

SJR

27

**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT
First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 2/6/04

FURTHER:

Date of 5-Day Notice: _____
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED
IN TO OFFICE: 2-19-04

Resources Committee considered SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 27

SJR 27 SUBMERGED LAND TITLE DISPUTES

Relating to the resolution of submerged land title disputes.

and recommends:

- be replaced with _____ CS _____ (_____)
- adopt previous _____ CS _____ (_____)
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by _____ Committee
- further referral to _____ Committee

Senate Bill:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Title
House Bill:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical Title Change
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Title w/ SCR # _____

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#
DNR	2/7/04			✓	

Department	Date	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
<i>[Signature]</i>	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>			✓	
CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>	✓			

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: SJR27-DNR-MLW-02-17-04
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Natural Resources
 Title Submerged Land Title Disputes RDU Resource Development
 Component RS2477 and Navigability
 Sponsor Sen. Seekins
 Requester Senate Resources Component No. 2226

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2004) cost: 0.0

Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2005 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

There is no fiscal impact to DNR associated with passage of a resolution.

Prepared by: Dick Mylius Phone 907-269-8532
 Division: Mining, Land & Water Date/Time 2/17/04
 Approved by: Thomas Irwin, Commissioner Date 2/17/04
 Agency: Natural Resources

ALASKA STATE SENATE

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Senator Ralph Seekins
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Senate Joint Resolution 27 Sponsor Statement

A Resolution relating to the resolution of land title disputes

Alaska holds over 20,000 rivers and more than 1,000,000 lakes considered to be potentially navigable waterways. This amounts to nearly 60,000,000 acres of submerged lands. At statehood, title to all submerged land was to be transferred to Alaska from the federal government. It's important to note that up until statehood this land was held in trust for the future state by the federal government. Now, more than 45 years after Alaska became a sovereign state, the federal government has yet to transfer title to these promised lands.

SJR 27 does three things:

1. It encourages the Secretary of the Interior and the Alaska congressional delegation to support and endorse the continuation of the process for recording federal disclaimers of interest for quieting title to submerged lands;
2. It requests the Alaska congressional delegation to introduce legislation in the Congress to provide for federal participation in the proposed state and federal Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska; and
3. It requests the introduction of legislation in the Congress to amend the Quiet Title Act to ensure federal cooperation in resolving submerged land title disputes.

The dilemma is clearly illustrated in the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case of *Alaska v. USA* (decision filed on January 28, 2000). Circuit Judge Andrew Kleinfeld authored the opinion of the court excerpted as follows:

It is undisputed that when the Union [United States of America] was created, each of the thirteen original states retained title to the lands covered by navigable waters, and that under the "equal footing doctrine" each new state succeeds upon statehood to the federal interest in these lands. The Submerged Lands Act gave Alaska title to the beds of navigable rivers on January 3, 1959.

Under [the Quiet Title Act] . . . the federal government takes the position that its sovereign immunity shields it from the state government's claim [to clear title to submerged lands] until the federal government itself makes a claim. Because Alaska is very large, much of it is wilderness, and there are innumerable waters, the federal government has not had time yet (45 years) to determine what claims it wishes to make. Therefore, the state government must wait until the federal government makes a claim, if it ever does, before settling whether it has title.

In a nutshell, the federal government's preferred method for reconciling these disputes appears to be to wait the state out. When (if ever) the government decides to make a claim against state ownership, only then does Alaska have an opportunity to protect its ownership interest. This is accomplished by filing a quiet title suit against the federal government – just as it did in the case cited above relating to the Nation, Kandik and Black Rivers.

The bottom line? That which should be indisputable – that Alaska holds title to its submerged lands – has, in fact, been effectively disputed as a function of the federal government's foot dragging. Without doubt, the existing processes of resolving submerged lands title disputes are inadequate and exceptionally slow. SJR 27 seeks resolution to this extraordinarily unfair dilemma.

ALASKA STATE SENATE

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Senator Ralph Seekins
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Senate Joint Resolution 27

A Resolution relating to the settlement of land title disputes

The proposed Resolution is intended to encourage settlement of submerged land title disputes between the federal government and the State of Alaska.

3 Facts

1. Alaska holds over 20,000 potentially navigable rivers.
2. Alaska holds more than 1,000,000 navigable lakes.
3. Alaska holds nearly 60,000,000 acres of submerged land.

3 Statements

1. Prior to statehood, title to all submerged lands in Alaska was held in trust by the federal government; upon statehood title to all submerged lands was to be transferred to Alaska.
2. Under the "equal footing doctrine", the Submerged Lands Act gave Alaska title to the beds of navigable rivers as of January 3, 1959.
3. Yet, the federal government claims its sovereign immunity shields it from Alaska's claim to these lands until the federal government itself makes a claim thereby bringing the process to a virtual halt.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

CONFLICTS CONCERNING TITLE TO SUBMERGED LANDS IN ALASKA

By: Ron Somerville, Resource Consultant
and
Ted Popely, Legal Counsel

Updated: 02/11/04

Statehood Entitlement – Submerged Lands

Alaska became a state in 1959 and under the Equal Footing Doctrine and the Submerged Lands Act inherited title to almost 60+ million acres of submerged lands. Unfortunately, since statehood, less than 20 rivers have been determined to be navigable by the federal courts. Although BLM has made numerous navigability determinations and the Department of the Interior is presently working positively with the state to identify and issue a "Recordable Disclaimer of Interest" for navigable waterways, the process is still painfully slow. Considering the fact that Alaska contains 20,000+ potentially navigable rivers and well over 1,000,000 lakes that could qualify as navigable, it could take several life-times and billions of litigation dollars before Alaska realizes its entitlement, if at all. In addition, the passage of time weakens the state's ability to provide the factual determinations necessary to prove in a federal court that a waterbody was navigable at the time of statehood.

Issues of State Ownership of Submerged Lands

Alaska faces two types of legal hurdles in establishing its entitlement to submerged lands. Its most critical problem is to establish, in an efficient and timely manner, which of the state's rivers and lakes are navigable. Alaska's second hurdle is to determine which submerged lands the United States legally withdrew prior to statehood. The state's attempts to resolve these issues are thwarted by the extremely narrow interpretation the United States gives to the federal Quiet Title Act and by the lack of a non-judicial process to determine title.

