

Yukon Flats land swap on hold

By Tim Mowry
Fairbank Daily News-Miner

FAIRBANKS, Iowa — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has delayed for as much as one year its decision on a controversial land swap within the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge between the federal government and Doyon Ltd., the Fairbanks-based Native corporation.

The Fish and Wildlife Service planned to announce its decision later this fall but Larry Bell, assistant regional director for external affairs, said the agency is now shooting for the fall of 2009 as a target date. The agency is still waiting for some lands that are part of the deal to be appraised, he said.

The appraisals are needed to ensure that the swap is an “equal value exchange,” Bell said.

In the swap, the Fish and Wildlife Service would get at least 150,000 acres of Doyon land within the refuge, and Doyon would give up another 56,500 acres of land it owns inside the refuge that was selected as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1970.

Doyon, the largest private landowner in Alaska, would get 110,000 acres of refuge lands believed to be rich in oil and gas reserves with subsurface drilling rights to another 97,000 acres of adjacent land. The Native corporation would also get to select lands outside the refuge in exchange for the ANCSA-selected lands it gives up in the refuge.

The proposed exchange, which refuge and Doyon officials have been negotiating for the past six years, is opposed by environmentalists and many residents in Yukon Flats villages, who fear development in the refuge and the effects it will have on hunting, fishing and wildlife habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a draft environmental impact statement for the proposed swap in January and received more than 100,000 public comments, of which more than 80 percent opposed the exchange.

“It’s a major coup for us in the villages to have it put off for another year,” Dacho Alexander, first chief of the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich’in tribe in Fort Yukon, said on Friday, a day after the delay was announced. “It kind of gives us breathing room we’ve been asking for to study the possible implications of drilling in the Flats.”

Alexander said the tribe feels “the issue going to any other administration but the Bush administration is a good thing.”

A private contractor is doing the appraisals, which must be reviewed by the Department of the Interior’s Appraisal Services Directorate before they are approved for use in the EIS, Bell said. The agency is allowing up to a year to complete the process in the event more lands need to be appraised or more work needs to be done on the initial EIS, he said.

Jim Mery, senior vice president at Doyon, said the delay was not unexpected because the appraisal process to determine the value of subsurface resources is a complicated one and there aren’t many companies in the country that do it.

“This is very typical in these large EIS processes,” Mery said. “They end up taking three or four times longer than anticipated.”

All Doyon officials can do is wait until the appraisal process is completed, he said.

“We would have loved to be done with this process a year ago or be finishing up right now but it hasn’t worked out that way,” Mery said. “It’s nothing we can control. Based on what we know (the Fish and Wildlife Service) is just doing their job.”

Fear grew for child before found in car’s trunk

By Travis Coleman
Great Falls Tribune

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — After first hearing on Thursday that 2-year-old James Many White Horses II was missing, relatives from Browning who helped raised him wondered if his mother, Summer Many White Horses, could be responsible for his disappearance.

“We all agreed that she could,” said Elissie Buffalo, Summer Many White Horses’ aunt.

Buffalo and other family gathered in Browning on Saturday to remember the boy who loved cars and was nicknamed “Hymmie,” one day after his mother was arrested on accusations of killing him and storing his body in the trunk of her car since May. Authorities searched the car on Friday and discovered the boy’s body.

“He was just an active little boy. Just a happy, bubbly-eyed little kid,” Buffalo said.

“Everybody is shocked and hurt,” said Marie Franks, Summer Many White Horses’ grandmother.

Family members and Cascade County authorities also revealed more information on Saturday about 31-year-old Summer Many White Horses, her two children and the alleged crime for which she is

being held in the Cascade County Detention Center.

Cascade County Attorney Brant Light said that in addition to her son in the trunk, Many White Horses’ 11-year-old daughter was in the back seat when she led a Great Falls Police officer on a short pursuit July 21.

Light, referencing an accident report, said a police officer began following her red 1996 Ford Taurus after she allegedly was speeding in the 500 block of 31st Street North. Many White Horses allegedly ignored the officer’s lights and sirens while driving through several stops signs before entering the intersection of 38th Street and 6th Avenue North.

She then crashed into a parked truck on the 3800 block of 6th Avenue North, Light said. Many White Horses failed a breath test and was arrested.

Her daughter was placed in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services while Many White Horses was booked on several misdemeanor traffic offenses, including driving under the influence and reckless driving, Light said. There was no indication that police should search the car, which they would have needed a warrant for, he said.

Many White Horses was taken to jail, and her car was towed to Carnahan & Sons Towing and Repair on Smelter Avenue.

