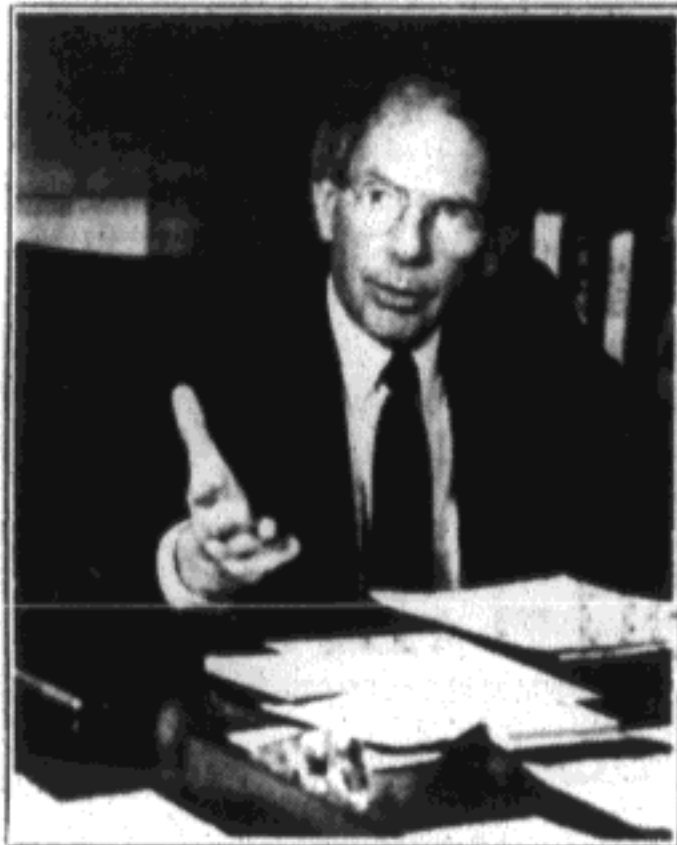


Gov. proposes Int'l Herd Agreement

JUNEAU — The State of Alaska has notified the federal government that negotiations should begin on an international agreement to conserve the Porcupine caribou herd shared by Alaska and Canada, Governor Bill Sheffield announced.

"We have a good opportunity to protect this magnificent wildlife resource while it is still healthy," Sheffield said. "A formal agreement with Canada can help us do that, and enhance Alaska's role as a wildlife manager."

The Porcupine caribou herd, which roams across the Alaska-Canada border, is the largest migratory population of animals in North



"We have a good opportunity to protect this magnificent wildlife resource while it's still healthy."

America. Named for the Porcupine River Valley through which it migrates, the herd numbers between 120,000 and 160,000.

Sheffield said any international agreement should conserve the size, health, and productivity of the herd, as well as ensure the continued use of the caribou by Alaska residents. Eventually, an Arctic International Porcupine Caribou Range could be established through bilateral discussions with Canada, the Governor said.

"I have discussed Alaska's negotiating position on the Porcupine caribou herd with many concerned residents, and I believe we have established a solid position for the United States to carry into these negotiations," the Governor said.

Among the major points of the state's position were:

- The international agreement would apply to the herd and its habitat north of 64° 30' North latitude and north of the Yukon River.

- The agreement would not alter the existing authority of the State of Alaska over the herd, but require international coordination of management and conservation of the herd.

- An advisory board or council representing local, state, and federal interests would recommend joint research projects, appropriate harvest limits for the United States and Canada, and provide the vehicle for sharing information.

- The agreement would underscore

the importance of subsistence uses of the herd and prohibit the commercial sale of caribou meat.

"Unlike other international wildlife agreements, this one is designed to prevent problems, not to patch up an already bad situation," Sheffield said.

"This agreement would give us a way to manage the herd and its habitat as a whole, not just as two halves."

The state's position on an international agreement was developed as the result of several years of efforts by a

working group appointed by the Governor, following a request by residents of Northeast Alaska. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game prepared several draft position papers and circulated them for comment by various environmental, sport hunting and other groups.

The formal state position will be forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for use in formulating a U.S. negotiating position. Alaska will be represented on the negotiating team, Sheffield said.