The Basis of the State's Claim of Title to Submerged Lands

Alaska owns the submerged lands underlying navigable waters and marine waters seaward three miles by virtue of the Equal Footing Doctrine and the Submerged Lands Act of 1953. The Equal Footing Doctrine dictates that new states enter the Union with all of the powers of sovereignty and jurisdiction that pertain to the original states. When a state enters the Union, it takes title to the lands underlying navigable waters and between mean high and mean low tide as a matter of constitutional right, subject only to the paramount federal power to control the waters for navigation in interstate and foreign commerce. The Submerged Lands Act conveys lands under marine waters and also includes lands underlying inland navigable waters to confirm their automatic passage under the equal footing doctrine.

For purposes of title to submerged lands, waters are navigable when they are used or susceptible of being used in their natural and ordinary condition as highways for commerce over which trade and travel may be conducted. Unfortunately, only a handful of waterways have been adjudged navigable since Alaska's statehood, because of the unwillingness of the United States to settle navigability issues outside litigation, and because of the jurisdictional difficulties of litigating navigability against the United States.

Despite the Equal Footing Doctrine and the Submerged Lands Act, the United States claims title to most or all of the state's submerged lands within the 25% of Alaska that the federal government had reserved before statehood. This issue is governed by *Utah Division of Lands v. United States*, 482 U.S. 193 (1987) Commonly referred to as the "Utah Lake" case. In Utah Lake, the court held that in order to establish that it retained title to submerged land within a reservation, the United States must establish (1) that Congress clearly intended to include submerged lands in the withdrawal, and (2) that Congress affirmatively intended to defeat the future state's title to submerged lands. In Utah Lake, the court found that the United States did not establish congress' intent to include the lake-bed in the reservation, despite the fact that the purpose of the reservation was to preserve the lake for a reservoir.

Navigable Waters Jurisdictional Issues

Some federal agencies have issued regulations governing activities on navigable waters flowing through federal lands. The extent of their authority to do so is unclear. In some instances the agency may have Commerce Clause authority (e.g. promulgating regulations to implement environmental laws) but the more difficult question is the scope of an agency's authority whose mandates are not directly related to water, but are tied to land management, such as the National Forest Service, National Park Service, National Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management. The Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit has held that some agencies may regulate non-public lands under the Property Clause if the activities could negatively affect the purpose of the federal reservation. In Alaska, the more common scenario is an agency restricting public access on navigable waters within a reservation, such as requiring restrictive permits to conduct commercial activities on a waterway.

Navigability Criteria Conflicts

Where title to submerged lands is at stake, the dispositive issue is usually the navigability of the waters that overlie them. The United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) makes navigability determinations infrequently, only for lakes less than 50 acres and rivers less than three chains (198 feet) wide, and only when it is conveying the adjacent uplands. When waterways are larger than these measurements BLM conveys the adjacent and non-submerged land without navigability determinations. Even when BLM finds a smaller waterway non-navigable, however, it maintains that the determination is relevant only to the amount of acreage it is conveying and does not reflect a federal position on title.

The greatest hurdle to overcome in the State's efforts to identify and manage navigable waters has been the long-standing differences of opinion between the State of Alaska and the United States regarding the application of the test for determining title navigability. Navigability is a question of fact, not a simple legal formula. Variations in waterbody use that result from different physical

characteristics and transportation methods and needs must be taken into account. There are many legal precedents for determining navigability in other states based upon the particular facts presented in those cases.

The physical characteristics and uses of a waterbody used by the State for asserting navigability "criteria," are based upon legal principles that have been established by the federal courts. These criteria are applied to rivers, lakes, and streams throughout the State and take into account Alaska's geography, economy, customary modes of water-based transportation, and the particular physical characteristics of the waterbody under consideration.

To resolve these navigability criteria disputes, the State has actively pursued a limited number of court cases challenging particular findings of non-navigability by the federal government. Some of the important cases are:

Gulkana River. In this case, both in the U.S. District Court and on appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals, the federal courts rejected the federal government's restrictive interpretation of the phrase "highway of commerce" in the title navigability test. The federal district court stated that to demonstrate navigability, it is only necessary to show that the waterbody is physically capable of "the most basic form of commercial use: the transportation of people or goods." Because the Gulkana River can be used for the transportation of people or goods, the Gulkana River was found navigable. The court of appeals found that the modern use of the Gulkana River for guided hunting, fishing, and sightseeing trips is a commercial use and, since the physical characteristics of the river have not significantly changed since 1959, provides conclusive evidence that the river was susceptible of commercial use at statehood. The court also found that modern inflatable rafts can be used to establish navigability. In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the request to review and overturn the decision and, thus, the Gulkana River precedent is now binding on all future navigability determinations in Alaska.

Kandik, Nation and Black Rivers. In this case, the State and Doyon Limited successfully established that the use or susceptibility of use of a river or stream by an 18-24 foot wooden riverboat capable of carrying at least 1,000 pounds of gear or supplies is sufficient to establish navigability. Based upon the use of these types of boats for the transportation of goods and supplies by trappers, as well as extensive historic and contemporary canoe use, the federal courts found the Kandik and Nation rivers navigable and, due to a technical interpretation of the federal Quiet Title Act, failed to rule on the Black River. The Department of the Interior issued a "Recordable Disclaimer of Interest" for the Black River, however, in 2003.

Alagnak River, Nonvianuk River, Kukaklek Lake and Nonvianuk Lake. In this federal district court case, the Alagnak River, Nonvianuk River, Kukaklek Lake and Nonvianuk Lake were all found navigable. Their primary transportation use is for commercially guided hunting, fishing, and sightseeing and for government research and management. They also serve as a means of access for local residents to their homes and to the surrounding areas for subsistence hunting and fishing.

From the standpoint of the public, the state and the federal governments both contribute to the confusion over navigability determinations. The State Policy on Navigability adopted by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources includes the following explanations:

“When information is lacking, and it must make a navigability determination, the state is forced to rely solely upon the physical characteristics shown on maps and aerial photographs. In these cases, the state identifies as navigable all streams depicted on the U.S.G.S. maps with double lines (generally at least 70 feet wide) and having an average gradient over the length of the stream of no more than 50 feet per mile.”

“Streams depicted with single lines, although narrower in width, may also be listed as potentially navigable if they have gradients of substantially less than 50 feet per mile and are at least 10 miles.”

“If a lake is totally isolated, it will be included on the state’s navigability maps if it is at least 1 ½ miles long. That length insures that the lake can be used as a highway.”

“An isolated lake might need to be 2-3 miles long to be included on the state’s navigability maps.”

“...those lakes which are shown on maps and aerial photographs as having a navigable water connection with other navigable waters, or which are accessible by short overland portages, are considered navigable regardless of the size of the lake.”

