

Today, the Interior Committee will begin mark-up of the Alaska National Interest Lands legislation. The first vote will likely resolve which bill will be used as the mark-up vehicle. The Alaska Coalition strongly urges you to vote against the Meeds substitute, H.R. 10888, and to support the Committee Print of H.R. 39 as the mark-up vehicle.

Some Points to Consider :

1) Mr. Meeds does not provide any wilderness designation for the Tsongas National Forest in Southeast Alaska. The Tsongas is our nation's largest forest (16 million acres) and currently there is not even 1 acre of wilderness designated which would insure protection of the rich fishery and recreational opportunities of this unique rain forest environment.

2) The Committee Print boundaries were drawn to exclude 70% of the hard rock mineralized zones in Alaska. However, there is also a Mineral Process in the Committee Print, which is a significant compromise, that would allow mineral development on certain conservation units in Alaska if it was found to be in the "national interest". Mr. Meeds would significantly weaken this mineral process and make it extremely easy for these conservation units, which Congress establishes to protect the wildlife, scenic and recreational values for all Americans, to be invaded for mineral development. The Administration is opposed to any such mineral process and believes that existing law is sufficient to handle any situation which may arise.

3) Mr. Meeds would also create "Study Areas" in four key wildlife areas in Alaska. This Study Area concept is another "fifth system" scheme which would allow a federal/state Commission to have classification authority over federal lands.

4) A similar substitute bill, which Mr. Meeds introduced in the Alaska subcommittee was defeated by a 10-7 vote.

5) The Committee Print of H.R. 39 is the bill which has been thoroughly reviewed in extensive hearings, briefings, and markup sessions by the Interior subcommittee on General Oversight and Alaska Lands. The Committee Print of H.R. 39 has been significantly modified from its original format to insure that all state and national needs have been addressed. Therefore, we urge you to support the compromise H.R. 39 as reported out of subcommittee and to vote against any further weakening amendments.

WE URGE YOU TO SUPPORT THE COMMITTEE PRINT OF H.R. 39 AS THE MARK-UP VEHICLE  
DURING FULL INTERIOR COMMITTEE MARK-UP.

Thank you.