Resource Review

June 1996

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Message from our executive director

by Paula E. Easley

Who owns the land?

“I had truly been hoodwinked;” what about you?

I know it’s absurd, but people living on the East Coast, New York City for example, actually believe the rest of the country is as “developed” as Big Pack. With all the疏通 of New York City for example, believe their city is “developed.” They have no concept whatever of the vast open spaces outside their city. Flying around Alaska really blows their minds. After living in Alaska for three years and reading so much environmental literature, I was convinced the American people were paving over the south 48 at an alarming rate. They’ve done a marvelous job of convincing us that we’ve “destroyed” so much land that we must remove every acre that’s left from any kind of productive use. The media unquestioningly carried forth their message. It wasn’t until I began meeting with the National Public Lands Advisory Council and traveling to such “resort” outposts as Rosewell, New Mexico, Casper, Wyoming, Klamath Falls, Oregon, Grand Junction, Colorado and Butte, Montana, that I became flabbergasted with how little of our nation’s land had been paved over. I had truly been hoodwinked, and that made me mad. I couldn’t believe the signs, or I’d never have known the areas had been cut. Even more exciting were the honest-to-god logging trucks with legos on them!

Here are the questions asked:

1. What percent of land in the U.S. do you think is used for settlement, commerce, and industry, energy and mineral production, transportation, water storage and other consumptive uses? Answers ranged from 10% to 78%, with the majority responding above 50%. The correct percent is 4.5%.
2. What percent of land do you think is used for agriculture and forestry, including rangelands? Answers ranged from 12% to 60%, with a mean of 35%. The correct percent is 78%.
3. What percent of land do you think is devoted to non-consumptive uses (parks, wilderness, glaciers, deserts, wildlands and water)? To this question, responses centering between 40 and 65% probably meant people included rangeland in this category. The correct amount is 17.5%.

Now, aren’t you glad to have this juicy tidbit of information?

P.S. On my recent (first in 25 years) automobile trip through the Pacific Northwest, I was fully prepared to view a vast clearcut wasteland. How could I not, with all the other tales of tree plantations with new growth 20 to 40 feet high. Thinks, Weyerhaeuser, for those signs, or I’d never have known the areas had been cut. Even more exciting were the honest-to-god logging trucks with legos on them!

National lands council names three committee chairmen

Paula Easley, Executive Director of the Resource Development Council, has been appointed chairman of the Land Committee of the National Public Lands Advisory Council.

Easley has been serving on the 21-member federal advisory board since 1982. Her new position with the NPLAC was announced last month at the organization’s spring meeting in Casper, Wyoming. Easley of Reno, Nevada, was appointed chairman of the Council while Robert Wright, former vice president of the National Cattlemen’s Association, was appointed chairman of the Renewable Resource Development Council.

The Resource Development Council (RDC) is Alaska’s largest privately funded nonprofit economic development organization working to enhance Alaska’s natural resources in an orderly manner and to create a broad-based, diversified economy while protecting and enhancing the environment.

RDC’s work has been focused in several key areas of economic development, including regional economic development and overall management of the public lands, especially those affecting energy and mineral development and overall rangeland management.

Easley is Alaska’s sole representative on the Council.

Does Alaska need a recreation river bill?

HB 93, which wouldobile open-ended recreational river system on state land to protect six important southcentral rivers, failed to pass the legislature this year.

Some people fear that the failure of this bill will mean the destruction of Alexander Creek, Lake Creek, Moose Creek, Talchulitna River, Talkeetna River and the Little Susitna River — this is simply not true.

The issue here is not whether we should protect these rivers from activities that will impact the significant recreational opportunities. The real issue is whether legislation is needed to accomplish that goal. Everyone, from developers and sportsmen to residents of the Susitna Valley and Anchorage, agrees that the recreation values of the area must be protected.