Clouded Titles Due to Erroneous Navigability Determinations

The standard procedures for surveying and conveying federal land are found in the Manual of Instructions for the Survey of the Public Lands of the United States. Under those procedures, consistently used in every public land state except Alaska, only uplands are surveyed and conveyed in fulfillment of acreage entitlements, not submerged lands. The survey rules require that all lakes 50 acres or larger, and rivers and streams three chains (198 feet) in width or wider, regardless of navigability, be meandered rivers, lakes, and streams is not included in computing the amount of land involved in the conveyance.

In Alaska, however, the federal government had not consistently followed these survey rules. Until 1983, the federal government treated submerged lands the same as uplands. All bodies of water that were considered non-navigable by the federal government, regardless of size, were surveyed as though they were uplands and the acreage of submerged lands were charged against the total acreage entitlement.

Because of these conveyance procedures, the navigability of waterbodies in Alaska has been an issue of contention since the enactment of the Alaska Statehood Act and ANCSA. In addition to the problems caused by a lack of information about many waterbodies, the situation was exacerbated by the narrow definition of navigability used by the federal government. Hundreds of rivers, lakes and streams considered navigable by the state were determined non-navigable by the federal government.

In 1983, the Department of the Interior agreed that the standard rules of survey should be followed for land conveyances in Alaska. The recipients of conveyances from the federal government are charged only for the amount of public land is calculated by the survey, which does not include the areas of meandered rivers, lakes and streams. This decision by the Department of the Interior was legislatively approved in 1988.

Despite the fact that the use of these survey procedures has eliminated many of the land conveyance problems after 1983, a major problem concerning navigability decisions made by the federal government under the old system remains unresolved. At issue are the hundreds of erroneous non-navigability decisions and the resulting submerged land conveyances made to ANCSA corporations in previous years. This issue becomes more critical as efforts are made by the federal government to establish a deadline for completing land conveyances. ANCSA corporations may be unable to replace erroneously conveyed submerged lands if the selection process had been terminated.

Difficulties Quieting Title to Submerged Lands

The State must file a Quiet Title Action in federal court to definitively resolve a dispute with the federal government regarding ownership of a navigable water body. The federal government has made it very difficult to quiet title. The Quiet Title Act provides that the United States may be named as a party defendant in a civil action "to adjudicate a disputed title to real property in which the United States claims an interest." 28 U.S. C. § 2409a(a). The United States has adopted a very narrow view of the term "claims and interest," asserting that the federal court has no jurisdiction to hear quiet title actions against it unless the federal government actively and expressly asserts an interest in the lands. In the context of the submerged lands, this will occur only in rare circumstances.

While the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has decided that a federal non-navigability decision is a sufficient federal claim of interest to give the court jurisdiction under the Quiet Title Act, for these few waterways the State still may be unable to get a judgment, for the following reason. The State receives notice of a non-navigability determination when BLM issues a conveyance decision. Both because the State must give 180 days notice under the Quiet Title Act before filing a complaint, and because a preliminary injunction to prevent the conveyance is unavailable under the Quiet Title Act, the United States will likely convey the lands to a third party before the State can do anything to prevent it, and the State could arguably lose its cause of action against the United States.

Therefore, the State rarely has a viable cause of action to quiet title to submerged lands. The United States is in virtually the same position it was before the Quiet Title Act was passed: it controls when and how a court resolves title disputes. The exception to this general rule will be title disputes based on the issue of whether the United States defeated the State's right to submerged lands before statehood, where the United States has expressly taken a position.

The final legal determination of whether a water-body is navigable is a complex process requiring factual determinations that a waterway had been effectively used for commerce prior to statehood. In the States' litigation to quiet title to the Black, Kandik, and Nation Rivers in northeast Alaska, a panel for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals noted in January, 2000:

“There is also a serious policy concern in favor of allowing resolution of disputes based on the United States’ inchoate claim to everything in Alaska but what it has disclaimed. Eventually, all the witnesses will be dead, reducing the reliability of litigation. Someone who used one of these rivers in 1959 at age 20 is now 60. The population in the area was so sparse at all relevant times – probably no more than a couple of hundred people who might have used the three rivers during the relevant time, most too young to have relevant knowledge or too old to have survived the forty years since statehood – that a few deaths by old age can remove most or all the knowledgeable witnesses. Also, a state entitled as of 1959 to all the incidents of ownership in its rivers, yet still deprived of clear title forty years later, is effectively deprived of what it is entitled to under the equal footing doctrine.”

In addition, the process has become incomprehensibly complicated and expensive. A case in point is the quiet title action by the State to resolve submerged lands ownership under the Black, Kandik and Nation rivers in northeast Alaska. These three rivers clearly meet the criteria established by the federal courts for determining navigability in Alaska. Despite the fact that no one contested the State’s claim that these three rivers met the federal courts criteria for determining navigability, this case took nine years and upwards of a million of state and federal dollars to litigate, eventually resulting in the State winning two of the three cases and achieving no solution on the third.

Solutions Through Administrative Action – Recordable Disclaimer of Interest

Following meetings with the Legislative leadership in 2002, the Department of the Interior offered to examine the possibility of using a “Recordable Disclaimer of Interest” as a means of resolving submerged lands title disputes between the state and the federal government. In 2003, the Department of the Interior issued a “Recordable Disclaimer of Interest” in the Black River located in Northeast Alaska. This River was one of three rivers in that region that the ownership of the submerged lands was not resolved through litigation.

The legislature, through Legislative Budget and Audit, has funded a special project for the Alaska Departments of Natural Resources and Fish and Game to expedite the petition process to the Department of the Interior for issuing “Recordable Disclaimers of Interest” for navigable waters and RS 2477 Rights-of-way. The major emphasis of the project has been directed at navigable waters. Some petitions are pending and others are due to be submitted early in 2004.

Solutions Through Federal Legislation

- A. **Changes to the Quiet Title Act.** The precise issue in dispute between the state and the United States is what should require the United States to “claim an interest” so as to trigger jurisdiction under the Quiet Title Act. A provision in the Quiet Title Act that defines this phrase broadly enough to permit the state to quiet title to its submerged lands would resolve the issue. This would require a definition that makes the existence of a legal cloud on title sufficient to constitute a federal claim of interest, so that the United States’ refusal to take a position as to navigability for title purposes of waters on federal lands would give the state a cause of action in federal court.

