ANWR compromises begin to emerge
New dimension added to debate

The raw outlines of a compromise have begun to emerge in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee after the latest round of hearings on legislation to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas leasing.

The only legislation before the Committee as of October 20 was S.B. 1217, submitted by Alaska Senators Frank Murkowski and Ted Stevens. The pro-development bill contains provisions for a competitive leasing program and sound protection of fish and wildlife resources as well as environmental values. Although environmentalists have labeled this approach extreme, the bill is practical, straightforward and does not circumvent environmental law.

The Senate panel is now proceeding to mark up the bill. Revised legislation reflecting public input may be released by November.

The most likely compromise will be phased leasing of the 1.5-million-acre Coastal Plain and extra protection for areas used heavily by caribou for calving.
The Resource Development Council (RDC) is Alaska’s based, diversified economy while protecting and enhancing the environment.

Not in Chugach State Park

In 1970, the 500,000-acre Chugach State Park was set aside to fulfill a variety of purposes, from providing diverse recreational opportunities in the areas bordering Anchorage to providing true pristine experiences in the 60% designated Wilderness.

The recent decision by the Department of Natural Resources to allow for year-long trial periods of helicopter ski resort development in the park is another in a line of actions by the state to allow for the development of more than one resort in its wilderness areas. The decision is not a surprise.

Alaskans should be cautious about precluding such opportunities, especially since we attract tourists from all over the world. Furthermore, Alaska has minimal alternative infrastructure options to offer such as roads, gondolas, tram lines, and visitor centers. A recent ACDP poll found 73% of Anchorage residents support ski resort development in the park and 65% support helicopter access for tourism. This variety of leisure activities is likely to generate more tourism dollars for Alaska’s economy.

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Usibelli's loading area on the Alaska railway two miles east of the mine. This would mean a big savings on transportation costs, Sims said.

But the biggest savings would come in construction of the power plant itself, Sims stressed. The plan calls for use of prefabricated modules that can be shipped to the site and assembled.

"We estimate that this will cut the cost in half," Sims said. "The technology we are looking at is state-of-the-art and can meet the strict air-quality regulations."

The power plant would employ about 200 people during construction and about 50 full-time. In addition, more jobs will be created at the mine because of the increase in coal demand.

If the coal-processing facility, which would use steam from the electrical plant as an energy source to dry coal, is built, approximately 50 additional full-time jobs would be created.

The symposium will be held at the Clarion Hotel in Anchorage December 3-4. It is designed for executives of timber, mining, petroleum, forestry and engineering representatives and community leaders.

With few exceptions, these forests are in wild and unmanaged status.

The potential for supplying commodities to spire economic and social growth in northern areas is great, but the potential will require purposeful management if economic potential coupled with environmental concerns are to be realized.

Alaska is the prime repository of boreal forest in the United States. The Alaska boreal forest is virtually unmanaged.

Alaska northern forests, the RDC Education Foundation, a sister organization to the RDC Development Corporation, has organized a two-day international symposium directed at boreal forest management.

Boreal Forest Management

To better understand the potential of the boreal forests of the Alaska northern forests...
Debate over ANWR exploration heats up

By rep. Lindsay Thomas and rep. John Dingell.

Those familiar with oil and gas operations know that the bill Jones is a detailed map on how to block every phase of exploration and production.

"this proposal would hamstring the industry's ability to find and extract oils and would turn Arctic operations into a bureaucratic nightmare," said governor cooper.

congressman Don Young, who is a member of the merchant marine panel, said he would not support the bill. however, he liked the fact that the legislation shifts the debate from whether there should be oil activities in the refuge to how such activities should be managed.

industry officials were similarly unconvinced about the exploration-first idea. they prefer the present system when the state has proposed leaving unexplored areas of the coastal plain.

while the white house would decide whether leasing would boost the size of refuge set-asides in Alaska, to 100 million acres, an area roughly the size of California and ten times the refuge acreage in all other 49 states combined.

in the latest round of Senate hearings, environmentalists argued that there should be oil activities in the refuge to produce needed oil.

But the Jones bill is said to be a compromise. young's pro-development bill, which has 148 cosponsors, and Congressman Mo Udall's legislation which would designate the entire coastal plain as wilderness.

while the state's proposal would allow development to occur in the area if studies found no serious consequences for the caribou, the Jones bill would permanently designate the entire coastal plain as wilderness.

According to physical evidence, some environmentalists charge that "there's unbelievable damage at Prudhoe Bay." It's a broad claim to make, but the most compelling rebuttal comes from the fish and wildlife positions and continuous need to feed, reproduce and rear their young throughout the North Slope.

"there is no evidence that animal or bird populations have increased because of the presence of industries," said webb. "the evidence that the habitats of the ability to support future populations of wildlife has not been impacted by any number of exploration activities on the plain." the tundra occupied by all north slope oilfield facilities," said ROD branch member doug webb.

"Of the 600,000 acres enclosed in the refuge, only 8,160 acres are actually occupied...less than two percent," webb said.

webb, who serves as vice president of operations at Standard Alaska Petroleum Company, noted that the "footprint" in ANWR would be even smaller. he explained that Prudhoe Bay's oilfield facilities were the state-of-the-art when they were built 15 years ago. But the petroleum industry has learned a lot since then about "doing more with less, making things smaller, more compact and efficient.

Any oil development in ANWR would utilize such technological advantages as horizontal drilling techniques, new drill rig technology as currently being used by the drilling rigs at the new endako project and various other advances in building and facilities design.

These and other advances will lessen the amount of land needed to produce any oil reserves found in ANWR. Industry experts have estimated that if development in these areas were to occur, it would take up less than one percent of ANWR's estimated 43 million acres.

"industry officials were similarly unimpressed," rep. ben k. campbell (R-Iowa), rep. Larry Craig (Idaho), rep. Paul D. Broun (Ga), rep. James B. Pritchard (VT), rep. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (CO), and rep. Richard Lemen (CA) all questioned the claim that the "environmentally sensitive" proposed development areas are environmentally sensitive.

the Senate and House debates are set to occur next week.

The bill, which would prohibit any activities on a 376,000-acre area of the coastal plain, the "protective management zone" would be reduced to 130,000 acres if the refuge includes the coastal plain.

The bill, introduced in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, would allow exploration until a seven-year study on the impact of development on ANWR's environment is completed.

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