

# Controversy

*This editorial was written by Margaret Seeganna of Nome in response to a proposal by the Fish and Game Department to close Nome River (½ to 1½ miles from the mouth) to fishing*

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Why is it that the Natives are always getting the snapping end of the whip? Natives have lived and would like to keep on living in accordance with Nature. Their lives were entwined in their environments. Environments which *they* never went out to destroy in the name of progress.

With the coming of each season the Natives anticipate and prepare for the activities of that season. The Natives participate and share in the activities of that season. There are different kinds of activities in different villages. Nature has no limits. Mother Nature puts no limits on how much the Natives should take. Nature gives or reserves what she produces. Natives have lived with this for centuries.

Be it birds, seals, walrus or whales. When there was plenty the busier the Natives were, stacking against the time that Nature was not so fruitful. Natives learned from experience how Nature takes care of its wildlife. They never complained that the wildlife was going extinct. Because our Elders said that when wildlife was scarce that Nature was building up on its wildlife stocks and that hunting or fishing would improve. Natives have great respect for Nature and *love* the lands and environments. Natives were the *first conservationists*. Mind you! There were no written laws or statements. But everyone was involved in accepting these unwritten rules and guidelines.

Why do Natives get the blame for dwindling game, and wildlife or fish and get pressured into decreasing the amount of their share of subsistence. We hear about Native subsistence being the first priority with the Game and Wildlife Department. How can Natives be convinced? The odds are always up against them. The older Natives having little or no understanding of the white language or how the laws pertaining to their hunting or fishing are structured so that they have *little or no voice in their own guidance*. So they are guided or trying to be guided by people who know little or nothing at all of the Native cultures, with guidelines that do not apply within their environment or their cultures.

There are many instances where the Natives have been restricted to hunt or fish during the normal run of the wildlife or fish. Natives are restricted to hunt or fish to give way for commercial fishing or crabbing and for sportsmen. Why not stop commercial fishing from where the Natives are subsistence fishing? There are other places that are not being fished by the Natives. The easiest solutions are to pick on Natives who were the first hunters and fishers in Alaska.

— Margaret Seeganna