The Resource Development Council was protected that the legislation mandated by HB 93 are already being enforced by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Legislation would simply add another layer of designation and restrictions to lands that are not threatened. Furthermore, DNR has all the necessary authority to manage the lands to protect the recreation values.

Since DNR, in fact, already manages the areas to protect the important values that so many Alaskans rely on, it is obvious that the bill is a clear duplication of management direction. In general, duplication is costly and unnecessary, and should be especially avoided in times of declining revenues.

Following are specific examples of such duplication:

1. The bill set three goals for the management of the rivers: public recreation, wildlife habitat and water quality. The Susitna Area Plan already classified those lands to protect these elements.
2. The bill would have prevented land disposals in the river corridors. The Department of Natural Resources has already placed these lands off limits to land disposal.
3. The legislation would have closed the area to mineral entry. The Commissioner of DNR has already signed a mineral closing order for the same lands.
4. The bill would not prohibit snowmobiles or motorboat use of the rivers. There are no such restrictions on the rivers right now and DNR is not considering any.
5. Since DNR is presently enforcing the mandate of the Susitna Area Plan, public review and comment are required by law before any changes could be made to these river areas. Following are specific examples of such duplication:

Notable Quotes

“Our family of four relocated from Oregon to Alaska last year. It was a move dictated by special interest groups that shut down the timber industry where we were. We saw numerous jobs lost and mills shut down because these ‘interest’ groups were deciding how the forests should be managed.”

Mary Ann Lamb

Alaska Women in Timber

“Environmentalists have relentlessly pursued a political agenda to further erode hunting and fishing opportunities in Alaska. Whenever you ask any of these folks if they are anti-hunting, they almost always deny it; however, although in many cases they are not directly opposing hunting, they are in fact working to prohibit access to many areas left open for consumptive uses.”

Ed Grasser

Alaska Outdoors Council, Inc.

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New regulations to ban use of lethal action against whales

The National Marine Fisheries Service plans to ban the use of explosives, firearms and other potentially lethal means of scaring whales away from catches after Alaska fishermen last month set off powerful explosions in Prince William Sound to scare orca whales from their nets.

These new regulations will take effect within 10 days after appearing in the Federal Register. It applies to 760 Alaska fishermen who have certificates of exemption from certain sections of the federal Marine Mammals Protection Act. Fishermen came under fire recently for using powerful Detadrive explosives that might harm the whales. The explosions were set off despite the fact that no one knows what effect they may have on the whales.

The Resource Development Council gathered earlier this month to examine the certificates of exemption, which allow fishermen to injure or kill marine mammals in order to prevent losses. The council is a relatively small standard on Alaska industry. Alaska's petroleum industry is prohibited from using explosives.

Alaska's petroleum industry is prohibited from using explosives from using explosives under a 1975 policy that applies only to that one industry. The oil industry's use of explosives has been denied without exception, despite the EPA's Alaska Pulp agreement on new standards

The Alaska Pulp Corporation and the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 10 office have agreed on wastewater treatment standards for the Sitka pulp mill.

The agreement must be approved by the EPA's Washington, D.C. office, the Justice Department and the federal court system.

Based on the state's approval of an $8.2 million loan guarantee for purchase of new equipment, the agreement includes a compliance schedule.

Mill operators and the EPA have argued over wastewater treatment standards, and the EPA denied a variance for the mill three years ago.

Provisions of the Bristol Bay Cooperative Management Plan banning the use of explosives for geophysical surveys had a major part in the decision, as did intense pressure from fishermen and environmental groups to prevent the use of explosives in water.

The Alaska Oil and Gas Association is now conducting a $120,000 experiment in Resurrection Bay near Seward to convince state officials to lift their ban on the use of Primacord for seismic exploration. The program involves a number of small explosions to assess possible effects on juvenile salmon and herring.

The state has agreed to reconsider the oil industry's use of explosives once it has more information to work with. The AOGA study should provide that information.

