Welsch calculates that the figure may drop as low as 3000 based on the following computation: He estimates that the 10 percent cut in indirect costs is equal to $70 million and that the 4 percent cut is equal to $67 million. The two reductions total $137 million. This figure, divided by the average cost of an NIH grant—$124,000—is equal to 1100. Finally, subtract 1100 from 4100 to get 3000 grants.

The delegation's estimate probably represents a rock-bottom figure. Congress, however, may be inclined to pass the cut in noncompeting grants, a reduction imposed during the FY 1982 continuing resolution. At a recent meeting at NIH, Assistant Secretary of Health Edward Brandt said that cuts in indirect costs are "still negotiable."—***Marjorie Sun***

Preventive Research Office Suggested

Secretary of Health and Human Services Richard S. Schweiker might establish a top-level division that conducts applied research in disease prevention, according to a department official.

Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Robert J. Rubin recently told the National Institutes of Health (NIH) director's advisory board that "prevention research is a legitimate enterprise" and that the federal government "wants the maximum return on past investments" in biomedical research. Rubin said Schweiker favors setting up an Office of Preventive Health Applications of Research.

The plan would provide a visible way for Schweiker to live up to a statement made at his confirmation hearings nearly a year ago that he would like "to be remembered as putting preventive health care and preventive medicine at the top of the list of priorities."

But at least two participants at the NIH board meeting said the proposed office was a bad idea, partly because funds from the NIH budget probably would be diverted to this new division. Basic research, they argued, is the true basis of preventive medicine.

—Marjorie Sun

Alaska Stakes a Claim for Arctic Research

A modest expansion of arctic research is under way in the state of Alaska, thanks to an unusual initiative by the state government. This expansion could soon be augmented by the federal government through an Arctic Research and Policy Act recently introduced in the U.S. Senate, with Alaska the obvious beneficiary. These initiatives are intended to mitigate a problem of uncoordinated and underfunded research in a state with massive natural resources.

Last year the state, through a grant award system modeled generally on that used by the National Science Foundation, furnished $2 million in grants for basic and applied research and disbursed $280,000 for small technology projects. The grants were administered by the state Council on Science and Technology, which was established in 1978 to provide science advice and assistance to the governor and state legislature and later given an expanded role.

According to the council's executive director Christopher Noah, the legislature expects the council to fund "good research relevant to issues in the state." Most of the projects seem to focus on peculiarly Alaskan problems. For example, one study of the biochemistry of arsenic in mine drainage, a particular problem of gold mines, has applications in many places in Alaska where mine runoff contaminates drinking water. The council also supports some social and behavioral research, such as a study of the potential effect of oil development on native life-styles. The council is aiding efforts to promote the federal bill by funding meetings and planning activities.

The Arctic Research bill (S.1562) was introduced on 31 July by Senator Frank H. Murkowski (R–Alaska) in behalf of himself and senators Ted Stevens (R–Alaska) and Henry Jackson (D–Wash.). The sponsors argue that more and better coordinated arctic research is necessary in view of Alaska's importance to the economy because of its energy resources and to national security because of its propinquity to the Soviet Union.

Gerry Atwell/USFWS

A high-level arctic research council would be established with the secretaries of Interior, Defense, and Commerce, the governor of Alaska, and federal science agency chiefs as members. The council would be charged with formulating and coordinating a comprehensive arctic research policy. The bill would provide considerable financial leverage by creating an Arctic Research Fund that would have the right to 1 percent of revenues up to $25 million a year from government sales or leases on the North Slope or its continental shelf. The bill introduced last summer has made no legislative headway so far but its sponsors say they expect hearings soon.

As to future prospects for state support of research, Alaska's Council on Science and Technology shares with all other operations of state government a heavy dependence on oil revenues. And oil revenues are down because of the drop in demand and prices. Hearings on the council's budget are now in progress before the state legislature and the coming weeks will test how well the R & D experiment will survive in a cold climate.—***John Walsh***