B. Joint State/Federal Navigable Waters Commission. In 1971, Congress and the State of Alaska respectively created a Joint Federal/State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska to assist in the massive land-use planning process following passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The State Legislature passed a bill in 2002 to create a similar State/Federal Commission for the purpose of expediting navigability determinations and providing recommendations for ways to improve the process of making water use and navigability decisions in Alaska. Similar legislation was introduced in Congress by the Alaska delegation to create the federal portion of the Commission. Unfortunately, this legislation did not pass as the federal and state administrations looked for other ways to accelerate title dispute resolutions.

Examples of Navigability Complexities & Additional Information

Appendix A is a copy of the State of Alaska's August 27, 1992 notice to Secretary of the Interior, Manuel Lujan, Jr. of its intent to quiet title to submerged lands described under 194 specific water-bodies in Alaska. Similarly, Appendix B contains a copy of the official notice to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt of the State's intent to quiet title to submerged lands described under an additional 9 water-bodies. Most of the water-bodies listed in Appendix A and Appendix B have been recognized by the Bureau of Land Management as being navigable for land conveyance purposes but have maintained that this assertion is not for title purposes.

THE
FOLLOWING
DOCUMENT(S)
ARE
POOR
ORIGINAL
COPIES

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

August 27, 1992

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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Manuel Lujan, Jr., Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Lujan:

The State of Alaska intends to file real property quiet title actions as to the submerged lands described on the list attached as appendix A, and is providing you this notice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §2409a(m). Title to these lands passed to Alaska at statehood based on the equal footing doctrine, the Submerged Land Act of May 22, 1953, P.L. 83-31, 67 Stat. 29, 43 U.S.C. §§1301 et seq., and the Alaska Statehood Act of July 7, 1958, P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339, 48 U.S.C. note preceding §21.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. COLE
ATTORNEY GENERAL

By:

Joanne M. Grace
Joanne M. Grace
Assistant Attorney General

JMG/sh
Attachment

cc: J. T. Tangen, Regional Solicitor, Department of Interior
Edward F. Spang, State Director, Bureau of Land Management
Niles Cesar, Area Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Walter Stieglitz, Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
John Morehead, Regional Director, National Park Service

8/27 mailed cert return receipt

Appendix A to letter of August 27, 1992.

Colville Region

Mouth of Colville River to Nuka River
Mouth of Kuna River to Chefarnak

Northwest Region

Mouth of Agiapuk River to American River
Mouth of American River to Budd Creek
Mouth of Buckland River to West Fork
Mouth of Fish River to Omilak Creek
Mouth of Niukluk River to Council
Mouth of Kobuk River to Lower Kobuk Canyon
Mouth of Koyuk River to Dime Landing
Mouth of Kuzitrin River to Noxapaga River
Mouth of Noxapaga River to Turner Creek
Mouth of Noatak River to Aniak River
Mouth of Selawik River to Kugarak River
Shaktoolik River
Throat River
Ungalik River
Mouth of Unalakleet River to Termile Creek

Koyukuk River Region

Mouth of Hoqatza River to Hog Landing
Mouth of Koyukuk River to Bettles
Mouth of Middle Fork to Wiseman

Upper Yukon Region

Mouth of Bearpaw River to Diamond
Mouth of Beaver Creek to Victoria Creek
Birch Creek
Mouth of Black River to Boundary
Mouth of Chandalar River to North and West Forks
Mouth of Charley River to Bear Creek
Mouth of Chatanika River to Steese Highway Bridge
Christian River
Mouth of Coleen River to Lake Creek (59 miles)
Mouth of Crooked Creek to Bridge
Grass River
Mouth of Hess Creek to North and South Forks
Mouth of Hodzana River to Pitka Fork (79 miles)
Jim Lake
Mouth of Kandik River to Boundary
Mouth of Nation River to Boundary

Mouth of Porcupine River to Boundary
Ray River
Mouth of Seventymile River to Barney Creek
Mouth of Sheenjek River to Thluickohnjik Creek
Mouth of Tatonduk River to Boundary

40 Mile Area

Forty Mile River
Mouth of North Fork Forty Mile River to Kink
Mouth of South Fork Forty Mile River to Mosquito Fork

South Central Region

Mouth of Chulitna River to Tokositna River
Mouth of Kasilok River to Tustumena Lake
Mouth of Kenai River to Kenai Lake
Kenai Lake
Knik River
Lake Louise and outlet
Lake Tustumena
Mouth of Skwentna River to Portage Creek
Susitna Lake
Mouth of Susitna River to Indian River
Mouth of Talkeetna River to Chumilna Creek
Mouth of Tokositna River to Home Lake Outlet
Tyone Lake
Mouth of Tyone River to Tyone Lake
Mouth of Yentra River to confluence of its East and West Forks
Johnson River
Red River

Tanana Region

Mouth of Chena River to North Fork
Mouth of Chisana River to Scottie Creek
Mouth of Goodpasture River to Central Creek
Harding Lake
Healy Lake and outlet
Johnson River
Mouth of Kantishna River to Lake Minchumina
Lake George and outlet
Lake Mansfield and outlet
Mouth of Nabesna River to Nabesna Mine
Mouth of Nenana River to Healy River
Mouth of Salcha River to Paldo Creek
Mouth of Tanana River to Nabesna and Chisana Rivers
Mouth of Teklanik River to near Comma Lake
Mouth of Tetlin River to Tetlin Lake
Mouth of Tolovana River to West Fork
Mouth of Wood River to Fish Creek

Middle Yukon River

Mouth of Innoko River to Cripple Creek
 Mouth of Iditarod River to Iditarod
 Khotol River
 Little Melozitna River
 Melozitna River
 Mouth of Nowitna River and Sulstna Rivers to Tamarack Creek
 Tozitna River

Lower Yukon Region

Anvik River
 Bonasila River
 Kotlik River
 Nulato River
 Pastolik River

Kuskokwim River Region

Mouth of Aniak River to Salmon River
 Mouth of Big River to Otter Creek
 Mouth of Chukowan River to Gemuk River
 Crooked Creek
 Mouth of East Fork Kuskokwim River to Slow Fork and Tonzona River
 Mouth of Gemuk River to Beaver Creek
 Mouth of George River to Julian Creek
 Mouth of Holitna River to Chukowan River
 Hoholitna River
 Mouth of Johnson River from Mud Creek Portage to Crooked Creek
 Mouth of Johnson River to Nunapitchuk and Atnautluak
 Kisaralik River ✓
 Mouth of Kuguklik River to Kipruk
 Kulik Lake ✓
 Mouth of Kuskokwim River to North Fork
 Little Tonzona River
 Mouth of Middle Fork and Big River to Salmon River
 Mouth of Middle Fork Kuskokwim River to Pitka Fork
 Mouth of Nixon Fork to its West Fork
 Mouth of North Fork Kuskokwim to Lake Minchumina Portage
 Mouth of South Fork Kuskokwim River to Tatina River
 Mouth of Stoney River to Lime Village
 Mouth of Swift Fork to Highpower Creek
 Mouth of Tokotna River to Fourth of July Creek
 Mouth of Talbiksok River to Yukon-Kuskokwim Portage
 Mouth of Tuluksak River to Upper Land
 Whitefish Lake and outlet

