# Stratman Case Against Leisnoi Over

Thursday, 02 July 2009

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Erik Wander/KMXT

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court denied Kodiak rancher Omar Stratman's petition for review of his court battle with a local Native group over land rights, putting an end to the case after 33 years. KMXT's Erik Wander has more.

Stratman first contested Leisnoi Incorporated's right to approximately 115,000 acres of land in 1976, when the Native corporation received lands on Kodiak and Woody islands under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The drawn-out legal process has resulted in several court decisions and overturns since 1976, the most recent coming in 2008, when the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decided in favor of Leisnoi. The high court's Monday decision affirms the 2008 ruling.

Stratman's attorney, Michael J. Schneider, said he and Stratman are understandably disappointed with the outcome of the case, although not completely surprised.

-- (Schneider 1 30 sec. "It is very, very difficult to get ... sure did the best we could.")

Schneider expressed some relief that the case is finally over, despite the disappointing outcome. He said that those similarly frustrated that Lesnoi now gets to keep the land and can restrict its use have no choice but to accept the court's decision and move on.

-- (Schneider 2 36 sec. "It's just the way it is ... but we lost that debate.")

Schneider said he admired Stratman for being able to withstand the pressures he's had to endure throughout the years. He also explained the ultimate goal of the case and said it never would have reached the nation's highest court without Stratman's perseverance.

-- (Schneider 3 42 sec. "This guy has really stood ... to their lands as they choose.")

Leisnoi shareholder Roy Madsen said his first reaction to the decision was relief. He described recent reports on the case as one-sided both regard to the facts and the portrayal of Stratman.

-- (Madsen 1 50 sec. "The Secretary of the Interior ... because he had motive.")

Charlie Powers, Koniag Incorporated's Vice President for Corporate Affairs, declined to comment on the Supreme Court's decision. However, Koniag President Will Anderson issued a statement saying, "Koniag is very pleased that the litigation is finally over and that Woody Island's eligibility has been upheld." Anderson's statement continues, "It is very unfortunate that this litigation has lasted for such a long time and has been the source of a lot of hard feelings on both sides. Now we can finally put this issue behind us and focus on working together as a community."

I'm Erik Wander.

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