

Subsistence

Now, the real work begins. The joint meeting of the fish and game boards last week produced both a general policy statement and guidelines as to how subsistence regulations should be developed and implemented. For the most part, getting those tasks done falls on the shoulders of Tom Lonner, new subsistence section chief, and his small staff.

It is an awesome job, full of complexity and burdened with a myriad of political considerations, both direct and indirect, many of which have little or nothing to do with the basic question of how to best manage Alaska's fish and game resources to the benefit of all of the state's citizens.

The policy statement and the guidelines, which are printed elsewhere in this week's paper, seem a little thin or vague in some places and somewhat arbitrary in others. They are obviously the products of a large committee, a compromise among members who hold differing views and who interpret the issue in different ways.

Still, it is a beginning, and it could be worse. The boards could have attempted to give a final specific definition to the word "subsistence" without having at their hands the data and scientific evidence that would give the term real meaning. It is Lonner's task to provide that data.

It is not an enviable task, but at least he has some of the flexibility and a general framework in which to begin, without his hands being tied by arbitrary definitions.