

Digest of Federal Resource Laws of Interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([43 USC 1601-1624](#)) -- Public Law 92-203, approved December 18, 1971 (85 Stat. 688), and repeatedly amended, authorized Alaska Natives to select and receive title to 44 million acres of public land in Alaska, and \$962,000,000 in cash as settlement of their aboriginal claim to land in the State. The Act established a system of village and regional Native corporations to manage the lands and cash payments, and made extensive provisions regarding the operations of the corporations.

Special provisions were made for, and restrictions placed on, selection of lands within existing National Wildlife Refuges.

The Act also required the Secretary of the Interior to withdraw up to 80 million acres of existing public land for specific consideration as new national wildlife refuges, national parks, national forests and wild and scenic rivers. These lands were to remain in a special withdrawal category until Congress completed action on the proposals or until December 1978. On October 14, 1978, the 95th Congress adjourned without passing the necessary legislation or an extension of the existing protection for these lands.

From 1977 to 1980, the Secretary exercised his authority under Section 204(e) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (90 Stat. 2743) to withdraw from mineral entry and State selection for three years approximately 110 million acres in Alaska which had been under consideration for inclusion in the national conservation systems.

In recognition of special scientific values and to provide further protection to some of these areas, in 1978 and 1979, the President proclaimed 17 national monuments comprising 56 million acres. This action was taken under authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906. (See entry "Historic Preservation", and for disposition of the withdrawn lands, see entry "Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.")

The Act was recently amended by P.L. 105-276 (Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999). This new provision allows native Alaskans, who are Vietnam veterans (within certain parameters), to be able to obtain an allotment of not more than two parcels of federal land totaling 160 acres or less under the Act of May 17, 1906 (chapter 2469; 34 Stat. 197). Such allotments may be selected only from lands that were vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved on the date when the person eligible for the allotment first used and occupied those lands. No later than 18 months after enactment of this law, the Secretary of the Interior shall promulgate rules to carry out this section.

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