

Lujan: Solution to subsistence is at state level

by Alexandra J. McClanahan
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Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan urged Alaska Natives gathered Wednesday at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage to avoid seeking changes in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act to solve subsistence problems in Alaska.

Agreeing with him was Congressman Don Young, R-Alaska, who said attempting to change ANILCA would be a disaster.

Young said if anti-hunting organiza-

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a three-hour, closed-door meeting Wednesday.

Conference participants endorsed a proposal by Rep. Lyman Hoffman, D-Bethel, to amend the State Constitution to allow the state to conform to federal law. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 provided a subsistence priority for rural Alaskans.

The 1986 state subsistence law conformed to ANILCA, but the state Supreme Court last December declared that the law violated the State Constitution.

Hoffman's proposal doesn't endorse a rural preference in so many words, but does so indirectly by endorsing conformity to the federal law which provides the rural preference.

A member of Hoffman's staff says the proposal also would provide the state flexibility in case ANILCA is amended to provide a Native preference.

The conference also resolved "that Native tribes and organizations will work in the long-term to gain a subsistence priority for Alaska Native tribal members and to affirm the power of Alaska Native tribes to manage and regulate subsistence uses by their members."

The conference supported the continuation of state management of fish and game on federal lands in Alaska. But it threatened to withdraw that support unless the state reviews and revises its subsistence management system.

In such a review, the state should define *rural* to include as many Alaska Natives as possible, the conference said, and it should establish a subsistence system for persons who don't live in rural areas but who can show a "traditional and customary" use of subsistence resources.

The review and revision process must include representatives of Native organizations, the conference said, and the state must devise a management system "that is responsive to the true subsistence needs of affected Alaskans."

If the state fails to enact a subsistence law that meets federal requirements, the conference wants the federal government to involve Native organizations directly in any federal takeover of fish and game management on federal lands in the state.

The conference doesn't want the state to contract with the federal government to manage such federal lands. Instead, it encourages the federal government to contract with tribal organizations to do that job.

Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan says federal law requires him to take over the management of federal lands in Alaska unless the state enacts a law that meets federal requirements. Lujan gave that message at least three times Wednesday: at an Anchorage Chamber of Commerce breakfast, at the summit conference and at a special evening legislative teleconference held at the site of the conference.

As the leadoff witness at the

teleconference, Lujan told lawmakers there is "no better thing than for the Legislature to pass a constitutional amendment, and, of course, get it signed by the governor so that we can continue the arrangement which we have right now."

During the summit conference, Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, and Gov. Steve Cowper endorsed a rural preference constitutional amendment. Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, sent a videotaped message urging participants to "let reason prevail" and support a rural preference.

Cowper and Rep. George Jacko, D-Pedro Bay, have also introduced measures to provide a rural preference constitutional amendment. Rep. Kay Wallis, D-Fort Yukon, has introduced a measure that would provide a Native-preference constitutional amendment.

Amending the constitution requires approval by two-thirds of each house of the Alaska Legislature and then approval by a majority of the state's voters.

Mike Lane of KSKO in McGrath assisted in this story.