

Fisheries conference scheduled

Juneau -- Gov. Jay Hammond announced his office will jointly sponsor the Aleutian/Pribilof Fisheries Conference September 5-7 at St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs.

The Alaska Native Foundation, the Aleut Corporation and the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association will co-sponsor the three-day conference involving people from the communities in the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands.

Hammond said the conference "is part of the state's program for development of a major billion-dollar bottomfish industry in Alaska. Approximately 80 percent of the bottom fish potential is in the Bering sea."

The governor said the purpose of the conference "is to raise the level of awareness of the people living in the area of the opportunity in bottomfishing and other fisheries." Currently the resident population is only minimally involved in the fishing business.

The conference is expected to involve some 150 participants including the governor's Bottomfish coordinator, Jim Edenso, and other state administration officials, state legislators, and federal representatives from the National Marine Fishery Services Economic Development Administration, Department of Com-

merce, and the Farmers Home Administration. Members of the Alaska Congressional delegation also are being invited.

The conference and workshop will include presentations by a specialist in gear and technology, vessel and plant financing and other aspects of the fishing industry.

Hammond said "with the restrictions now imposed on foreign fishing within the 200 mile limit, there is new promise for harvesting our rich bottomfish resources. This industry can and should be the backbone of a long-term, healthy, renewable resource economy for Alaska."

The governor recently announced his approval of a comprehensive plan of his bottomfish Task Force which recommended that the state spearhead development with the private sector of a dock, shipyard, transportation and other community facilities necessary to support a major bottomfish industry, as well as assist in bringing technology and training to the people who will be involved in the business.

Alaska currently is harvesting less than one percent of the maximum sustainable yield of bottomfish. The species of bottomfish include: Atka Maceral, Pacific Cod, Yellowfin Sole, other flounders, Pacific Ocean Perch, Alaska Pollock,

Sablefish (BLack Cod) and other finfish.

Hammond said his Bottomfish Task Force estimates that development of the industry could create 20,000 additional jobs in the next two decades. "It is important that the people living in the area of this rich resource benefit directly from it," he said.

The governor pointed out that the \$26 million dock at Unalaska which the American President Lines, Ltd. plans to construct to handle containerized and refrigerated fish cargo, will give the people of the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands ready access to foreign markets for their fish products.