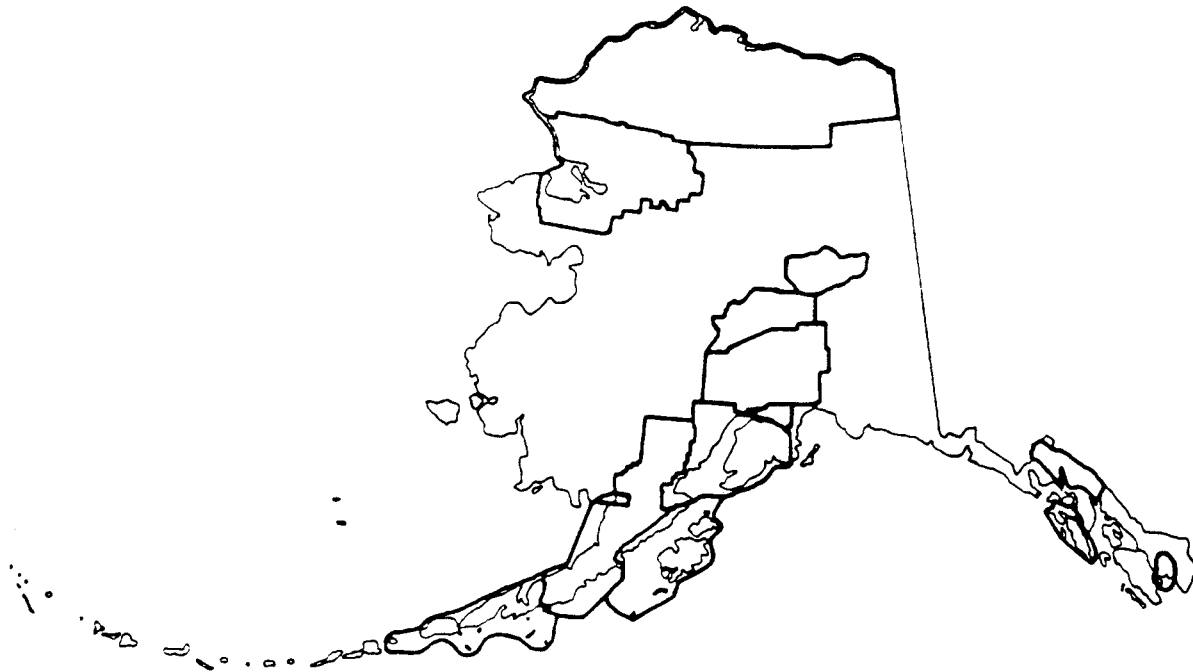


**ALASKA LOCAL BOUNDARY COMMISSION
1991 ANNUAL REPORT TO
THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**



Walter J. Hickel, Governor

**With Assistance from
Department of Community and Regional Affairs
Edgar Blatchford, Commissioner**

**Municipal and Regional Assistance Division
Robert Walsh, Director**

III. MAJOR PROJECTS

Model Borough Boundaries

Purpose of the Model Boundary Study

The voluntary formation of new organized boroughs, revived in 1986 after a 14 year lull, remained an issue of widespread interest in 1991. The LBC believes that declining state budgets, local concerns over the allocation and development of resources, and the legal challenge to the state's method of funding schools are among the factors likely to give continued impetus toward borough incorporation. However, the factors prompting borough formation have also led to lawsuits or intense disputes among residents of different communities or regions each time a borough proposal is made.

The LBC members are acutely aware that each of their decisions affects not only the residents within the proposed boundaries, but also residents of the surrounding areas and the state as a whole. For this reason, in 1989 the LBC concluded that, rather than examining an area only when faced with an immediate need to review a specific petition, the Commission should study all of the unincorporated regions of the state and propose model boundaries. These model boundaries would be used as a guideline when organized boroughs sought to annex more territory or unorganized areas petitioned for borough incorporation.

The Commission and its DCRA staff began planning the Model Boundary study in mid 1989. They divided the unorganized borough into ten general regions, and decided to focus first on the areas of the state for which petitions for incorporation or annexation were pending. The research on the project began in earnest in 1990, and with the additional funds appropriated by the Legislature for FY 92, the Commission hopes to complete the project by the end of the fiscal year.

