

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY MORTON ANNOUNCES HIS CHOICES OF MEMBERS ON JOINT FEDERAL-STATE LAND USE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR ALASKA

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today announced appointment of four members to the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska.

The 10-member body--established under authority of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, signed into law by President Nixon--will make recommendations to both the State and Federal Governments concerning the proper use and protection of lands in America's largest State. Most of Alaska is Federally-owned, but the new law establishes procedures for land selections by Alaska Natives and the State Government, and for land withdrawals by the Secretary of the Interior.

Co-chairmen of the Commission are the Governor of Alaska, William A. Egan, and Jack O. Horton, former Deputy Under Secretary of the Interior who was appointed as Federal co-chairman by President Nixon last March. The law provides that four members will be appointed by the Governor and four by the Secretary of the Interior.

Secretary Morton's four choices are:

--Celia Hunter, of Fairbanks, executive secretary of the Alaska Conservation Society and a charter member of the Bureau of Land Management's Advisory Board for Alaska; member of the national Governing Council of the Wilderness Society; graduate of the University of Alaska with a degree in botany; and co-owner of Camp Denali, a summer resort near Mount McKinley National Park.

--George Sullivan, Mayor of Anchorage, who also has been a transportation executive, a deputy U.S. marshal at Nenana, Alaska, and a past president of the Alaska Junior Chamber of Commerce.

--Dr. Richard Cooley, economist and geographer, author of three books and various articles on Alaska, consultant to various Federal and State of Alaska agencies, and chairman of the geography and environmental studies program, University of California at Santa Cruz.

--Joseph H. Fitzgerald, former chairman of the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska; former State coordinator for the Alaska Earthquake Recovery Program, 1964-65; and widely known for his knowledge of Alaska. A past president of Ozark Airlines, Mr. Fitzgerald--a Rhodes Scholar in his youth--first came to Alaska in 1949 as a regional attorney for the Civil Aeronautics Authority in Anchorage, and later headed the Civil Aeronautics Board's Alaska Office.

"I am highly pleased we were able to get people of this caliber, experience, and knowledge to serve on the Commission," Secretary Morton said. "All are outstanding people in their own fields, yet all are generalists capable of determining and balancing national and State interests in Alaska.

"Land use planning in Alaska requires understanding of many things--the Arctic and sub-Arctic environment, balanced resource management, social and economic interrelationships, government policy and regulation. I expect to rely heavily on the advice of the Commission in reaching many of the decisions that the Secretary of the Interior must make on the lands and resources of Alaska," Mr. Morton said.

Governor Egan's appointees, also announced today, are Dr. Max Brewer, State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation and former longtime director of the Arctic Research Laboratory at Barrow; Charles Herbert, State Commissioner of Natural Resources and a minerals geologist; James Hurley, Matanuska Valley farmer; and Harry Carter, executive director of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

Under the Act, the Commission is to undertake a process of land use planning and make recommendations of areas for Federal retention; Federal and State lands to be made available for disposal; and uses of lands remaining in Federal and State ownership. It also is charged with advising on proposed land selection by the State and by Alaska Natives (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts).

The Act also directs the group to set up procedures to obtain public views, by hearings and otherwise; create a committee of land use advisers representing a broad spectrum of interests and opinions; advise the President and the Governor of Alaska on programs and budgets for administration of State and Federal lands in Alaska.

In addition, it is to make recommendations to insure that economic growth and development is "orderly, planned and compatible with State and national environmental objectives, the public interest in the public lands, parks, forests, and wildlife refuges in Alaska, and the economic and social well-being of the Native people and other residents of Alaska."

It also is directed to recommend ways to improve Federal-State coordination and consultation on resource allocation and land-use decisions.

Except for the Governor, the Federal Co-Chairman, and others on State or Federal payrolls, the members receive \$100 a day plus expenses for each day they work on Commission business. The Commission is to report annually to the President, the Congress, and the Governor, with a final report due by May 30, 1976. The Commission's existence expires December 31, 1976.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provided that \$962.5 million would be paid the State's approximately 55,000 Natives in payment for their aboriginal land claims, in addition to selection by the Natives of some 40 million acres of land.

The 1971 Act also directed the Secretary of the Interior to set aside up to 80 million acres for national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and wild and scenic rivers. Last March 15, Secretary Morton designated preliminary set-asides for the above requirements, on which final decisions will be made in mid-September, pursuant to that law.