

Tight budget forces Fish and Game cutbacks

Budget revisions are forcing severe cutbacks in Department of Fish and Game programs for the coming fiscal year, according to Commissioner Ronald O. Skoog.

As a result of the revisions, most temporary employment will be dropped and 10 full-time positions will be left vacant in the Game Division.

Also, research efforts will be reduced, including efforts at wolf control, and there will be a 50 per cent reduction in the Survey and Inventory and Di-

sease and Parasite programs. A herd census project on the Western Arctic caribou herd will be delayed for a year and there will be a reduction of field monitoring and enforcement activities.

The area offices in Bethel and Wrangell will be closed and the staff at King Salmon will be cut in half.

Skoog pointed out that in strictly dollar amounts, the coming year's budget for the Game division is only 13 per cent below the Fiscal Year 1979

budget. "However, when inflation, increases in fixed costs and other factors are calculated, the result is a drop in available operating funds of 44 per cent."

"We have been forced to make major revisions in our planned activities," Skoog said. "Long range research and management programs, informational and other services to the general public, training programs, cooperative programs with other agencies, planning, and other functions are being curtailed or decreased, just to make it possible for us to attend to the urgent day-to-day needs of the resources."

"It is particularly distressing" Skoog noted, "because we are losing much of our ability to respond quickly to unexpected resource changes and other emergency situations. This limits our effectiveness as managers, and could easily have a very detrimental effect on the resour-

ces we deal with, and upon which many Alaskans depend for their livelihood. In the end, it will be the people of Alaska who will suffer if this situation continues to exist in future years."

In the Commercial Fisheries Division, budget revisions will

force major reductions in travel, coordination, planning and training; public information programs and responsiveness to requests for data; and participation in Board and Advisory Committee meetings. In addition, there will be a loss of flexibility in dealing with in-season problems.