Because the formation of local governments can be a very emotional issue in Alaska, the Commission's reason for pursuing the Model Boundary project has occasionally been misunderstood. The purpose of the study is not to force the incorporation of new boroughs. Instead, the study enables the LBC and DCRA to be better prepared for future borough petitions, through the information and public comment obtained in the study process. The study has also encouraged communities in the unorganized borough to consider where future boundaries should be drawn, as well as given guidance to petitioners on the factors which go into borough incorporation decisions.

When the project is complete, the LBC will have adopted model boundaries for all of the unorganized borough. Under the LBC's June, 1991 regulations, the Commission generally will not approve proposed borough boundaries extending beyond the model boundaries. However, the boundary lines adopted are not fixed or unchangeable. Petitioners for borough incorporation or an annexation to an existing borough can successfully propose different boundaries if they make a specific showing to the Commission of why the other boundaries are more appropriate.

Study Procedures

The LBC begins its study of each area by sending out a large eight-page tabloid which explains the study and sets out the questions the LBC expects to consider in its decision-making process. Each tabloid includes a map on which recipients are requested to draw suggested boundaries. DCRA prepares and widely distributes a report of its findings and recommendations for the area, and then the LBC holds hearings in as many communities as possible.

The LBC first tackled much of interior Alaska, adopting model boundaries for all of the area encompassed within the Iditarod Area, Yukon-Koyukuk, Yukon Flats and Railbelt REAA's. (The area within the Railbelt REAA and some of the adjacent territory became the Denali Borough in 1990.) In a pattern similar to the model boundaries the LBC has considered throughout the state, the model boundaries adopted for the interior extend the boundaries of existing organized boroughs as well as define model boundaries for potential boroughs.

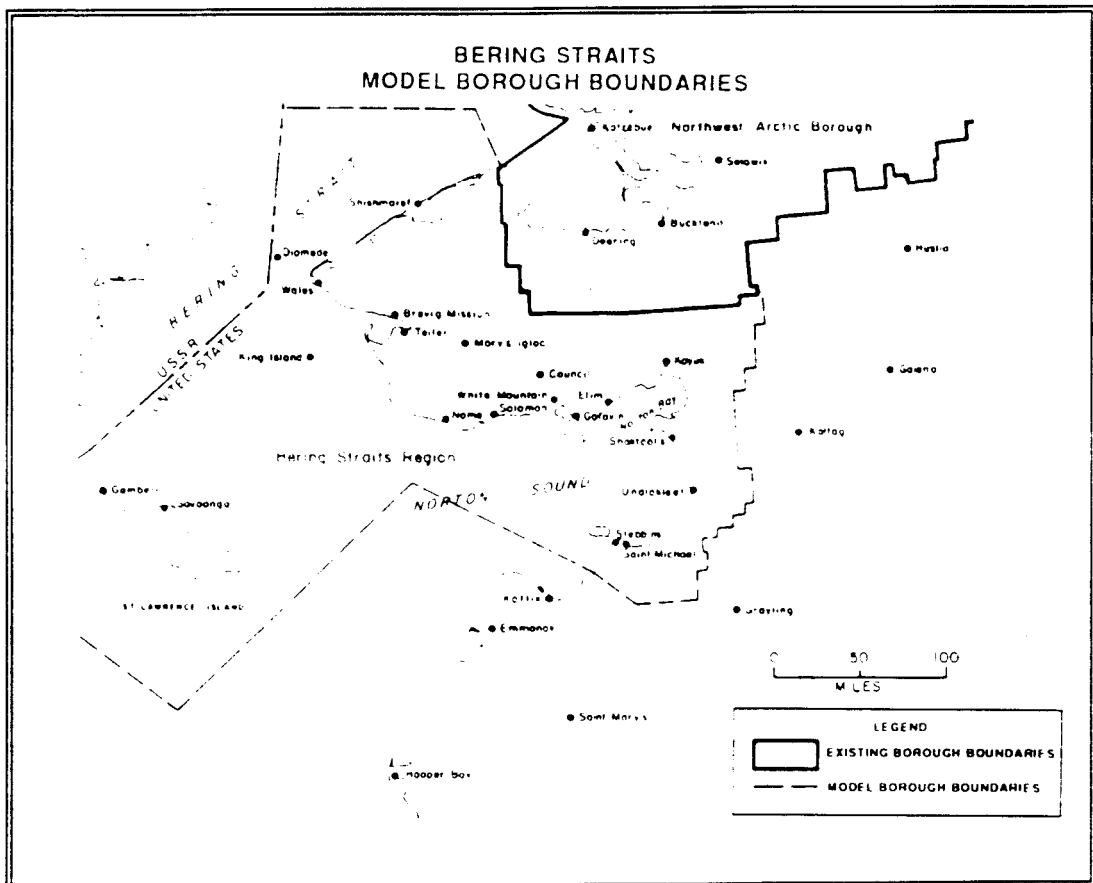
Since the Commission began this project, it has held hearings in 60 communities throughout Alaska. It has drawn model boundaries for approximately 225,000 square miles of the unorganized borough, most recently in the Bering Straits area and several parts of Southeast. To give a proper perspective to the size of the project, all fifteen organized boroughs encompass a total of about 250,000 square miles.

