

Higher paying spill jobs draw fishery workers

Processors seek more applicants

by Jennifer Gordon

Tundra Times reporter

While hundreds of people have rushed to Prince William Sound looking for big money jobs with VECO and Exxon, they are passing up jobs in the fish processing plants that depend on summer job seekers.

Among those hardest hit are Alaska Fresh Seafood Inc. on Kodiak Island and the fish processing plants owned by Chugach Alaska Corp.

On Kodiak Island, Alaska Fresh Seafood Inc. usually hires 45 to 50 people in the summer months. Dave Woodruff, vice president of the company, said the company will probably be able to keep the line workers with the most seniority — the ones who have worked continuously at the plant — but he said he doesn't think he will see many of the summer workers or students who usually show up for jobs.

Woodruff said Alaska Fresh Seafood Inc. usually processes 6 to 8 million pounds of fish each year. A decline in crab and shrimp has pinched the company in the past couple of years, and now, he said, there is a decline in the marketplace for Alaska seafood.

Woodruff said he has not contacted Exxon about the loss yet. He is waiting to see whether his predictions are right.

Chugach Alaska Corp. operates two fish processing plants in Prince William Sound, one in Kodiak and one in the Cook Inlet. Mike Chittick, president and chief executive officer of the corporation, said that the pro-

(Continued on Page Eight)

• Processors

(Continued from Page One)

cessing plants hire 450 to 500 people during the summer at more than \$8 an hour.

Exxon is expected to hire several thousand people for \$16.69 an hour to clean up the spilled oil from the *Exxon Valdez*.

Chittick said that the plant in Cordova is already open, and with the Copper River salmon run opening on May 15, the corporation is having to look at options to bring in more workers.

A higher percentage of workers from the Lower 48 may fill some of the vacancies, Chittick said. Out-of-state workers are a normal part of the crew, he said, adding that usually they are college students looking for high paying summer jobs. Another option may mean raising wages to compete with Exxon's offers.

Chittick said Exxon is aware of the problem, but at this time has taken no action. He said Chugach will be able to get through the Copper River run with enough manpower, but once the pink salmon come in at the end of June, a decision will have to be made.