Bristol Bay Region

Alec River *chignik*
 Aniakchak River *chignik*

Black Lake Chignik
Mouth of Chignik River to Black Lake chignik
Chikuminuk Lake
Chilikadrotna River
Chulitna River
Clark River
Mouth of Copper River to Falls
Dago Creek - Ugashtik
Dog Salmon River Ugashtik
Eek River
Egegik River and Becharof Lake Naknek
Gibraltar Lake and outlet
Mouth of Goodnews River to Watlamuse Creek
Mouth of Igushik River to Amanka Lake
Illianna Lake
Mouth of Illianna River to Forks
Mouth of Kanektok River to Kagati Lake
Kakhonak Lake
Mouth of King Salmon River to Olds Creek Ugashtik
Mouth of Kvichak River to Illianna Lake
Lake Aleknagik
Lake Chavekuktuli
Lake Clark
Lake Beverly
Lake Kulik Mt. Katmai
Lake Nerka
Lower Pike Lake and outlet Ugashtik
Kokwok River
Koktuli River
Muklung River
Mouth of Mulchatna River to Summit Creek
Mouth of Naknek River to Naknek Lake Naknek/Mt. Katmai
Negukthlik River
Newhalen River
Nishlik Lake
Mouth of Nushagak River to New Stuyahok
Mouth of Nuyakuk River to Nuyakuk Lake
Ongoke River
Osviak River
Quigmy River
Pile River
Ruth Lake and outlet Ugashtik
Mouth of Smelt Creek to Smelt Lake Naknek
Mouth of Snake River to Nunavaugaluk Lake
Stuyahok River
Tazmina River
Mouth of Togiak River to Togiak Lake
Tunulk River
Ualik Lake
Mouth of Ugashtik River to Lower and Upper Ugashtik Lakes Ugashtik
Upnuk Lake
Weary River

Mouth of Wood River to Lake Aleknagik

Copper River Region

Mouth of Bering River to near Bering Lake

Mouth of Chitna River to Tana River

Mouth of Copper River to Batzulnetas (above Slana)

Crosswind Lake

Mouth of Eyak River and Eyak Lake

Mouth of Klutina River to Klutina Lake

Low River

Miles Lake and outlet

Nelchina River

- Tasmuna River

- Mouth of Tazlina River to Tazlina Lake

Southeast Region

Chilkat River

Chilkoot River

Stikine River

Kodiak Island and Shelikof Strait Region

Afognak Lake

Mouth of Afognak River to the remains of the Bridge

Akalura and Red Lakes

Mouth of Aniakhak River to Albert Johnson Creek

Karluk Lake

Mouth of Karluk River to Karluk Lake

Statewide Region

Yukon River

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 17, 1996

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Bruce Babbitt
 Department of the Interior
 1849 C Street NW
 Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Babbitt:

The State of Alaska intends to file real property quiet title actions as to the submerged lands described on the list attached as appendix A, and is providing you this notice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2409a(m). Title to these lands passed to Alaska at statehood based on the equal footing doctrine, the Submerged Land Act of May 22, 1953, P.L. 83-31, 67 Stat. 29, 43 U.S.C. §§ 1301 et seq., and the Alaska Statehood Act of July 7, 1958, P.L. 85-508, 72 Stat. 339, 48 U.S.C. note preceding §21.

Sincerely,

BRUCE M. BOTELHO
 ATTORNEY GENERAL

By:

Joanne M. Grace
 Joanne M. Grace
 Assistant Attorney General

Attachment

cc: Laurie Adams, Regional Solicitor, Department of Interior
 Tom Allen, State Director, Bureau of Land Management
 Niles Cesar, Area Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
 David B. Allen, Regional Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
 Robert Barbee, Regional Director, National Park Service

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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 JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0300
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 FAX: (907) 465-6735

APPENIDIX A

Copper River Region
Copper River

Northern Region
Kuk River
Meade River
Kukpowruk River

Bristol Bay Region
Arolik River
Kanektok River
Kisaralik River
Goodnews River
Togiak River

MEMO

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
NATURAL RESOURCES SECTION

To: Jane Anvik
Director, Division of Lands
Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Tina Cunning
Coordinator, ANILCA Program
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

From: Joanne Grace
Assistant Attorney General
Natural Resources Section

Re: Amendment to the Quiet Title Act

Date: May 12, 1997

This memorandum outlines the need to amend the Quiet Title Act, 28 U.S.C. § 2409a. The United States' current interpretation of the Quiet Title Act arguably renders it almost completely inapplicable to state claims of title to lands underlying navigable waterways and to RS 2477 rights-of-way.

The change requested: The state seeks clarification of the Quiet Title Act to indicate that a federal court has jurisdiction over claims by a state to quiet title to lands if a potential interest of the United States clouds the state's title. A "cloud" on the state's title is a possible claim or encumbrance by another that, if valid, would affect or impair the title of the state.

Why the change is necessary: The United States has developed an interpretation of the Quiet Title Act that may preclude the state from quieting title to its submerged lands¹ and RS 2477

¹ The state took title to lands underlying waters navigable-in-fact at statehood, pursuant to the Equal Footing Doctrine and the Submerged Lands Act of 1953, 43 U.S.C. §1301 et seq. Alaska has thousands of waterways that may be navigable, but the only

rights-of-way.² According to the United States' interpretation, the state may bring a quiet title action only when the United States essentially invites it to do so.

The Quiet Title Act provides that the United States may be named as a party defendant in a civil action "to adjudicate a disputed title to real property in which the United States claims an interest." 28 U.S.C. § 2409a(a). The United States has adopted a very narrow view of the term "claims an interest," asserting that the federal court has no jurisdiction to hear quiet title actions against it unless the federal government actively and expressly asserts an interest in the lands. In the context of submerged lands, this will occur only in rare circumstances. Where title to submerged lands is at stake, the dispositive issue is usually the navigability of the waters that overlie them. The United States Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") makes navigability determinations infrequently, only for lakes less than 50 acres and rivers less than three chains wide, and only when it is conveying the adjacent uplands. When waterways are larger than these measurements BLM conveys the land without navigability determinations. Even when BLM finds a smaller waterway non-navigable, however, it maintains that the determination is relevant only to the amount of acreage it is conveying and does not reflect a federal position on title.

