

Editorial



Lujan does the right thing

Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan deserves credit for his forthright support of subsistence and his apology last week to the people gathered at the Alaska Federation of Natives' subsistence meeting.

He also is to be commended for making what is probably an unprecedented appearance by a member of the Cabinet at an Alaska legislative hearing. Lujan was the first speaker Wednesday evening at a legislative teleconference on subsistence at the Egan Center attended by about a third of the members of the Legislature.

The secretary told the legislators unequivocally that he will take over management of fish and game resources July 1 on federal lands in Alaska if no action is taken on the part of the state.

Earlier, the *Tundra Times* criticized the secretary for making a commitment to speak at the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce breakfast, but at the same time declining an invitation from AFN to address the people at the meeting.

What was particularly galling about the secretary's decision was the fact that he listed subsistence among topics for his speech to the chamber.

At any rate, Lujan *did* address the AFN gathering last week. He cut short his press conference after the breakfast and went straight to the AFN meeting at the Egan Center. He apologized for his decision not to address the group, saying he changed his mind when he realized that the meeting was a large group of many Alaska Natives from throughout the state.

It's commendable when a person admits he or she made a mistake, especially when that person holds a high office. We thank Lujan for his support of subsistence and his apology. That apology, by the way was accepted by AFN Chairman Ralph Eluska.

The next several months will be critical for the Alaska Native community. As the July 1 deadline for a takeover of fish and game management on federal lands in Alaska draws closer, the need for action will be even more pressing.

We believe that Lujan would be fair as a manager of subsistence resources and that he would protect the people who depend so heavily on them. We agree with the secretary, however, that a federal takeover is not the answer.