

History of the Subsistence hunting and fishing law

(Editor's Note: This is part four of a continuing history of the state subsistence hunting law as interpreted by Nunam Kitlutsisti. Nunam Kitlutsisti is the environmental arm of the Association of Village Council Presidents representing 56 Yupik Eskimo villages in the lower Yukon and Kuskokwim River area.)

THE HISTORY OF THE SUBSISTENCE HUNTING LAW 1975-1978

By Nunam Kitlutsisti

The Bethel sports hunters present had no objection to a subsistence or controlled use zone, but felt that they should have the right of continued access to the area. Several hunters felt it would help the moose population if the foreigners were kept out of the area. In the last three years, foreigners have been coming to Aniak and have gone out by local charter services into this area for sport hunting trips.

There have been no checks on whether the moose meat was ever harvested. Villagers in the area had complained bitterly about the foreign hunters coming into the region, but the local Fish and Game Advisory Board was dominated by airplane hunters who refused to act on the villagers petition to eliminate outsiders through controlled-use and subsistence zones.

The Department's moose biologist responsible for the Aniak area called a meeting there to discuss the controlled use and subsistence zones. Only airplane hunters showed up, and they voted down the proposals. No effort was made to go to the other villages that had asked for the proposals. These vil-

lages had stated that they were concerned with the moose populations and supported the proposals.

The moose biologist who had mistakenly represented the boundaries for one of the subsistence zones led several village groups to oppose that. By showing an incorrect map, she led the villagers to believe that airplane hunters would be allowed on their moose hunting areas but excluded from other areas. This would have meant the elimination of moose in their hunting area, so they voted against the proposal.

There was little effort by the Division of Game to get the correct map out to the villages that had been misinformed. In summary, the villagers in the areas affected were united in their opposition to sport hunters from outside. Bethel's meat hunters who use airplanes agreed with the villagers that the foreigners must be excluded for the moose to survive and the region to get some control over moose hunting practices.

As a result of these feelings, the local Fish and Game Advisory Boards decided to amend their proposals to provide access for the airplane hunters to a specific location. It was felt that a totally united front would be more effective at the next Board of Game meeting. Upon presentation of the amendments to those from Bethel who had opposed the proposals, the con-

flict was resolved. This still left the airplane hunters from the Aniak area opposed to the creation of the controlled-use and subsistence hunting areas.

At the Board of Game meeting, representatives of the local Fish and Game Advisory Boards presented the amended proposals, further justifications for the proposals and the fact that the opposition from a portion of those opposed to the creation of these areas had been resolved. No action was taken on the proposals until the representatives from the local Fish and Game Advisory Boards had left the meeting.

In a telephone call with a member of the Board of Game, it was learned that the Board had rejected all proposed controlled-use and subsistence hunting area proposals except a small area for controlled-use around Galena on the Koyukon River. The Board member indicated that the Board did not believe that competition really existed and that access controls had to be imposed. The Board felt that the lack of harvest tickets and harvest reports from the area documented that not enough information was available to warrant the Board's imposition of controlled-use and subsistence areas.

The Board member also

stated that the Board gave serious consideration to terminating the existing controlled-use areas until better biological information was available.

The Board member was asked if the Department staff had informed the Board that no harvest tickets or harvest reports were in the area due to the negligence of the staff and that it had been necessary to charter in harvest tickets to Russian Mission on Sept. 13, 1977, so that villagers could buy tickets before going into the controlled-use area to hunt. There were no harvest reports or tickets available in Bethel either. The Board member stated that this was not mentioned.

The Board member also stated that an airplane hunter from Sleetmute and the moose biologist responsible for the area had both addressed the Board and stated that one of the proposals was unnecessary because the only trouble in the area was one guide out of Bethel and that restrictions should not be made for the entire area due to the one man. The Board member was asked if either person discussed the Scandinavians who had been going out with the airplane hunters from Aniak into this area or the relationship of either man to the sport hunting interests in the area. The Board

member responded that these had not been discussed.

The Board member was also asked about the issue of stopping big game hunting by airplane during the open moose season. The Board member stated that that effort would not work for State law required that an emergency gun be carried in all travel. He was told that this proposal was the result of a joint agreement between the enforcement agency, the Division of Game and the region's local advisory boards. The Board member stated that neither the enforcement agency nor the Division of Game had spoken in favor of the idea.

The final question asked was why the Board continues to reject the legislative intent to identify areas where subsistence is in conflict with commercial game hunting and establish through these zones areas for Alaska subsistence hunting only. The Board member declared that the biological information did not warrant zoning due to the lack of harvest tickets and reports and field observations.

Continued Next Week