

State, BIA Efforts Forestall Gasoline Shortage at Gambell

A threatened halt in the annual hunt that provides a winter food supply for Gambell villagers has been forestalled by the combined efforts of the State and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Governor Walter J. Hickel disclosed this week.

The St. Lawrence Islanders, some 50 miles from the Siberian coast, must gather much of their supply of seal, whale and other game after the ice breaks up on the Bering Sea each spring.

This year they appealed for help when they found

themselves disastrously short of gasoline. The fuel is needed to power the boats used during the spring hunt.

Normally, an entire year's supply of fuel and oil is brought to the village annually in a single shipment.

The villagers sought the help of the State, the BIA and Alaska's Congressional Delegation to have extra gas flown to Gambell.

Through the efforts of the State Rural Development Agency a Nome hunter and guide, Ed Shepherd, volunt-

eered to loan the villagers 20 to 25 barrels of fuel for hunting purposes.

In mid-April Hickel said the Seattle office of the Alaska Native Industries Cooperative Association authorized Gambell to purchase its much-needed gas and oil locally—that is from Nome, some 200 air-miles away.

The ANICA is a function of the BIA and sponsors the operation of a store at Gambell.

Coincidentally, Major

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Gambell . . .

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General C. F. Necrason of the Alaska National Guard was in Nome when the authorization came through.

He immediately ordered that his Guard aircraft be used to haul the fuel and oil to Gambell, the Governor said.

The airplane flew 23 barrels into the village on April 14, and another 20 the following day, along with 175 gallons of lube oil.

Another 27 drums of gasoline are still available at Nome, if they are needed.

"We commend General Necrason for his quick and decisive action to help the people of Gambell," Hickel said, "an action we just learned of today."

Gasoline normally costs 95¢ a gallon at Gambell. The purchase price if it had been flown in commercially would have been prohibitive, according to natives there.

It is understood that the Gambell villagers have upped their order of fuel and oil from 170 barrels for this fiscal year to 225 barrels for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Island sources indicate that various snow-travel machines used by the villagers consumed more gas than had been anticipated.