The Resource Development Council publishes Resource Review each month to inform its members across Alaska and the United States of latest RDC actions and issues affecting the development of Alaska's resources.

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A small price to pay to share in the satisfying efforts of building a sound economy in Alaska through resource development.
Private vs. Secret Meetings

An exciting event occurred this December that should have far-reaching effects on Alaska’s ability to enhance future development opportunities.

The event was a New York meeting of Alaska private sector and government leaders with some 85 heads of major U.S. Corporations. Purpose of the meeting was to impart information about Alaska resource issues, to create an awareness of Alaska’s strategic importance to the nation and her allies to form a network of influential “friends of Alaska” to advance our behalf.

Far different from the elite group of environmentalists from the Southern 48 who coalesced during the d-2 battle as “Alaskas” to oppose the state’s development, this group would recognize the key role of Alaska in achieving national goals.

But you didn’t hear much about this event, did you? The Council on Economics and National Security, which cosponsored it, decided early on with RDC’s concurrence that, for the utmost in candid discussion to take place, the meeting would be private. An executive summary would be prepared, however, that would report the essence of the meeting yet not be private. An executive summary would be prepared, yet not be attributed.

You did hear that RDC and elected officials from Alaska were participating in a mysterious “secret” meeting in New York.

The Anchorage Daily News, which determined the “secret” meeting, particularly one attended by a public official, must be open to the press! Let’s turn that around for a moment. Should a newspaper’s editorial session or financial meetings be open to the public and the media? Doesn’t the public have a right to be in on the deliberations when editors endorse or oppose candidates on issues? Should the public, which is so affected by what a newspaper reports, be privy to the debate that occurs concerning publication of sensitive news stories and how they will be treated? Because of the “public” nature of the media, shouldn’t salary information of the publisher and employees be public information? Shouldn’t an annual financial report be required? Shouldn’t reporters be required to identify news sources in their stories?

Of course not. The Anchorage Daily News has every right to hold private meetings (even with the governor) mand decide what is confidential as does the Alaska Center for the Environment, the RDC Executive Committee, a bank board or anyone else who chooses to, in accordance with the law.

The point is, newspapers and broadcasters are businesses like any other business, whose first priority must be to make a profit. It is crucial that public officials not allow themselves to be intimidated by the media which strives to coerce them into their own meetings than their own good judgment and the law require.

Alaska’s Open Meetings Act and subsequent attorney general opinions on its application should be required reading for media representatives. Those same representatives would do well to ask what they can do to make their presence more positively received by individuals and organizations who deal with them.

NOTE: Two excerpts from the May 11, 1981 Attorney General’s Opinion concerning application of the Open Meetings Law to informal meetings:

But where the committee, task force, or group has no power to act by a vote of its members, has no fixed functions which constitute its business, and has no fixed membership to exercise its power by vote, then the Open Meetings Act, by its own terms, does not apply.

“In summary, it is our view that the Open Meetings Act only applies to multi-member bodies, which have a fixed membership, which are supported in whole or in part by public money, and which are empowered pursuant to law to exercise governmental power or to provide advice through a vote of their membership. It does not apply to meetings of private persons which have a fixed membership, have no governmental power or to provide advice through a vote of their membership.”

(Carried on Page 5)

Message From The Executive Director

By Paula P. Leader

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Guest Columnist

Wrong Facts On Forest Plan

by Richard W. Tindall

Chairman

Forestry, Fisheries & Agriculture Division

Larry Williams of Girdwood and Nancy Lethcoe of Valdez have recently expressed their views on the proposed Chugach National Forest Plan. Unfortunately, both have stated biases and factual inaccuracies that need correcting.

First, Williams asserts a 76-year precedent of Chugach forest management as primarily for recreation. The early-day miners and loggers of Prince William Sound would have had a good laugh out of that. Until the Sterling Highway was built, just how much public recreation use was made of the Chugach?

