

Stevens: Legislators' failure means Alaska faces 'void'

by Alexandra J. McClanahan
Tundra Times publisher

Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, told reporters last week he was saddened by the Alaska Legislature's failure to authorize a constitutional amendment on subsistence for the General Election in November.

"We have a void now," Stevens said in a press conference in his Anchorage office. "You just can't have two sets of management on one resource."

Stevens said his biggest fear about the fact that federal management of

continued on page nine

• Vote 'saddens' Stevens

continued from page one

fish and game resources on the 60 percent of Alaska owned by the federal government began July 1 is that there will be confusion and federal pressure to change management philosophy.

Federal managers prefer a "balance" in all game populations, while state managers focus on sustaining certain species at specific levels, he said. Stevens said he believes the federal takeover will mean new restrictions on hunting.

The takeover took place because the Alaska Supreme Court last December declared Alaska's subsistence law unconstitutional. Since a subsistence preference for rural users is required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, failure by the Legislature to take action mandated a federal takeover.

Stevens was asked his reaction to the fact that some groups, as well as Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, are advocating a court challenge of ANILCA, rather than solving the problem through the Legislature and the voters.

Stevens said the problem with that approach is that portions of ANILCA are believed to be "Indian legisla-

tion," authorizing Congress to protect Native people. Pressing ANILCA through the courts could lead to a Native-only preference in subsistence, he said, adding that he did not believe that was healthy for Alaska.

Such a preference is being sought by a number of Native groups throughout Alaska. Native people at a summit earlier this spring, however, decided to pursue a rural preference in the Legislature.

The Legislature, however, failed to take action authorizing a constitutional amendment to be offered to voters in November.

Stevens also sharply criticized Republicans who are seeking to close the Primary Election Aug. 28.

Although he is a Republican himself, Stevens said he strongly supports an open primary, especially because of what he termed Alaska's itinerant population.

Also, Stevens noted that the majority of voters in Alaska are not registered as either Republicans or Democrats, but that should not keep them from voting in the primary.

The senator said he was "appalled" by the effort to close the primary.