

# Good salmon harvest depends on old growth trees

By **BILL HESS**

*Tundra Times Staff*

Thanks to a pristine environment, Alaska holds some of the richest fish and game resources anywhere but careful planning and management of resources will be necessary to keep it that way. Dr. William Demmert, deputy commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game recently warned his peers of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood.

More than 110 million salmon were caught in Alaskan fisheries during each of the past two years, compared to about 26 million salmon caught annually along the West Coast of the Lower 48. One of the prime reasons given for this abundance of fish has been the preservation of the spawning waters for the fish, as well as measures taken to insure

that enough are allowed to return to spawn.

Dr. Demmert told the ANB and ANS members, many of them expert fishermen, that plans for the Southeast area of the state call for a total run of 45 million fish by the year 2000. Should this goal be reached, it would help reduce problems between user groups, especially for subsistence priority users. Should fishing deteriorate, then problems will increase, Demmert emphasized.

Demmert stressed that the forests in Southeast are vital to the survival of salmon there. "We know that old growth forest is needed along fish streams in order to provide protection for salmon eggs and young fry from summer heat, winter cold, and runoff from the rains. We also know that deer and probably other game require old growth timber to  
(Continued on Page Twelve)

# Old growth trees said to be vital to bountiful salmon harvest

(Continued from Page One)  
survive heavy winter snows."

Logging plays a major role in the economy of Southeast, and has the potential to play an even greater role.

Along with the U.S. Forest Service, the State and other interests, Sealaska Regional Corp. and some of the village corporations also are looking to the timber industry to earn new revenues and create more jobs.

Should the capital ever be moved from Juneau to South-central Alaska, a move which the Natives of Southeast are fighting, timber would probably be even more important as a means to replace some of the lost jobs and to help sustain an economy which would be hurt by the move.

The U.S. Forest Service plans to cut 450 million board feet of timber per year for the

next 10 years for a total goal of 4.5 billion board feet, Demmert said.

This "will require approximately 318,000 acres of Tongass National Forest lands to be cut annually," Demmert explained. "With a total of 3.3 million acres of land with harvestable timber, this theoretically means a 10.5 year cycle. At that rate, if all timber is cut, with a little left for old growth fish and game habitat requirements, there will be impacts. What are they? . . . Do these cuts take into account the lands selected by the state, and private lands selected by the Native corporations, all part of that total originally?"

It takes 300 years to grow

old timber, Demmert stated, and the normal cutting cycle is about 100 years. He also stressed that it would be essential to understand what the impacts of the proposed cuts would be on fish and game populations, and to plan for them.

A large U.S. Borax mine has been proposed near Ketchikan. "Have we looked at the impacts of a new community of up to 5,000 people, and the mine tailings from 60 tons of waste rock per day deposited in the fjord?" Demmert asked. "Will that operation alter the habitat sufficiently to require adjustments to our way of life in parts of Southeast?"

Hal Dean, of the Nishga

Tribe in Naas River, British Columbia, later told ANB-ANS of pollution and harm to marine life in that area, while conceding that safeguards could likely be taken to prevent much of the damage.

Demmert advised his peers to determine if such activities would create the need for adjustments in subsistence priorities, or in the economic, social and cultural fabric of Southeast.

Demmert stressed that because of contemporary economics and political forces at work, the fish and game department would probably have little impact on the course of future development.