The state disputes the United States' view, but even assuming that the state is correct and a non-navigability decision is a sufficient federal claim of interest to give the court jurisdiction under the Quiet Title Act, the state still may be unable to get a judgment, for the following reason. The state receives notice of a non-navigability determination when BLM issues a conveyance decision. Both because the state must give 180 days notice before filing a complaint, and because a preliminary injunction to prevent the conveyance is unavailable under the Quiet Title Act, the United States will likely convey the lands to a third party before the state can do anything to prevent it, and the state arguably will lose its cause of action

way to definitively establish title to the submerged lands by obtaining a court judgment.

² Congress granted these rights-of-way by act of July 26, 1866, 43 U.S.C. § 932, Revised Statutes 2477. In *Hamerly v. Denton*, 359 P.2d 121, 123 (Alaska 1961), the Alaska Supreme Court stated the general rule about acceptance of this federal grant, holding that before a highway may be created the appropriate public authorities of the state must clearly manifest an intention to accept a grant, or the public must use the right-of-way for such a period of time and under such conditions as to prove acceptance.

against the United States.

If the United States prevails in its jurisdictional theories, therefore, the state will rarely have a viable cause of action to quiet title to submerged lands. The United States will be in virtually the same position it was in before the Quiet Title Act was passed: it controls when and how a court resolves title disputes. The exceptions to this general rule will be title disputes based on the issue of whether the United States defeated the state's right to submerged lands before statehood, where the United States has expressly taken a position.

Similar "claims an interest" problems arise in the context of RS 2477 rights-of-way. Under the United States' interpretation of the Quiet Title Act, the court will have jurisdiction to adjudicate the state's interest only in the few cases where the United States takes an affirmative, express position that rights-of-way do not exist. The United States has a policy of refusing to take a position on the existence of these rights-of-way, however; in general it will not express any opinion about the routes, so that a state cannot establish that the United States has "claimed an interest" as the United States interprets that phrase. The only exception would be a right-of-way that the United States vigorously disputes, but in such cases the United States might sue the state and the Quiet Title Act would not be invoked at all. Again, the United States wants to be in control of which, if any, cases are filed.

How the change could be effected: The precise issue in dispute between the state and the United States is what exactly it means for the United States to "claim an interest," so as to trigger jurisdiction under the Quiet Title Act. A provision in the Quiet Title Act that defines this phrase broadly enough to permit the state to quiet title to its submerged lands and RS 2477 rights-of-way would resolve the issue. This would require a definition that makes the existence of a legal cloud on title sufficient to constitute a federal claim of interest, so that the United States' refusal to take a position as to navigability for title purposes of waters on federal lands and general refusal to take a position on RS 2477 rights-of-way would give the state a cause of action in federal court.

4 thereof on issuance of process or institu-
6. tion of prosecution of any proceedings
does not exempt United States from post-
ing appeal bond with state court. U.S.
of Dept. of Air Force v. Wilhelm. Tex.Civ.
App.1977, 535 S.W.2d 498.

Involving United States

it in common or joint tenant owning
where the United States is one of such
ants, against the United States alone
and any other of such owners, shall
the same manner as would a similar

court orders a sale of the property or
neral may bid for the same in behalf
United States is the purchaser, the
shall be paid from the Treasury upon
try of the Treasury on the requisition

2.)

D STATUTORY NOTES

is similar action between private persons
were substituted for "shall proceed as
7. other cases for partition by courts of
equity, and in making such partition the
court shall be governed by the same prin-
1- ciples of equity that control courts of
of equity, in partition proceedings between
1. private persons." in view of Rule 2 of the
Federal Rules of Civil Procedure [this
if title].
is

Changes were made in phraseology.

REFERENCES

ules Civ.Proc. Rule 3. 28 USCA.
le 4, 28 USCA.

REFERENCES

nedly in general, see Partition § 10 et seq.
re of proceedings. See C.I.S. Partition § 20

TRONIC RESEARCH

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ing the Explanation pages of this volume.
600

NOTES OF DECISIONS

Construction with Federal Rules of Civil
Procedure 1
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2. Jurisdiction

This section which waives sovereign
immunity for partition suits in which
United States is a joint tenant or a tenant
in common does not confer subject-mat-
ter jurisdiction on district courts. Prater
v. U.S., C.A.5 (Ga.) 1980, 612 F.2d 157,
on rehearing 613 F.2d 263.

Statutes authorizing partition and quiet
title actions against United States and
permitting United States to be named as
party in actions affecting property in
which United States claims mortgage or
lien did not apply to claims seeking to
recover South Vietnamese assets blocked
under Trading with the Enemy Act
(TWEA), and did not provide basis for
subject-matter jurisdiction. Can v. U.S.,
S.D.N.Y.1993, 820 F.Supp. 106, affirmed
14 F.3d 160.

1. Construction with Federal Rules of
Civil Procedure

Since the Federal Rules of Civil Proce-
dure, this title, do not themselves enlarge
the jurisdiction of the federal district
courts granted by a statute waiving sover-
eign immunity, changes made in this sec-
tion and § 1347 of this title relating to
partition action involving United States,
for express purpose of conforming the
wording of this section and § 1347 of this
title to rule 2, Federal Rules of Civil Pro-
cedure, this title, abolishing the procedur-
al distinctions between actions at law and
suits in equity, could not reasonably be
construed to have enlarged the jurisdic-
tion of the district courts. Stanton v.
U.S., C.A.5 (Tex.) 1970, 434 F.2d 1273.

§ 2409a. Real property quiet title actions

(a) The United States may be named as a party defendant in a civil
action under this section to adjudicate ^{may have} ~~disputed~~ title to real prop-
erty in which the United States ~~claims~~ an interest, other than a security
interest or water rights. This section does not apply to trust or
restricted Indian lands, nor does it apply to or affect actions which
may be or could have been brought under sections 1346, 1347, 1491,
or 2410 of this title, sections 7424, 7425, or 7426 of the Internal
Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (26 U.S.C. 7424, 7425, and
7426), or section 208 of the Act of July 10, 1952 (43 U.S.C. 666).

(b) The United States shall not be disturbed in possession or
control of any real property involved in any action under this section
pending a final judgment or decree, the conclusion of any appeal
therefrom, and sixty days; and if the final determination shall be
adverse to the United States, the United States nevertheless may
retain such possession or control of the real property or of any part
thereof as it may elect, upon payment to the person determined to be
entitled thereto of an amount which upon such election the district
court in the same action shall determine to be just compensation for
such possession or control.

