

Award honors Alaskan, Canadian hunters

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently presented the Regional Director's Commendation Award to the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee and the Inuvialuit Game Council for development and implementation of the Agreement for Polar Bear Management in the Southern Beaufort Sea.

"This award recognizes significant contributions by individuals or organizations within the private sector toward the stewardship of public land, fish, wildlife or other natural resources in Alaska," Regional Director Walter O. Stieglitz said.

The Fish and Game Management Committee and the Inuvialuit Game Council represent the hunters of polar bears in northern Alaska and north-western Canada.

Because of their mutual concern for the welfare of the population and the nature of the shared international resource, the user groups decided on a coordinated approach to management of the resource.

The management agreement was ratified Jan. 29, 1988, and now calls for the management of polar bears on a sustained yield basis founded upon scientific information.

Provisions of the agreement are more restrictive than the provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and provide for protection of females and cubs, denning bears, hunting seasons and harvest allocation guidelines, along with stipulations for the protection of the environment.

The annual allocation of 76 bears has been divided equally between the Beaufort Sea communities of Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Barrow, Atkasuk and Wainwright in Alaska (38), and



Getting together for the award presentation were, from left, Charlie Brower, executive manager of the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Regional Director Walter Stieglitz and Andy Carpenter, chairman of the Inuvialuit Game Council.

Aklavik, Tuktoyuktuk, Inuvik and Paulutuk in Canada (38).

During the first year Alaska hunters harvested 58 bears. Although this figure is substantially above the allocation, the number of females taken, the critical component of the population,

was within sustainable limits. Forty percent (24) of the bears were taken in camps located on shore ice during spring whaling activities.

A significant number of animals taken in May represented a danger to hunters in camps. During the second

year the harvest was reduced to 24 bears, with the number of females taken within sustainable yield limits.

As hunters have become aware of the agreement and its terms, they have limited takes accordingly, Fish and Wildlife officials said.