

Stevens again warns against repeal

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Tundra Times Editor

The federal government is ready and willing to take over complete control of fish and game management on all federal lands in the state if an initiative to repeal the subsistence law is passed, U.S. Senator Ted Stevens told the Alaska Legislature last week.

But while Stevens spoke, a representative from the Alaska Elections Commission was telling the Alaska Federation of Natives Board of Directors that the petitions to put that initiative on the November ballot have fallen at least 1,500 names short of the necessary 17,000 signatures.

If the petition drive falls short after final review of the

names submitted for the initiative, the people submitting the petition have 30 days to get the needed signatures, according to Alaska law.

Stevens told the Legislature that he has talked with U.S. Secretary of Interior James Watt who announced he intends to take control of fish and game management, immed-

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Stevens' subsistence stand criticized by foes

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ately if the initiative repeals the amendment.

Stevens' statements were immediately criticized by anti-subsistence advocates who charged he sold out in his stand on the matter.

Warren Olson, chairman for the Alaskans for Equal Fishing and Hunting Rights called Stevens' statements a disgrace to his claimed representation of all Alaskans.

Olson contends that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act stopped any rights that Alaska Natives have to subsistence priorities.

If the federal government steps in to regulate the fish and game, it will mean that 60 percent of Alaska land will be under federal control, a situation that Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Ronald Skoog, and most members of the state Legislature don't want.

While Skoog hasn't spoken out loudly against the initiative, he told a joint meeting of the fish and game boards in Anchorage last year that the department opposes the initiative for the very reason that it will remove local control of most of the hunting and fish-

ing resources in the state.

In other developments, the AFN board of directors has agreed to open an office for the Alaskans for Sensible Fish and Game Management, the organization set up at the AFN convention in December to fight the initiative if it is placed on the November ballot.

The office will be opened in Anchorage but no specific location has been announced.

The anti-initiative campaign earned more than \$100,000 at the December AFN convention, about \$30,000 coming from contributions during the convention and the

rest coming from proceeds of a fund-raising auction held annually. Money earned in that auction usually is given to the Howard Rock Scholarship Fund but AFN officials of the Howard Rock Scholarship Foundation, which is not directly connected with the

Tundra Times, decided this year to allow proceeds from the auction to go to the subsistence issue.

Twelve scholarship fund of \$1,000 each were set up to be awarded to students from each region this year.