

Fed dollars target sanitation; Gov's council reports progress

Tundra Times staff

The Governor's Council on Rural Sanitation met in late March to review the progress of numerous work groups charged with hammering out long term recommendations to resolve the rural sanitation issue.

In a video conference that included sites in Anchorage, Juneau, Fairbanks and Barrow, task force members adopted two position papers, one on the Power Cost Equalization program and one on force accounting. A third paper, on regulatory flexibility, was sent back to the work group for further deliberation.

Power Cost Equalization, Revenue Sharing and Municipal Assistance - Funds from these three programs have a significant impact on the ability of village governments to afford the operations and maintenance of sanitation facilities. The council voted to support funding for these programs at current or increased levels for the fiscal year 1997 state operating budget.

Force Accounting - Force accounting is a method of construction in which a

city, village council or other grant recipient assumes the role of a general contractor and owner of a project and constructs a project using local administrative and/or labor resources. This method has been successfully used on many rural sanitation projects. The council voted to strongly support continued use of force accounting, and to urge the Legislature, state and federal agencies and general public to forego any attempts to curtail the force accounting option for rural sanitation projects.

The council will meet again in June.

In other recent sanitation developments:

- At the request of Rep. Don Young, the U.S. House of Representatives last month authorized appropriations of \$15 million per year for the next seven years for village water and wastewater improvements. The Congress will still have to specifically appropriate the money each year, and the measure passed by the House makes the federal funds contingent on matching state funds. A similar measure was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Ted Stevens.

- The U.S. House is also considering

a \$25 million appropriation, also subject to a 50 percent state match, for development and construction of water systems for rural and Native communities. A portion of federal monies targeted for these projects would be allocated for tribal set-asides.

- The Environmental Protection

Agency has awarded a \$217,413 grant to the Rural Alaska Community Action Program for the Alaska EPA Americorps Program to improve solid waste management and sanitation in Alaska Native villages through grassroots, community-based education and direct service activities.