Lethcoe states that timber harvest in the Chugach forest is not feasible without “a tremendous taxpayer subsidy to private logging companies.” If this were true, how could private forest owners, such as Weyerhaeuser Co., Crown Zellerbach, Boise-Idaho, profitably survive? Where are their taxpayer subsidies coming from? Perhaps it’s a difference in financial management. I’m sure the Weyerhaeuser Co., doesn’t subsidize its recreation, fisheries and wildlife programs from its timber management budget.

But you didn’t hear much about this event, did you? The Bureau of Land Management’s timber management program in western Oregon from less than 10 percent of its net timber sale receipts. Other agencies can manage their operations as well, provided other ancillary programs, such as landscaping, recreation, wildlife, snow rangers, etc., pay their own costs and are not subsidized from timber sale receipts.

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New York Conference

Resource Dependencies Threaten U.S. Security

Executives of major U.S. corporations were warned by the Council on Economics and National Security (CENS) in New York this December that, unless the United States makes some hard decisions regarding resource dependencies, the national security of our nation and its allies is severely threatened.

R. Daniel McMichael and Dr. Glenn Olds, speaking on behalf of CENS at a meeting of petroleum and private sector policymakers from Alaska and other states, elaborated on points made at the International Conference on Coal, Minerals and Petroleum held in Anchorage last February.

(See Conference Proceedings, February 1983, available from RDC)

Minerals of the United States were so weak when compared to those of the Soviet Union that McMichael and Fine deemed American policies virtually nonexistent. Russia, meanwhile, has employed its own 15-year “conquer the Arctic” program with the ultimate goals of using its own resources, exporting them at below market prices and pursuing joint technical and trade agreements with lesser developed countries and U.S. allies.

The United States, by not meeting resource needs of its allies, supports Russia’s efforts to neutralize alliances and increase the Soviet throttle on resource-poor nations.

It was reiterated that Russia operates some 20 specially designed icebreakers and that, in 1983, Norway spent nine, the United States none. With Russia’s control of over 70 percent of the Arctic coastline, the United States, by not meeting resource needs of its allies, supports Russia’s efforts to neutralize alliances and increase the Soviet throttle on resource-poor nations.

Crucial to this policy is an aggressive strategy that includes immediate reversal of Soviet activities in the Arctic and passage of a moratorium on the Interior Department’s 1984 Appropriations bill. It was the second year in a row that Congress barred leasing in these areas and the Interior’s ban also included BLM wilderness study areas.

Legislation calling for a Council for Minerals and Materials was introduced with hearings held by both the Science and Technology Committee and the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. What to do about mineral assessments in areas that have been withdrawn from mineral entry was also the subject of proposed legislation.

1983 saw the resignation of two of Interior’s top environmental officials. Both Ann Burford and James Watt were viewed as highly controversial and were the subjects of intense Congressional and media attacks. The new EPA chief and Secretary of Interior have assumed low profiles heading into the 1984 election year.

Regulatory reform efforts dealing with mining law administration were undertaken by the Department of Interior in 1983. While no proposed rules have been published, the top Interior lawyer stated in a speech before the American Mining Congress that the Department is looking at a “two-tier” approach to determine a valid patent and a patentable mineral deposit. These new regulations are aimed at clarifying the definition of the “law of discovery” and “prudent man rule.” An increase in the annual assessment rate requirement was discussed during a meeting in February between BLM officials and a NED delegation.

The Supreme Court struck Congress June 29 when it decided that the legislative veto device is unconstitutional. The ruling invalidated a tool that Congress has used over the past 50 years to overturn executive branch regulations or orders.

Interior Department officials believe this ruling invalidates the “emergency withdrawal” provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

We’re Energizing Alaska!

By Mary Ann Nichols

Congress did a great deal of “homework” in 1983 on national forest wilderness legislation based on the recommendations made by the RARE II program. The Senate passed bills for Wyoming and Missouri, and held hearings on California, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The House passed major bills for California and Oregon, plus bills for Alabama, Florida, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Vermont and Wisconsin.

Congress enacted only one wilderness bill in 1983: the 259,000-acre “Lee McTaff Wilderness” in Montana. The House version of the (Missouri) wilderness bill included a 1,900-acre area because of its (lead) potential.

