

process of consideration for the complete withdrawal of these lands from all forms of mineral entry or leasing, with the exception of deposits which are found by the Department to be extractable without damage to oil shale. Second, the Director of the Bureau of Land Management has initiated action on pending sodium lease applications to expedite decision on whether the leases should issue. Third, a series of immediate tests of the validity of dawsonite mining locations is being instituted.

This task of clearing away a half century of legal underbrush will be time consuming, vexatious, and difficult. But it is a necessary prerequisite to the long-term development of the lands in question. In this connection, there is one way in which the Congress could be very helpful in simplifying the task.

As you know, there never has been and there is not at this time any general requirement that notice of a mining claim be filed with any Federal office or agency. It has been the view, Mr. Chairman, of my own people for many years that this is a major defect in terms of procedure, in terms of the public interest, in terms of the responsibility of those making claims under the old mining laws, and this defect can be cured.

Recordation in the land records of the county is all that is required and a search of those records must be made to determine whether Federal public lands are so encumbered. Our search of county records may not disclose the present address of the locator, nor assignments of the claim that he has made to third parties. We think that such information should also be a part of the land records of the Bureau of Land Management and that the locator or claimant should bear the burden of such a filing.

Undoubtedly there are hundreds of thousands of mining claims that have been recorded but have, in fact, been abandoned. Not only for the purposes of the oil shale program but for orderly administration in general, we urge that a recordation statute be enacted requiring that all past claims be recorded within a reasonable period—2 or 3 years—and that all future claims or transfers be recorded currently. Assuming widespread publicity, this seems a reasonable and equitable way to eliminate a tremendous volume of potential work for our Federal land managers. And this is work that can only delay the forward movement of the oil shale development program. I want to underscore that.

We have proposed such recordation legislation in the past and very shortly will transmit a new proposal for your consideration. I would say, because I know many of the members of the committee are very familiar with the law that was passed a few years ago with regard to scrip and the land claims thereunder, this is precisely the procedure the committee followed. In our judgment the result was very successful and we think if there is any one single stroke that the Congress could take to enable us to eliminate the underbrush and get on with the development, that this is the most immediate step that will be helpful.

The second element of our program involves the blocking up of oil shale properties into efficient development units. One of the explanations advanced for failure to develop privately owned oil