

# Native subsistence priority gets support in Bristol Bay

Delegates to the Second Annual Bristol Bay Tribal Government Conference last week strongly endorsed a subsistence priority for Alaska Natives to be implemented by "any possible means" by state, federal or tribal governments.

The action was taken in anticipation of a statewide subsistence conference to be held in April by the Alaska Federation of Natives, according to the Bristol Bay Native Association.

While endorsing a Native preference for subsistence, conferees did not exclude other methods of protecting subsistence rights. The delegates supported a proposed amendment to the Alaska Constitution which would allow a preference for subsistence uses on the basis of local residency, customary or traditional use or dependence on the resources for food

and other purposes.

Legislation to place the amendment on the November ballot has been introduced by State Rep. George Jacko, D-Pedro Bay, and Peter Goll, D-Haines.

The amendment would overturn the recent "McDowell" decision in which the Alaska Supreme Court found the state's subsistence priority law to be unconstitutional and placed state law in direct conflict with federal law.

The three-day tribal conference focused on protecting subsistence rights in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's ruling. Conference delegates gave clear direction to the Bristol Bay Native Association and other Native organizations to continue educational and informational efforts at the village level as they attempt to forge a position of statewide unity on subsistence.