

# Bomb Bambi?

The Alaska Fish and Game Department has come up with a novel idea that, they say, will benefit subsistence hunters and fishermen.

Their proposal, submitted by a Fish and Game advisory board in Fairbanks, would strictly broaden the methods of hunting for subsistence hunters.

The avowed reason for this proposal is simple. Subsistence hunters and fishermen hunt and fish to put food in their mouths and to gain needed materials for crafts and arts work. Therefore, those hunters and fishermen should be able to take their game and fish in the most economical, efficient manner possible.

According to Clint Buckmaster, chairman of the Joint Board of Fish and Game, the proposal is being put forward to find out how far the state citizens want subsistence to go.

While we will not at this time take a stand for or against this proposal, we must comment.

One of the biggest problems facing Alaska subsistence hunters in the up-coming battle to defeat a subsistence repeat initiative is public perception.

It has been said time and time again that reality and perceived reality are two different things and often perceived reality is more important than reality itself. Thusly, it matters not to many anti-subsistence advocates that 99 percent of subsistence hunters are responsible people who use what they take and take what they need.

What matters to many anti-subsistence advocates is that they heard a while back that some subsistence hunters massacred a whole herd of something and left the bodies in the snow. And this incident has been used repeatedly against subsistence rights. Rumors about a small group of irresponsible people painted a large group of responsible people with an ugly tint.

Now comes the proposal that would allow subsistence hunters — and only subsistence hunters — to use explosives, fire and artificial lights to shoot beavers, use oversized steel traps, take game from a moving motorboat, and to have exclusive access to Dall sheep hunting in the Brooks Range and there, take three sheep per hunter instead of the current one for sports hunters.

Whether you agree with these proposals or not, please recognize and consider the effect even the suggestion of such a thing will have on voters in the upcoming initiative.

Envision the anti-subsistence lobby decrying the rights of subsistence hunters by describing them as bomb-throwing hunters who run down their prey while that prey is swimming helplessly in the water.

We can visualize the cartoons of an Alaska Native tossing a bomb at Bambi. And, remember the media flap that occurred last year when a park ranger tried to chase a moose to shore when the moose was in trouble in the water? The moose drowned and bumper stickers proclaiming "Save a Moose, Drown a Park Ranger," are pasted on the backs of pick-up trucks everywhere.

And it is this sort of word-of-mouth nonsense that is the biggest opponent of subsistence lifestyles in Alaska.

The Joint Boards of Fish and Game will meet March 22 in Anchorage to discuss the matter. We hope many people are there to listen and to watch.