

# Begich Concerned About Seal Harvest Ban on St. George Island

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Nick Begich of Alaska expressed his great concern this week regarding an announced plan of the Department of Commerce, and its National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to seek a ban of up to ten years on the seal harvest on St. George Island, Alaska.

Begich stated that such a ban was "a partial abandonment of the wise fur seal management policies carried on under the present North Pacific Fur Seal Convention. This Convention, and its successful fur seal recovery, were protected and left in the marine mammal bill passed by the House. Now, it

appears that the Senate and N.O.A.A. are choosing the route of a total ban."

"My primary concern," said Representative Begich, "is the cultural and economic well-being of the Pribilof Islanders, and the harvest has both economic and cultural importance, as well as being an environmental tool of recognized merit."

In a letter to Howard Pollock of N.O.A.A., the agency responsible for the harvest moratorium proposal, Congressman Begich expressed a number of concerns and requested a full report on

the proposal.

"It is strange to me," said Begich, "that the Fur Seal Convention policies, which have resulted in a fivefold increase of the seal herd since 1900, will now be abandoned for up to 10 years, at the possible expense of the people of St. George Island. There are many unanswered questions remaining."