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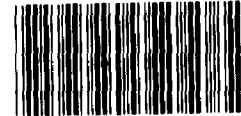
UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

ENERGY AND MINERALS
DIVISION

B-203005

MAY 6, 1981

The Honorable Richard C. White
House of Representatives



115133

Dear Mr. White:

Subject: Constituent's Concerns Over Stipulations
For The Trans-Alaska Pipeline (EMD-81-79)

As requested in your March 25, 1981, letter, I would like to offer some comments regarding concerns mentioned in Mr. Robert Bothwell's letter. Mr. Bothwell cited our report, "Trans-Alaska Pipeline Operations: More Federal Monitoring Needed" (EMD-81-11, Jan. 6, 1981) and questioned the necessity for the various stipulations included in the grant of rights-of-way for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (TAPS) across Federal lands, which stipulations were the subject of the report.

As Mr. Bothwell pointed out in his letter, the Nation does need this domestic source of oil. Congress also recognized this need and responded to it with passage of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act of 1973. The Act, which was passed after several years of delaying court suits and arduous public debate over the potential adverse effects of the pipeline on Alaska's pristine environment, declared that it was in the national interest to obtain early delivery of Alaska's North Slope oil to domestic markets. But in enacting this legislation, which made possible the pipeline's construction, the Congress also sanctioned various environmental and other stipulations designed by the Secretary of the Interior to protect Alaska's environment.

The stipulations represent the Federal Government's first large-scale effort to assure a balance between oil and gas development and environmental protection in Alaska, taking into consideration Alaska's sensitive climate, soil, and seismic conditions. As such, they may well set a precedent for future energy resource development in Alaska. It is for this reason that we were interested in evaluating the Department of Interior's monitoring and enforcement of these stipulations.

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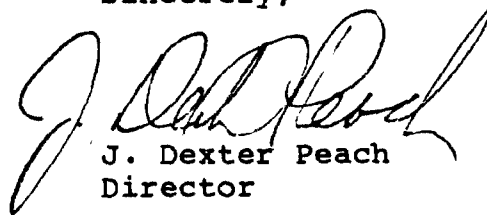
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We too are concerned with possible over-regulation. Thus our report, among other things, advocated additional research of the long-term environmental impacts of pipeline operations and action by Interior to evaluate not only operator compliance with the stipulations but also their effectiveness as well as the need for them. Such evaluations are needed, we believe, to form the basis for an appropriate level of protection consistent with the Nation's need for oil and gas and other Alaskan resources.

We appreciate Mr. Bothwell's concerns and hope these additional comments will be helpful in your response to him. Our Office of Congressional Relations previously sent you a copy of the TAPS report. However, we are enclosing another copy as well as a copy of another recently issued report in a similar vein--"Environmental and Other Problems along the Alaska Pipeline Corridor" (EMD-81-69, Apr. 8, 1981), which addresses the environmental impacts on Federal lands of the Alaska haul road that parallels parts of the pipeline.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely,



J. Dexter Peach
Director

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