

Over-harvest Feared—

1970 Polar Bear Season May Be in for Early Closure

The 1970 polar bear season may be closed early in order to maintain the harvest at 300 animals, the Fish and Game Department said.

Wallace H. Noerenberg, Commissioner, said that it may be necessary to close the season if the sport harvest exceeds 225 bear. This would allow for 75 animals to be taken by natives for subsistence purposes.

The closure, if necessary, will be made by emergency field announcement. The harvest is being closely monitored and guides and hunters will receive adequate notice prior to closure.

Polar bear spend the majority of their lives on ice packs which move about the circumplora region. Because the bears also are

constantly moving, it is possible that two or more countries may be harvesting from the same population, Noerenberg said.

He noted that scientists attending an international polar bear meeting held recently at Morges, Switzerland voiced considerable concern over the possible over-harvest of the animals.

Polar bear harvest figures for 1969 show that Canada took 400 animals, Alaska 300, Norway 300, and Denmark 125.

The Fish and Game Board is considering a staff proposal calling for a limit of 300 polar bears per year.

Under the proposal, applications for polar bear permits exceeded 300, a drawing would be held to distribute the permits

There is no limit to the number of permits which may be issued under the present rules.

The Fish and Game Board will act on the bear limit proposal at its April meeting in Kodiak.