1991 Activity

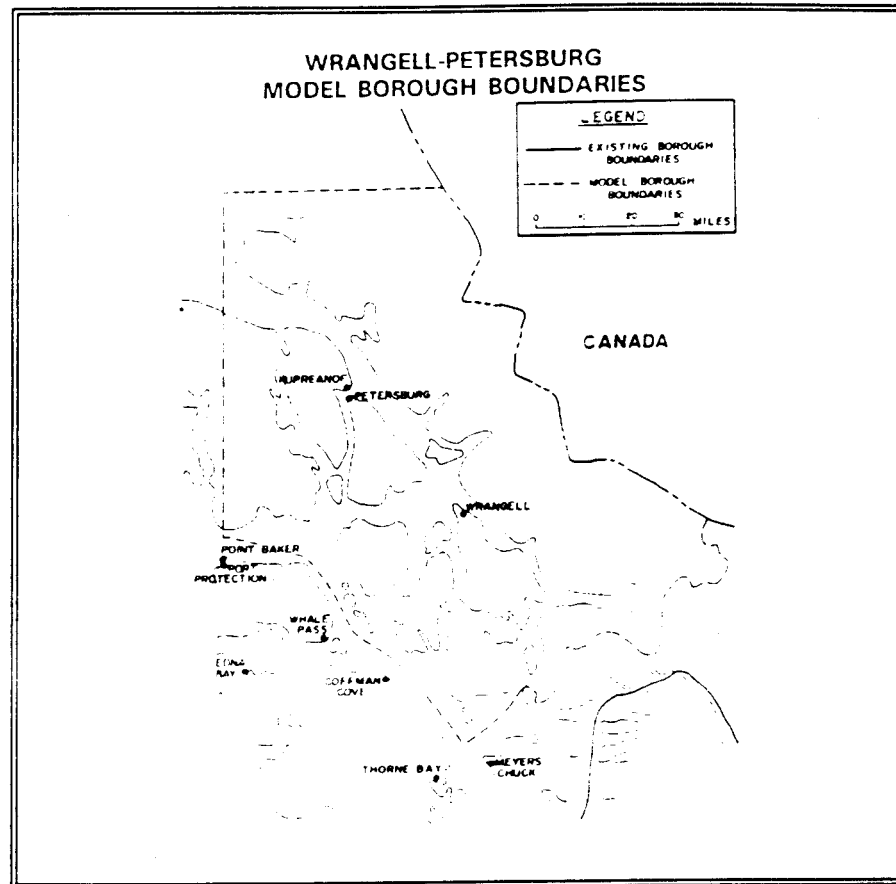
In 1991, the LBC held hearings in Southeast Alaska and the Bering Straits area. After considering DCRA's recommendations, written comments from the public, and oral testimony, the LBC adopted model boundaries for the Bering Straits region and for four organized or potential boroughs in Southeast. Maps of each of these areas are set out below, with a brief description of the boundaries.

Bering Straits Region. The LBC held two hearings on model boundaries for this region in October, 1991. The hearings took place in Nome and Unalakleet, with teleconference sites in Elim, Koyuk, Stebbins and Savoonga. Following the hearings, the Commission approved DCRA's recommendation and formally defined the model boundaries for this region to follow the boundaries of the Bering Straits Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA). Those boundaries also match the boundaries of the Bering Straits Native Corporation, Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area, Nome Census District, Norton Sound Health Corporation and Bering Straits Economic Council.

The model boundaries for a Bering Straits Region borough include an estimated 23,013 square miles of land and 5,264 square miles of water. The area contains two school districts, the City of Nome School District and the Bering Straits REAA. The 1990 Federal Census indicates that the region has 8,288 residents.