She was released from jail Aug. 10.

Light said authorities were not aware that Many White Horses had a son until the state gained temporary custody of her daughter around Aug. 14. Many White Horses gave no indication of her son’s whereabouts when she was questioned by police after Aug. 14.

A missing-person advisory was issued Thursday. Authorities, who suspected she may have headed to Oregon or Washington with her son, began actively searching for him, Light said.

The father lives out of state, Light said. However, Buffalo said the father did not sign the birth certificate and the family is not sure of his identity.

Light said police were not sure of Many White Horses’ son’s whereabouts, adding that it is not uncommon for a relative to take care of a child when a parent or guardian is in jail.

“The hope is the child is with a distant relative,” Light said.

Buffalo said she had Many White Horses in her Browning home as recently as a few days ago. Many White Horses told family members that her son

was being taken care of in Great Falls, which did not alarm them because she has a brother in Great Falls.

“We just assumed everything was OK,” Buffalo said.

She said during the visit, Many White Horses asked family members to take her daughter. It wouldn’t have been the first time relatives had helped her with the children. After Many White Horses gave birth to her son in a Billings prison, another aunt raised him for more than a year before a judge returned him to his mother after her release. Her daughter also was raised by a relative for a time.

Buffalo said it was painful to let the children go with their mother, a registered violent offender with a criminal record that includes convictions for aggravated assault, felony robbery and resisting arrest, according to court records.

“We knew what she was ... a danger. But (the court) thought one way or another she deserved another chance and we knew she didn’t,” Buffalo said.

Many White Horses had her son back for a few months before the accident. Great Falls Police found her in the city on Friday and questioned her about the missing toddler.

Light said she told police that her son had been in the

trunk of the car since the night of the accident. Officers then obtained a warrant to search the car, which was still at Carnahan & Sons.

They found the badly decomposed body of James Many White Horses about 3 p.m. Friday, Light said. His mother was arrested that afternoon on suspicion of deliberate homicide, tampering with evidence and obstructing a peace officer. Light expects Many White Horses to be formally charged with deliberate homicide Monday in Cascade County District Court.

“There’s so much we don’t know yet ... none of us had any idea he would be found in a trunk. We’re stunned, obviously,” Light said.

The body of James Many White Horses was sent to the Montana State Crime Lab in Missoula for an autopsy. Results of that exam and a cause of death could be known in a week to 10 days, Light said.

Meanwhile, the family plans to try to get custody of Many White Horses’ daughter, Buffalo said.

A memorial service for James Many White Horses will be held when his body is returned to the family after the autopsy.

“He was loved dearly,” Buffalo said.

Council expected to oppose Ponca plan

Tim Rohwer
Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa — The Council Bluffs City Council on Monday evening will officially make its position known about gaming in Carter Lake - and it appears it won’t be in favor.

The council will vote on a resolution that supports legal action being undertaken by the state of Iowa against the National Indian Gaming Commission regarding land in Carter Lake and its reclassification as “restored lands,” making the property gaming eligible.

The resolution was drafted by the City Attorney’s office at the request of the council at its last meeting. City Attorney Richard Wade believes there’s “strong support” on the council for this action, and, if approved, the resolution would be sent to the state Attorney General’s office as a show of support for what it’s doing.

What’s more, Wade said there’s a possibility the city could take it’s own legal action against the proposed casino because of the potential negative financial impact here.

“The city has different interests (from the state),” he said. “The city could lose jobs, sales tax revenue, gaming tax revenue and property tax revenue. There could be adverse financial impact on the city.”

The expected resolution approval comes less than a week after the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors decided to stay out of the state’s lawsuit against the proposed casino and a similar action being taken by the Nebraska Attorney General’s office.

In other action, the council will vote on whether to approve the recommendation by an Omaha/Council Bluffs committee to name the new pedestrian bridge in honor of Bob Kerrey, a former Nebraska governor and United States senator who was instrumental in securing federal money to help pay for most of the project.

The Omaha City Council will also vote on this recommendation and both councils must agree on the recommendation to make it official, according to Wade.

Fair favorite



Cable Hoover/Independent



Cable Hoove/Independent

ABOVE: Judges Sarah Bia, left, Margilene Barney and Wesley Bileen taste frybread during a frybread contest at the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock Saturday. Frybread is judge in several criteria including taste, color, aroma and even cleanliness of the contestant’s workstation. **LEFT:** Helen Benally removes her first frybread from the pan in a frybread contest during the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock Saturday.