(c) No preliminary injunction ~~shall issue~~ in any action brought
under this section.

(d) The complaint shall set forth with particularity the nature of
the right, title, or interest which the plaintiff claims in the real

property, the circumstances under, which it was acquired, and the ^{any} right, title, ~~or~~ interest ^{or potential} ~~claimed by~~ the United States ^{that may exist.}

(e) If the United States disclaims all interest in the real property or interest therein adverse to the plaintiff at any time prior to the actual commencement of the trial, which disclaimer is confirmed by order of the court, the jurisdiction of the district court shall cease unless it has jurisdiction of the civil action or suit on ground other than and independent of the authority conferred by section 1346(f) of this title.

(f) A civil action against the United States under this section shall be tried by the court without a jury.

(g) Any civil action under this section, except for an action brought by a State, shall be barred unless it is commenced within twelve years of the date upon which it accrued. Such action shall be deemed to have accrued on the date the plaintiff or his predecessor in interest knew or should have known of the claim of the United States.

(h) No civil action may be maintained under this section by a State with respect to defense facilities (including land) of the United States so long as the lands at issue are being used or required by the United States for national defense purposes as determined by the head of the Federal agency with jurisdiction over the lands involved, if it is determined that the State action was brought more than twelve years after the State knew or should have known of the claims of the United States. Upon cessation of such use or requirement, the State may dispute title to such lands pursuant to the provisions of this section. The decision of the head of the Federal agency is not subject to judicial review.

(i) Any civil action brought by a State under this section with respect to lands, other than tide or submerged lands, on which the United States or its lessee or right-of-way or easement grantee has made substantial improvements or substantial investments or on which the United States has conducted substantial activities pursuant to a management plan such as range improvement, timber harvest, tree planting, mineral activities, farming, wildlife habitat improvement, or other similar activities, shall be barred unless the action is commenced within twelve years after the date the State received notice of the Federal claims to the lands.

(j) If a final determination in an action brought by a State under this section involving submerged or tide lands on which the United States or its lessee or right-of-way or easement grantee has made substantial improvements or substantial investments is adverse to the United States and it is determined that the State's action was brought more than twelve years after the State received notice of the Federal

claim to existing with res mined t.

(k) N a State

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(m) lan.

(n) F lands: 2 of the

(o) any act Federal State's the lan.

(p) against

(Added Pub.L. 1986. 1

Revision 1972. see 197 News. p.

1986 No. 99- see 198 News. p

House U.S. Co 5643.

Referen- Sectic referred (a) to (c Stat. 5e fied to Lands. the Coc

which it was acquired, and the United States.

all interest in the real property if at any time prior to the disclaimer is confirmed by a district court shall cease unless a suit on ground other than provided by section 1346(f) of this title is brought in the United States under this section.

tion, except for an action brought by the United States, if it is commenced within the period of the claim of the United States.

ned under this section by a State (including land) of the United States used or required by the United States as determined by the head of the Federal agency over the lands involved, if the action is brought more than twelve years after the date the State received notice of the claims of the United States. If, in the absence of such use or requirement, the State is not notified by the Federal agency in accordance with the provisions of this section, the State shall be barred unless the action is brought more than twelve years after the date the State received notice of the claims of the United States.

claim to the lands, the State shall take title to the lands subject to any existing lease, easement, or right-of-way. Any compensation due with respect to such lease, easement, or right-of-way shall be determined under existing law.

(k) Notice for the purposes of the accrual of an action brought by a State under this section shall be—

(1) by public communications with respect to the claimed lands which are sufficiently specific as to be reasonably calculated to put the claimant on notice of the Federal claim to the lands, or

(2) by the use, occupancy, or improvement of the claimed lands which, in the circumstances, is open and notorious.

(l) For purposes of this section, the term "tide or submerged lands" means "lands beneath navigable waters" as defined in section 2 of the Submerged Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1301).

(m) Not less than one hundred and eighty days before bringing any action under this section, a State shall notify the head of the Federal agency with jurisdiction over the lands in question of the State's intention to file suit, the basis therefor, and a description of the lands included in the suit.

(n) Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit suits against the United States based upon adverse possession.

(Added Pub.L. 92-562, § 3(a), Oct. 25, 1972, 86 Stat. 1176, and amended Pub.L. 99-514, § 2, Oct. 22, 1986, 100 Stat. 2095; Pub.L. 99-593, Nov. 4, 1986, 100 Stat. 3351.)

HISTORICAL AND STATUTORY NOTES

Revision Notes and Legislative Reports
1972 Acts. House Report No. 92-1559, see 1972 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News, p. 4547.

1986 Acts. House Conference Report No. 99-841 and Statement by President, see 1986 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News, p. 4075.

H. House Report No. 99-924, see 1986 U.S. Code Cong. and Adm. News, p. 5641.

References in Text

Section 208 of the Act July 10, 1952, referred to in subsec. (a), is section 208 (a) to (d) of Act July 10, 1952, c. 651, 66 Stat. 560. Section 208 (a) to (c) is classified to section 666 of Title 43, Public Lands. Section 208(d) is not classified to the Code.

Amendments

1986 Amendments. Subsec. (a). Pub.L. 99-514 substituted "Internal Revenue Code of 1986" for "Internal Revenue Code of 1954".

Subsec. (c). Pub.L. 99-598, § 1(3), added subsec. (c). Former subsec. (c) was redesignated (d).

Subsecs. (d) to (f). Pub.L. 99-598, § 1(2), redesignated former subsecs. (c) to (e) as (d) to (f), respectively. Former subsec. (f) redesignated (g).

Subsec. (g). Pub.L. 99-598, § 1(2), (4), redesignated former subsec. (f) as (g) and, as so redesignated, added ", except for an action brought by a State," following "under this section". Former subsec. (g) was redesignated (n).

Subsecs. (h) to (m). Pub.L. 99-598, § 1(3), added subsecs. (h) to (m).

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[Prev](#) | [Next](#)[TITLE 43](#) > [CHAPTER 35](#) > [SUBCHAPTER III](#) > [Sec. 1745](#).**Sec. 1745. - Disclaimer of interest in lands****(a) Issuance of recordable document; criteria**

After consulting with any affected Federal agency, the Secretary is authorized to issue a document of disclaimer of interest or interests in any lands in any form suitable for recordation, where the disclaimer will help remove a cloud on the title of such lands and where he determines

(1)

a record interest of the United States in lands has terminated by operation of law or is otherwise invalid; or

(2)

the lands lying between the meander line shown on a plat of survey approved by the Bureau or its predecessors and the actual shoreline of a body of water are not lands of the United States; or

(3)

accreted, relicted, or avulsed lands are not lands of the United States.

