

New governor faces tough challenge

Stevens: Subsistence is biggest issue

by **Holly F. Reimer**
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Subsistence is going to be the biggest issue Alaska's new governor will have to address, according to Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska.

During a press conference last week in Anchorage, Stevens said many anti-gun, anti-hunting and anti-subsistence

groups have taken an interest in subsistence since federal takeover of hunting and fishing management on federal lands began last July.

Stevens warned that these groups, as well as others, have also talked about becoming board members on the subsistence board if federal takeover becomes permanent.

Stevens said he hopes Alaska will regain management because other states whose opinions about how Alaska's subsistence use works are not the same as Alaskans' opinions. Or, other states may not be in favor of subsistence or hunting altogether.

"Other states don't know what is right or wrong for Alaskans," Stevens

said. "And they don't know what life is like in Alaska."

If federal management does become permanent those Outside opinions could hurt Alaska Native subsistence lifestyles, the senator said.

And if federal management becomes permanent, Alaska will be the only

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state in the union that doesn't regulate its own hunting and fishing on federal lands, he added.

"Somehow we must revise the plan," he said.

Alaskans got to experience the federal government's idea of how Alaskans should hunt last season.

In many areas people didn't know whether they were on federal land or state land. This caused mass confusion in different parts of the state. Hunters didn't know whether they were following the right set of rules. The two groups even had their own hunting dates, which also overlapped and just added to the confusion.

This confusion over whose land was whose also caused many hunters who usually rely on subsistence hunts to feed their families to avoid participation in the hunts.

Federal takeover was the most apparent in the Ahtna region where the land is dotted by federal and state owned lands which have no boundaries markers to indicate the difference. So many hunters were discouraged.

"We need to make subsistence a priority. Alaskans can still regain state management, but there's only six or seven months," Stevens said.

Public meetings on subsistence are being held in 58 Alaskan communities

as well as in Seattle and Washington, D.C.

Those who cannot attend the meetings are urged to send written comments.

Another issue Stevens talked about was proposed federal budget cuts that could affect Alaska.

He said for the time being Alaska's military won't be cut nor will the Indian Health Service.

Stevens warned that if the budget was cut severely that the Alaska National Guard wouldn't even have enough money to conduct routine training missions.

"The National Guard would be limited to actual emergency missions.

There would be no searching missions," he added.

"The state of Alaska could not survive a sequester, I told the floor of

"The options to avoid it are getting more remote," Stevens said.

Although the president alone doesn't have the authority to push the "war