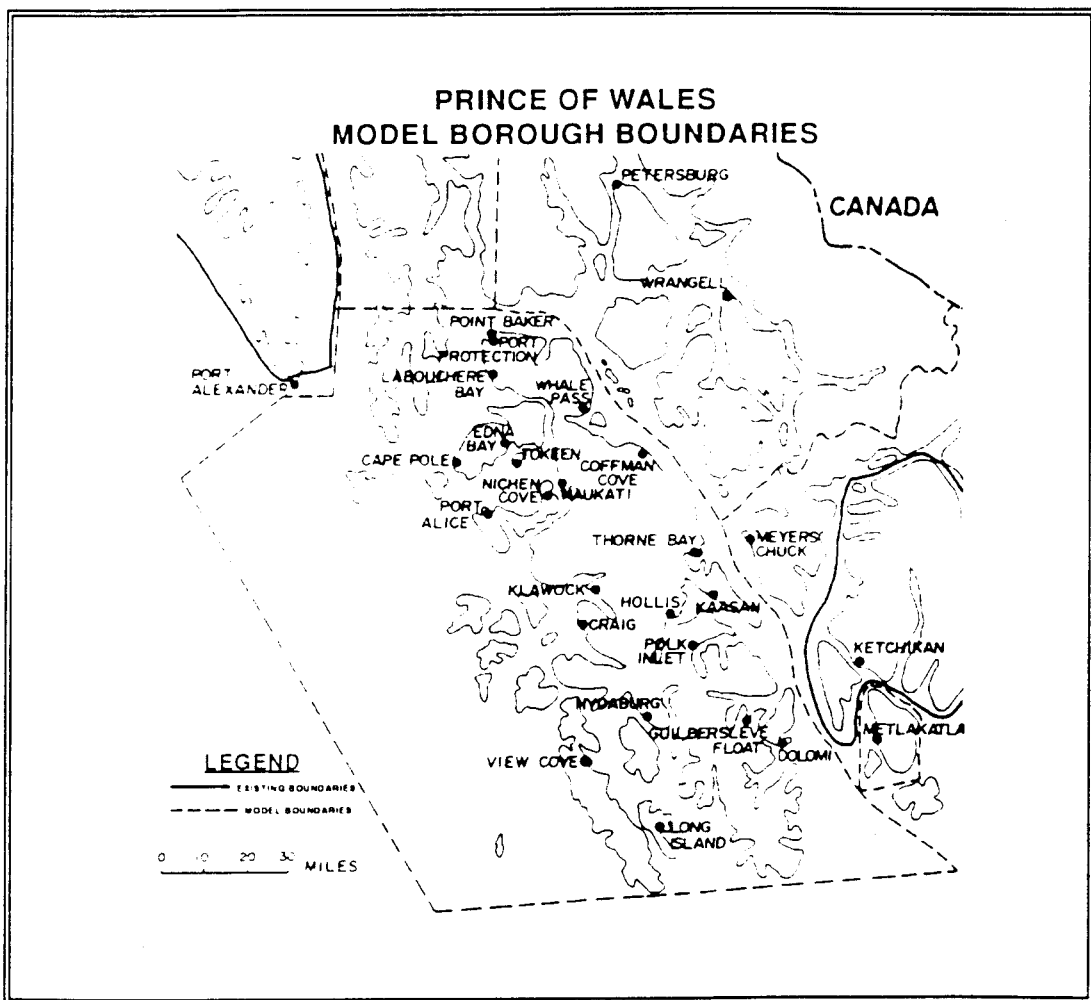
Wrangell/Petersburg Region. The LBC conducted hearings on model boundaries for this region in Wrangell and Petersburg in September. After receiving additional comments in November, the LBC defined model borough boundaries for this region to follow the boundary of the Wrangell Ranger District along the Misty Fiords National Monument to Ernest Sound and along Clarence Strait and Sumner Strait to an area north of the community of Point Baker. From there, the model boundary runs due north to Hobart Bay then due east to the Alaska/Canada border. The boundary then turns south following the border to the point of beginning.