(b) Procedures applicable

No document or disclaimer shall be issued pursuant to this section unless the applicant therefor has filed with the Secretary an application in writing and notice of such application setting forth the grounds supporting such application has been published in the Federal Register at least ninety days preceding the issuance of such disclaimer and until the applicant therefor has paid to the Secretary the administrative costs of issuing the disclaimer as determined by the Secretary. All receipts shall be deposited to the then-current appropriation from which expended.

(c) Construction as quit-claim deed from United States

Issuance of a document of disclaimer by the Secretary pursuant to the provisions of this section and regulations promulgated hereunder shall have the same effect as a quit-claim deed from the United States

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LAWS OF ALASKA

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Chapter No.
71

AN ACT

Establishing and relating to the Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

THE ACT FOLLOWS ON PAGE 1

AN ACT

1 Establishing and relating to the Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska.

2

3 * Section 1. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section
4 to read:

5 STATE POLICY. The legislature determines that the efficient and orderly
6 development of the state will be better achieved if the state and the federal governments join
7 together in a carefully coordinated approach to land and water use planning and management.
8 The legislature recognizes that, although the state is the primary trustee of public trust
9 resources, it is in the best interest of the citizens if the state and federal governments, as
10 designated stewards of these resources, cooperate to the maximum extent possible in
11 determining their uses. However, the legislature also recognizes that, even without federal
12 participation, the state must proceed to make management decisions. The state is particularly
13 blessed with significant water resources that are invaluable in numerous ways to state
14 residents and all citizens of the United States. With the massive numbers of navigable
15 waterways and bodies of water in the state, the task of resolving submerged land ownership

1 and navigable water determinations has been painfully slow, counter-productive from an
2 orderly resource management standpoint, and costly as the state, private landowners, and the
3 federal government attempt to initiate long-range planning processes. For this reason, it is
4 determined by the legislature that the State of Alaska and the United States should cooperate
5 in establishing a joint state and federal commission or, if the federal government elects not to
6 participate, a state commission must be established to proceed efficiently and effectively to

7 (1) expedite the process of quieting legitimate title to the state's submerged
8 lands;

9 (2) determine, to the extent possible, which bodies of water are navigable or
10 non-navigable; and

11 (3) provide recommendations to the state and the federal governments
12 concerning ways to improve the process of making navigability determinations and ways to
13 quiet title to the state's submerged lands fairly and expeditiously.

14 * Sec. 2. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
15 read:

16 NAVIGABLE WATERS COMMISSION FOR ALASKA. (a) A Navigable Waters
17 Commission for Alaska is established. If authorized by federal law, the commission shall be a
18 joint federal and state commission.

19 (b) The governor or the governor's designee shall serve as chair of the commission. If
20 federal participation is authorized by federal law, the member appointed by the President of
21 the United States or the United States Secretary of the Interior shall serve as co-chair of the
22 joint commission. The chair or co-chairs of the commission shall call meetings.

23 (c) If a joint commission is formed, four state and four federal members of the
24 commission constitute a quorum, and all decisions of the commission require concurrence by
25 at least four state and four federal members of the commission. Otherwise, four state
26 members of the commission constitute a quorum, and all decisions of the commission require
27 concurrence by at least four members.

28 (d) A vacancy in the membership of the commission does not affect its powers. The
29 vacancy shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

30 (e) Subject to procedures adopted by the commission, the chair or co-chairs, in
31 accordance with applicable laws, may

1 (1) appoint and fix the compensation of the commission staff and personnel as
2 they consider necessary; and

3 (2) procure temporary and intermittent services.

4 * Sec. 3. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
5 read:

6 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION. (a) The state membership on the
7 Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska is composed of the governor or the governor's
8 designee, two members appointed by the governor, two members appointed by the president
9 of the senate, and two members appointed by the speaker of the house, all of whom serve at
10 the pleasure of the appointing authority.

11 (b) The membership also includes individuals appointed under federal law if a joint
12 commission is authorized.

13 * Sec. 4. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
14 read:

15 COMPENSATION AND PER DIEM. (a) A state member of the Navigable Waters
16 Commission for Alaska who is a state officer or employee serves without compensation in
17 addition to that received for regular employment. Other state members of the commission
18 receive compensation as authorized for the Board of Fisheries under AS 16.05.290.

19 (b) State members of the commission are entitled to per diem and travel expenses
20 authorized by law for boards and commissions under AS 39.20.180.

21 * Sec. 5. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
22 read:

23 DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION. The Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska
24 shall

25 (1) establish a process for researching navigability determinations that affect
26 land title;

27 (2) develop procedures for involving private landowners and the general
28 public in the navigability determination process of the commission;

29 (3) undertake a process of navigable and non-navigable waters identification
30 under criteria established in law;

31 (4) make recommendations to improve coordination and consultation between

1 the state and federal governments in making navigability determinations and decisions
2 concerning title to submerged lands.

3 * Sec. 6. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
4 read:

5 HEARINGS. The Navigable Waters Commission for Alaska or, on the authorization
6 of the commission, any subcommittee or member of the commission may, for the purposes of
7 carrying out its duties, hold hearings, take testimony, receive evidence, print or otherwise
8 reproduce and distribute all or part of commission proceedings and reports, and sit and act at
9 those times and places as the commission, subcommittee, or members consider desirable.

10 * Sec. 7. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
11 read:

12 INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION. Each agency, department, board, or
13 commission of the state government is authorized to furnish to the Navigable Waters
14 Commission for Alaska, upon request of a chair or co-chair, information the commission
15 considers necessary to carry out its functions under this Act.

16 * Sec. 8. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
17 read:

18 REPORTS. (a) On or before January 31 of each year, the Navigable Waters
19 Commission for Alaska shall submit to the President of the United States, the United States
20 Secretary of the Interior, the United States Congress, the governor, and the state legislature a
21 written report describing its activities during the preceding year and its recommendations
22 regarding its duties under sec. 5 of this Act.

23 (b) The commission shall submit its final comprehensive report at least 10 days
24 before the date the commission is terminated.

25 * Sec. 9. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
26 read:

27 TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION. The Navigable Waters Commission for
28 Alaska is terminated two years after the effective date of this Act.