

Editorial

Self regulation

The Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), which met in Nome a couple of weeks ago, made it clear at the conclusion of their meeting that they intend to comply with the statements made by U.S. Federal District Court Judge Harold Green.

Judge Greene, when he refused to dismiss a case against state regulation brought by the village of Togiak, pointed out that it was Congress's intent, when it passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972, to permit continued hunting by the Alaska Natives as long as it was done in a non-wasteful manner, was restricted to the taking of non-depleted species, and was accomplished for specified, limited purposes.

At its meeting, the commission passed several resolutions in support of that intent. Pointing out that the inhabitants of the area have long been dependent upon that resource, most of those resolutions were directed to those inhabitants themselves.

But the resolutions are nothing new. They just formalize practices that the Eskimos have been following for generations. Hunting crews were urged to salvage as much of the animal as possible. Harvest levels are to be kept at a safe level that will not deplete the herds. And cooperation with efforts to study the walrus and its habit and habitat are encouraged.

None of this should be very surprising. Those who basically rely on a renewable, animal resource usually know better than most that wasteful practices now may mean no resource at all in the future. Nobody is more concerned about a safe continuing harvest of the walrus than those who have been dependent upon it for thousands of years.