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Alaska Department of Natural Resources

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Office of the Commissioner

STATE ESTABLISHES CLEAR TITLE TO TWO INTERIOR TRAILS IN RS 2477 SETTLEMENT

The State of Alaska has established clear ownership of two historic Interior trails under a settlement reached with federal and Native corporation officials of the state's claim to the trails under federal law RS 2477, Acting Commissioner Marty Rutherford announced today.

The settlement ends a lawsuit the state filed in April 2005 against the United States to quiet title to the state's rights-of-way for the 65-mile Coldfoot-Chandalar Lake trail and the 85-mile Caro-to-Coldfoot trail, which share a common route across federal land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, off the Dalton Highway north of Fairbanks.

"As far back as 1906 the Coldfoot-Chandalar Lake trail was used to access gold in the Chandalar area," Rutherford said. "As such, the trail is one of many rights-of-way established within Alaska under federal law. Establishing clear title to such historical routes is key to preserving our statehood rights and critical to opening access across the state."

In the settlement, both the federal government and Doyon, Limited agreed to accept entry of a judgment quieting title to the rights-of-way in the state. Other defendants included other non-federal stakeholders with claims to land adjoining or surrounding the trails. While the settlement confirms the state's right-of-way for these two RS 2477 routes, the federal government does not formally recognize them as established under RS 2477.

"The United States' willingness to recognize the state's right-of-way resolves this costly litigation and assures Alaskans the access they need to state and other public lands," Rutherford said.

The state asserted its claim to these two routes for several reasons, including their well-documented historical usage, their current use for mining, hunting, subsistence and recreation, and the access they provide to over 1 million acres of state land, she said.

The trails are among many access routes the state claims under RS 2477, a federal law by which the government granted rights-of-way across federal lands not otherwise reserved for public use, to encourage miners and settlers to expand into the Western states and Alaska. Although RS 2477 was repealed in 1976, existing rights-of-way created under it are preserved under federal law.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources provides detailed information and answers to frequently asked questions involving [RS 2477](#) rights-of-way online.

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