The Council believes fishermen should operate under the same mandate the oil industry has been required to follow, that of preparing diligently beforehand to assure that its activities will not harm the environment.

Double standards are not only unfair, the Council believes, they are nonproductive and confusing. They cause chaos for any industry doing business in the state.

Thoughts from the president

by Boyd Brownfield

Of all the issues before our great state, I believe those dealing with the future of our lands pose a greater impact upon Alaska than any other single issue. It is the destiny of these lands which forges the future of Alaska's greatest wealth; our overwhelming abundance of natural resources.

Consider for instance our enormous hardrock mineral and coal deposits, vast timber and fishery reserves, unparalleled water-borne energy, and the mineral and energy riches we have left.

We can reap the benefits of our land and enjoy its special unique values. Many uses can be accommodated.

As the battle heats up to look up more of Alaska's land, it is up to you and me to press for rational approaches to using our land and the resources it contains. We must accept this responsibility or the preservationalist philosophy will prevail.

The Resource Development Council is working diligently to bring land into production,

unlimited recreation and tourism opportunities and a host of others. Indeed, Alaska is overly endowed with riches and is the envy of our other 49 states.

However, without access to these vast opportunities, no meaningful resource development will take place. Our "potential" will rest in the ground, lending little assistance to the crucial mission of diversifying our level economy.

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Affordable access, facilities needed for Alaska tourists

The Resource Development Council has asked the President's Commission on American Outdoors to adopt six major policy directives that would allow people to enjoy the wonders of nature by providing affordable access and adequate visitor facilities in America's national parks.

Addressing the distinguished members of the Commission in Anchorage June 2, Executive Director Paula Easley said that before proposing any new legislative initiatives, the Commission should thoroughly assess the impacts on the western federal land states. She said a proposal that might well serve the state of Ohio could be disastrous to a state such as Alaska.

Easley also urged the Commission to recommend that the federal government not be one to be found in the National Parks and Travel Council report to the House Science Committee: "The report does not say they can't have recreation without 'parking' or 'specifically designated areas.'

Easley explained that National Geographic's 1986 opinion poll indicated that between 75% and 85% of Americans' favorite activities were walking, driving, sightseeing, picnicking and swimming. These activities, Easley stressed, require access and facilities.

"The greatest untapped recreational resource in the nation is the 272 million acres of land managed by the Bureau of Land Management," Easley pointed out. "Forest Service lands provide another 100 million acres. Lands managed by these two agencies allow the greatest variety of uses by humans and to meet the needs of recreationists, their uses should remain flexible and under their control.

"And in Alaska there is significantly more recreational activity on BLM and Forest Service lands than on those managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service or the Park Service, Easley said. "Yet the last two agencies continue to demand more Congressional appropriations for recreation than do the BLM or Forest Service."

In its third point, RDC suggested that recommendations to the President reflect the fact that other human uses need not be eliminated to have quality outdoor recreation. The Council stressed that a sound principle of multiple use encourages dispersed user areas, a variety of sightseeing opportunities and policies that allow land to be productive and contribute to the national economy.

"In Alaska, nearly all popular recreation areas exist because of access and facilities provided by mining, logging and commercial tourism operations," Easley said. "Recreation has traditionally consisted with other uses, and this variety of uses should continue.

Easley urged the Commission to recommend cost-effective approaches to meet increasing needs for recreation that involve the private sector. She also urged the Commission to recommend initiatives that result in negating the property rights of permittees, lessees, claimholders or land owners of any type on the federal lands.

The Council's sixth point called for the Commission to acknowledge that recreation is a resource having great potential for positively impacting the U.S. trade deficit. Easley proposed that efforts be expanded to capture a greater share of the international travel market by providing greater access to public lands and more adequate visitor facilities.

"In Alaska, affordable access is the first step toward providing a range of recreational opportunities," Easley said. "The best example of a successful marriage of affordable access and adequate facilities is not a national park..." (continued on page 5)