

Partner Eric Fjelstad Quoted in *The Columbian*—Cities and Tribes Navigate New Landscape as Indian Country in Alaska Slowly Grows

Partner Eric Fjelstad was quoted in "[Cities and Tribes Navigate New Landscape as Indian Country in Alaska Slowly Grows](#)," an article in *The Columbian* (Clark County/Vancouver, WA), regarding the learning curve as the federal government slowly accepts tribal lands into trust in the state.

Since the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act granted land to corporations, tribes don't own much land in Alaska. But that could change, said Eric Fjelstad, a partner with Perkins Coie in Anchorage. The international law firm has no trust-land cases in Alaska, but it represents Lower 48 entities that have conflicts with tribal trust lands there, he said.

It's not hard to imagine complicated questions arising, Fjelstad said.

The Clean Water Act contemplates treating tribes with trust lands as similar to the state, which could lead to conflicts involving environmental issues, he said. Companies wanting to build a road may one day need to seek permission from a tribe with trust lands, along with local, state and federal agencies, adding complexity to permitting.

"I don't want to be alarmist," Fjelstad said. "This will be like watching the grass grow. It's something to be measured in decades. It starts small, but it gets bigger and it evolves over time. So it has the potential to fundamentally change things with respect to tribes and their regulation of lands."

[Read the full article on *The Columbian*.](#)

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