

Our Congressional Delegation:

Senator Mike Gravel

There appears to be wide consensus that areas which may be included in one of the four conservation systems should remain open to traditional subsistence uses. Furthermore, most agree that in times of resource shortages, subsistence users should receive preference for those limited resources over non-subsistence users. I fully concur with these principles.

Thus, the leading questions become who are subsistence users and how should the resources be managed. On the first question I think subsistence must be defined on the basis of economic dependence, place of residence, and traditional lifestyle of the user. I don't think definitions or preferences based on race or ethnic origin are necessary, nor do such definitions serve to improve relationships among the varied citizenry of Alaska.

In regard to management of subsistence resources, I think we should retain the basic authorities now in operation. The Federal Government should remain the primary manager of habitat on Federal lands while the State should retain regulation of the uses of fish and wildlife throughout the State. In cooperation with the respective Federal managers, the State should continue to set seasons, take limits, etc. for fish and wildlife resources on all lands open to such uses.

The ingredient which has been deficient in the present system and which needs to be strengthened in the (d)(2) language is the input of local people. A system of local and/or regional boards should be created which would have principal authority in setting regulations and determining subsistence users. Actions by such boards could be subject to State or Federal veto but would serve as the primary adjudicator of fish and wildlife resources in those regions.

The State obviously will be shouldering a new burden with adoption of these special subsistence provisions. The specific language of any proposal must not describe procedures so complex as to be virtually unmanageable by the State or so costly as to not justify the objective. I intend to back a provision which would require the Federal Government to pay all or a major part of the added management costs.

Several legislative proposals dealing with subsistence are now being considered by the House Subcommittee on Alaska Lands for incorporation into a larger (d)(2) bill. Although the language in these proposals is quite different, I remain confident that there will be agreement on the general purposes, and acceptable language can be arrived at. Assuming such compromise language meets the general conditions described above, I would hope to incorporate it into my own (d)(2) proposal.