

# Unnecessary Restrictions

WASHINGTON, D. C. — In response to a letter of protest from Senator Mike Gravel (Democrat-Alaska), the Department of Commerce's National Marine Fisheries Service has agreed to public hearings on proposed limitations of "Authentic Native Articles of Handicraft and Clothing."

Senator Gravel, who favors Alaska as the site for the hearings, explained today that the Department's proposals "represent unnecessary restrictions on creativity and interfere with the livelihood of many of our State's residents."

"We're not going to stand by while a group of government bureaucrats decide our fate," the Senator exclaimed.

He said that the response from Robert Schoning, Director of the Marine Fisheries Service indicated that the hearings will be held next month, probably in Anchorage.

Under the current law, Alaska Natives are exempt from the moratorium on the taking of marine mammals, providing it is for subsistence living or for creating and selling authentic Native handicrafts or clothing.

The new proposals will very narrowly define and restrict exactly which items can be produced and sold as "authentic" handicrafts.

Senator Gravel recently cosponsored legislation authorizing \$5.3 million over the next three years to set up and maintain crafts workshops in Alaska and other eligible states.

"That bill aims at encouraging Native crafts; the restrictions proposed by the Marine Fisheries Service would have just the opposite effect," he stated.

In the original letter from Senator Gravel protesting the Department's actions, the Alaska Democrat charged that the new regulations "would make still worse the unnecessary restrictions that are being imposed under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, some of which are becoming intolerable to Alaska.

"Alaskans are greatly affected by this action," he declared, "and justice demands that they be given an adequate opportunity to be heard."