Progress on the remainder of the wilderness bills hinges on how long to “release” non-wilderness forest lands from future wilderness reviews. House Interior Democrats and environmental groups favor language deferring additional wilderness study until the mid-1990s, while some Senate Energy and House Interior Republicans favor language barring any re-study until after the year 2000. If the impasse over release persists, it could hold up final passage of wilderness bills for any of the remaining major western states next year.

Congress also rebelled against oil and gas leasing in federal wilderness and wilderness study areas by passing a moratorium on the Interior Department’s 1984 Appropriations bill. It was the second year in a row that Congress barred leasing in these areas, and the Interior’s ban also included BLM wilderness study areas.

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Transportation, Resources To Share Priorities

Transportation and natural resource issues will share the highest priorities in the 1984 legislative session, according to a survey recently completed by the Resource Development Council.

In a questionnaire to legislators, the Council asked each lawmaker to identify highest local priorities and issues that should have highest statewide priorities for the entire legislature.

Transportation, education, utility services and natural resources were identified as the most important to individual legislators’ districts. Other issues of high ranking included housing, municipal assistance/revenue sharing, law enforcement/public safety, marine transportation and facilities, state loans and funding programs, taxes and budgets, tourism and recreation.

Natural resource issues were considered most important for statewide legislative priority with transportation issues receiving the highest degree of interest. Predictably, the Alaska Railroad was the most mentioned transportation issue.

Hydroelectric projects and many of the individual legislators’ local priorities were also considered important as statewide issues.

The Resource Development Council conducted the survey to determine whether its activities toward resource and economic development coincided with efforts of legislators in the development arena.

According to RDC Deputy Director Jim Jinks, the results of the survey indicate an acute awareness by Alaska legislators of the necessity to deal with the critical issues affecting Alaska’s resources and their wise use.

“Our legislators are aware that Alaska’s future is dependent on how they resolve these issues in the coming session,” Jinks said. “We are enthusiastic at the prospect of working closely with them and other Alaskans to broaden Alaska’s economic base.” Jinks concluded.

Far East Trade Mission Set

The Resource Development Council is leading a trade mission-fact finding tour of the Far East May 12-27, 1984. The itinerary includes stops in Tokyo, Seoul and Taipei. The estimated price for the trip is $2,000, including airfare, deluxe hotels, some sightseeing and airport transfers.

Interested persons should contact the trade mission coordinator, M.A. Higgins, at 248-0355 before February. Space will be limited to 30 travelers.

Forest Products To Be Discussed

Marketing Alaska forest products is the subject of a seminar scheduled for February 13-14 at the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel.

The program features Jay Greenfield, forest resources and management consultant and publisher of the Alaska Forest Market Report. It is especially designed for directors of Native corporations, forest managers, bankers and buyers and sellers of Alaska forest products.

Speakers from throughout Alaska, the southern 48, China, Japan and Korea will address such topics as opportunities in the Pacific Rim markets, Alaska opportunities for forest industry investment, how to profit in the export market and what the state should do to help develop markets.

Conference fee is $195, which includes one luncheon. For additional information and registration, contact the Office of Conferences and Continuing Education, University of Alaska, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, 907-766-4779.

JAL Agreement To Boost Tourism Here

A five-fold increase in Japanese tourism during this decade could be the net result of a U.S. State Department agreement with Japan that permits Japan Air Lines to resume passenger service between Anchorage and Tokyo starting January 1.

The agreement, reached last month, restores rights of the air carrier to have seven roundtrip passenger flights per week. The agreement is significant since JAL in the past has flown the greatest volume of Far East tourists to the state. JAL had lost its Anchorage passenger rights in July when it started bypassing Anchorage to fly direct between New York and Tokyo.

In 1983 the Resource Development Council joined other organizations in supporting efforts by Senator Frank Murkowski to get the Anchorage rights reinstated.

Both Lufthansa Airways and Korean Air Lines are awaiting approval of their requests for passenger rights. RDC, the state and the city of Anchorage are supporting a “open skies” policy to provide as many seats as possible to facilitate tourism between Alaska and the Far East.