rate constituents about arbitrary actions, threats, permit elevations and differing agency requirements.

Because of the magnitude of Alaska's wetlands, we may tend to think our problems are unique. Not so. Since being appointed to the board of the Nationwide Public Projects Coalition, I have learned that many other cities and states are experiencing similar frustrations and greatly increased costs of providing public services in today's regulatory environment.

Also, most of the areas outside Alaska are subject to far more severe development pressures than is the case here. Imagine: 40% of fast-growing Florida is "jurisdictional" wetlands! Other states with high wetlands percent are Louisiana (53%), Arkansas (26%), Minnesota (23%), Michigan (22%), South Carolina (24%), North Carolina (22%), New York (20%) and Delaware (27%). Eight other states have between 10% and 20% wetlands.

For the first time I know of, we have an issue in common with our southern neighbors.

To learn more about how other communities are dealing with the federal agencies' efforts to implement "no net loss" of wetlands, Mayor Fink has contacted 803 cities with populations of over 50,000. Responses will be compiled and forwarded to the White House. Speaking of the White House, the President's Domestic Policy Council Task Force on Wetlands is just now — after concluding work on the Clean Air Act — shifting through hundreds of hours of public comment gathered during hearings held around the country, including Anchorage, last summer.

Rest assured the wetlands battle will heat up considerably in 1991, both on the administrative and legislative fronts. Alaska government, industry and private property owners had better be prepared to protect their significant interests in the outcome. Fortunately the Alaska wetlands Coalition, which has retained former Undersecretary of the Interior Bill Horn as its Washington representative, is right up there in the driver's seat.

Paula Easley is Director of the Department of Economic Development and Planning for the Municipality of Anchorage.

Alaska has an exemplary wetlands preservation record. About 99.95% of its wetlands have been preserved, only 80,000 of 170 million acres have been utilized since 1867.

Energy conference to address politics of the environment

(Continued from page 1)

The debate on distinctly Alaska dilemmas.

The opening segment of the conference will address current global energy events and will feature a panel of editors and publishers from Alaska's leading newspapers focusing on a press perspective on environmentalism and energy in the 1990s. Panelists include Lew Williams, Publisher of the Ketchikan Daily News, Carl Sampson, Editor-in-Chief of the Juneau Empire, Dan Joling, Managing Editor of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Bill Tobin, Editorial Page Editor of the Anchorage Times and Matt Zency, Editorial Board of the Anchorage Daily News.

The afternoon segment on Wednesday will address the emerging national wetlands policy and its impact on Alaska energy development, private property, community expansion and resource development on public lands. Practical solutions to Alaska's wetlands dilemma will also be discussed. Speakers include Dr. John W. Mitchell, Senior Vice President and Economist with U.S. Bancorp in Portland, Oregon, Dr. Jay Leitch, Associate Professor at North Dakota State University, Dr. Bernard N. Goode, a nationally-recognized environmental engineering authority from Burke, Virginia and Roger Meisen, Editor-in-Chief of BP Exploration Hermana of BP Exploration (Alaska).