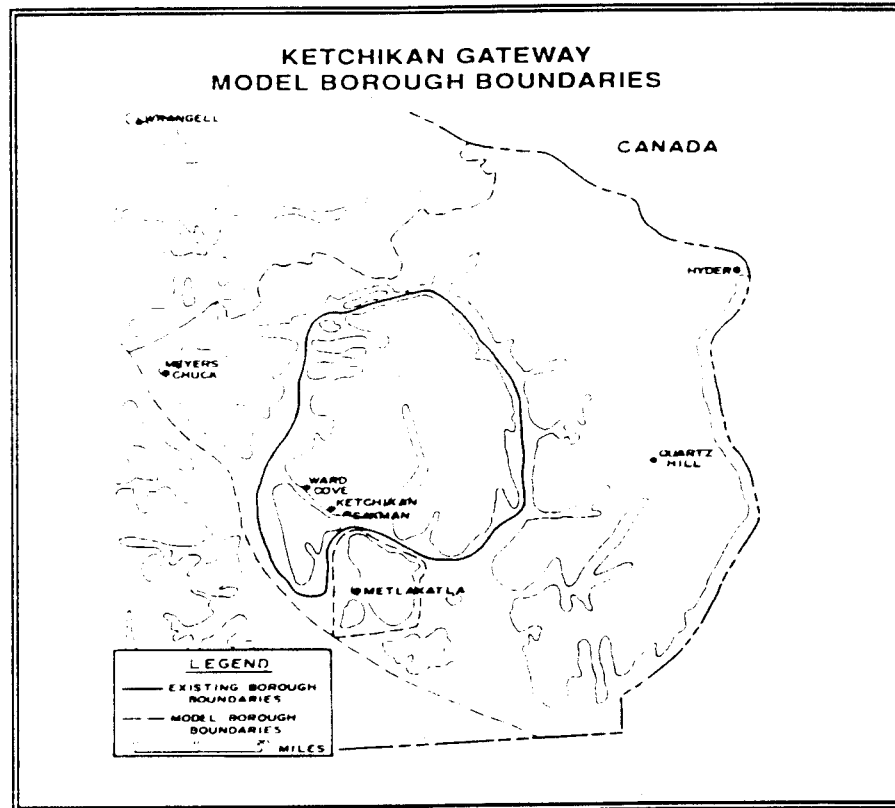
These model boundaries include an area of approximately 7,200 square miles of land and water, and has approximately 6,000 residents. The model boundaries encompass two complete school districts (Petersburg and Wrangell) and portions of two others (Southeast Island REAA and Chatham REAA).

Prince of Wales Island Region. The LBC held its hearing on model borough boundaries for this region in Klawock in September. Additional comments concerning model boundaries for this region were provided to the Commission in November.

The Commission adopted model boundaries for this region to extend from the southern boundary of the State of Alaska along Clarence Strait and Sumner Strait to an area north of Point Baker (following the Wrangell Ranger District boundary). From there the boundary extends due west across Kuiu Island to the middle of Chatham Strait where it turns south, following the State boundary back to the point of beginning. These model boundaries encompass an estimated 8,200 square miles of land and water. This area is all part of the Southeast Island Regional Educational Attendance Area, and has 4,650+ residents.



Ketchikan Gateway Borough. The LBC held a hearing on model boundaries for this region in Ketchikan in September. Residents of Meyers Chuck and Hyder participated via teleconference. Additional information concerning the model boundaries for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough was provided to the Commission in November.



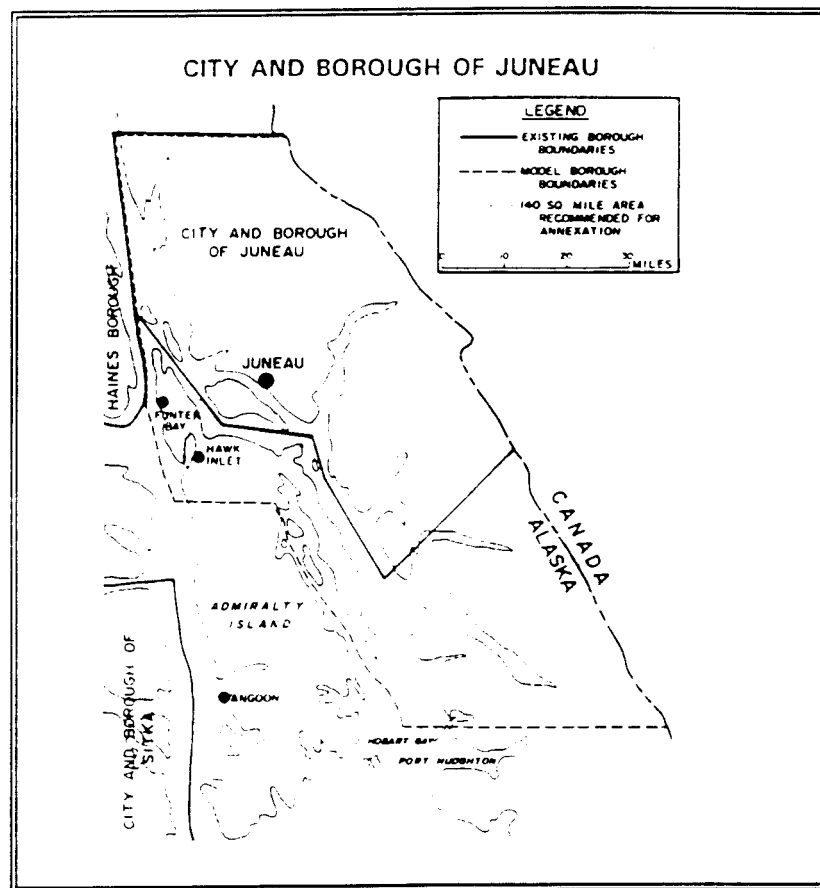
The model borough boundaries defined by the Commission for the Ketchikan area extend from the State's southern boundary along Clarence Strait to Ernest Sound. There, the boundary turns east, following the southern boundary of the Wrangell Ranger District and the northern boundary of the Misty Fjords National Monument to the Alaska/Canada border. From there, the model boundary line turns south along the Alaska/Canada border to the point of beginning. These model borough boundaries exclude the Annette Island Indian Reservation.

