

NANA opens seafood processing plant in Kotzebue

A fish processing plant which opened in Kotzebue recently is providing 30 jobs to area residents during the fishing season and will be re-gearred during the winter seasons to employ at least

20 during the hunting months.

The plant, called NANA Seafoods or Taguigmiithe, was opened by NANA Development Inc., the commercial arm of the North Alaska Native Association. The plant processes chum salmon.

The plant is the only heading, gutting and gilling plant in the region, according to Pam Herman, executive assistant to NANA Region President John Schaeffer, who first had the idea to open the plant.

Before NANA Seafoods was opened, area fishermen had to ship their products to outside areas whole. NANA Seafoods is a "heading, gutting and gilling" operation which allows fishermen to ship fish which already

has the heavy heads, gills and gut removed, thus saving the fishermen money in shipping costs.

The plant is in the former Kotzebue Sound Fishing Co-op building in Kotzebue. That co-op closed in 1974.

Consultant Ken Madsen of Seafood Product Systems of Seattle, acted as advisor on the project. He has helped set up processing plants in Ketchikan and Mountain Village.

The plant now employs 30 Kotzebue area residents but may end up hiring 10 more workers before the fishing season is over, said Herman.

One advantage of the plant is the fact that, because area resi-

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NANA Seafoods opens

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dents "have been working with fish all their lives, the quality of the product is really high. People

have been telling us they are very happy with our end product," said Herman.

Distribution of the end pro-

duct is handled by the Sitka Sound Fisheries and another distributor, said Herman.

The plant was opened with

primarily NANA seed money of about \$200,000 said Herman, but a \$15,000 State Private Industry Council Grant also was obtained.

The plant will be shut down

for about a month at the end of the fishing season for re-gearing and it will open "with about 10 fewer employees" to begin processing reindeer meat, Herman said.