



PURSE SEINER — Over 350 purse seiners, gill netters, and other boats are crowded into Bristol Bay near Togiak for this year's herring run. The concentration of boats has raised protests of overfishing from Native groups in the area.

Herring harvest protested

Togiak and other Bristol Bay Native fishermen are up in arms over what they call a "rape of the resource" as more than 350 fishing boats and nearly 20 foreign factory ships concentrate on the herring run there.

"There's so many boats out here that Summit Island glows at night," David Nanalook, president of the Indian Reorganization Act Village Council at Togiak said Tuesday. "We requested an emergency closure last week

but the fish and game people in Dillingham denied us."

"There's nets all over the damn country that have sunk with herring in them," Nanalook complained. "I don't think that's the way you handle a resource for the maximum benefit of everybody."

Nanalook said he and the villages he represents are primarily concerned about the expanded fishery because the herring are

the basis of the food chain in the area.

Last Wednesday, May 2, Nanalook sent a telegram to Gov. Jay S. Hammond, the Alaska congressional delegation and U. S. Secretary of Commerce Juanita Krepps and Secretary of the Interior Cecil Andrus complaining that "information concerning the Bering Sea herring stocks is deficient as to the inventory and the effects of concentrated excessive commercial purse seine efforts on immature stocks."

Calling the concentrated fishery a "national and international scandal," Nanalook accused the recipients of the telegram of violating their public trust for permitting the fishing without adequate information as to its possible effects.

As of press time on Tuesday, Nanalook said he had received no response to his telegram from anybody. "It's rough out here," Nanalook said. "I've lost count of how many boats are out there."

The fishery opened May 1, but still was not in full swing by Tuesday. Officially, the harvest guideline for the fishery is 12,000 metric tons. Last year a fleet of about 150 boats took in 7,751 metric tons.

The roe content of the

● Herring uproar

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fish is said to be high this year and prices paid are expected to be similarly high. Prince William Sound fishermen got \$1,500 a ton for their harvest earlier this year, and Sitka fishermen got \$2,000 a ton.

The fish actually never reach Alaska shores. Domestic on-shore processors buy the fish directly from the fishermen who then deliver it to company tenders where it is salted down then moved to foreign ships, usually Japanese.

The processors squeeze

the eggs from the female fish for the Japanese market, where the roe is extremely popular. In former years, the processors usually allowed the fish to rot for a few days before processing the roe and then threw the rest of the carcass away.

This process has been prohibited by recent regulations and the processors claim they will use the carcasses for other purposes rather than disposing of them.

This is the second year

that a commercial herring harvest of any size has taken place in the Togiak Village area. Just a few fishermen took a small harvest from the area three years ago.

Major spawning areas around Nelson Island are off limits to fishermen in order to conserve herring for local villagers, but Nana-look says these restrictions are not being observed.

"They are setting in areas that are usually closed to commercial fishing," Nana-

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● Herring harvest

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look said.

A further complaint of Nanalook was that the villagers were never consulted on how the fishery was to be used. He claimed, and asserted the same in his telegram, that this violated the U.S. Constitutional clause that guarantees special relationships between the government and aboriginal peoples.

"Since we the aboriginal people of the Bering Sea have a direct bilateral interest in these resources with the United States and since we have not been directly consulted on the arrangements between the North Pacific Management Council and other foreign

nations that is allocating resources directly detrimental to our sea claims rights, we therefore wish to place you on notice that violations of the public trust of your office could have serious national as well as international repercussions," the telegram read.

Nanalook said there is a local ordinance approved by the tribal council that prohibits the storage of airplane spotter fuel within the village limits without the prior approval of the [the prior approval of the elders and tribal councils.

At press time, Tuesday, Nanalook said he was seeking ways to enforce that order.