The area includes an estimated 7,300 square miles of land and water; of this, approximately 1,744 square miles are already included within the current boundaries of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. According to the 1990 Federal Census, this area is inhabited by 13,985 people, all but 157 of whom live within the current borough boundaries.

Local Boundary Commission

City and Borough of Juneau. The LBC conducted a hearing on the model boundaries for Juneau in July, 1990, but delayed action on the boundaries pending testimony from residents of adjacent regions. In November of 1990, the Commission held model boundary hearings in Kake, Hoonah, Cube Cove, Angoon, Sitka, Elfin Cove, Port Alexander, Pelican, Tenakee Springs, Haines, Skagway, Yakutat and Gustavus. (Due to bad weather, the hearings were conducted by teleconference.)

In November, 1991, the LBC defined the model boundaries for Juneau to include the Mansfield Peninsula, Glass Peninsula, and Seymour Canal areas of Admiralty Island. The model boundaries extend south along Stephens Passage to Hobart Bay on the mainland. From there, the boundaries run due east to the Alaska/Canada border. The boundary continues northward along the Alaska/Canada border following the existing boundaries of the City and Borough of Juneau.



The Juneau model borough boundaries take in about 2,400 square miles of land and water outside of the current CBJ boundaries, including the area recommended for annexation in Section VI of this report. The model borough area contains some 26,938 residents, all but 187 of whom already live within the CBJ boundaries.

Barring unforeseen events, the LBC plans to hold hearings in January, 1992 in several communities in the area stretching from Prince William Sound through much of the Chatham REAA. If the hearings go as scheduled, the Commission hopes to adopt model borough boundaries for that entire area in February. Four other general areas of the state also remain for consideration by the LBC:

Bristol Bay
Yukon/Kuskokwim
Delta Greely/Copper River/Alaska Gateway
Western Aleutian/Pribilof Islands

The LBC expects to hold hearings in these areas in the first few months of 1992, and hopes to adopt model boundaries, and thereby completing the entire project, by the end of the current fiscal year.

Conclusion

With the end of the project coming closer, the LBC has looked back to evaluate the study. The goal of the study - to provide the Commission with a useful tool for long-term planning and for decision-making in the best interests of the state - is being met. The LBC and its staff have learned a tremendous amount about the people and communities in the unorganized borough. At the same time, the residents of the unorganized borough have become familiar with the LBC, borough incorporation standards and the views of the residents of the surrounding communities. The LBC believes the study will provide valuable assistance in many future incorporation and annexation decisions.

LBC Regulations

In 1981, the Local Boundary Commission adopted its first regulations on municipal incorporation. In 1991, the Commission decided it was time to carry out a long-contemplated review of all of its regulations, including those interpreting the statutes on municipal incorporation. Armed with a February, 1991 Attorney General's opinion upholding the validity of its rulemaking powers and the scope of its regulations, the LBC worked with experienced legal counsel to update and revise its regulations. The new regulations, adopted by the Commission on June 29, 1991, resolve problems the LBC found with the old rules, and should be easier for people to use.