

Summit supports predator, waste control

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Three resolutions designed to enhance the stocks of fish and game throughout the state were passed last weekend by the Alaska Legislature's Subsistence Summit Group which has formed to tackle the volatile issue of subsistence and sport and commercial fishing and hunting in the state.

The resolutions call for an increased effort to control predators — mainly wolves — which cut down on moose and caribou herds; to increase the use of controlled burns

and other methods to improve the forest habitat for game; and the mandatory imprisonment of anyone found to deliberately waste game meat.

The meeting was called to discuss specific problems affecting the enhancement of game in the state including controlled burns, predators and wanton waste.

The group also was to have received a report of the effect of the passage of the subsistence statute on fish and game populations in the state but William Demmert, the Fish and

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Subsistence

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Game representative on the group, said it is still too early to get those numbers.

He said that a report may be forthcoming at the Fish and Game meeting in December.

The resolutions were passed after reports from Fish and Game and Bureau of Land Management personnel on the benefits and drawbacks of controlled burns, predator control and control of wanton waste.

Jules B. Tilliston from the BLM said that controlled burning is viewed as beneficial in areas where moose are declining because the burns return the forest vegetation to an earlier state.

He said that a burn in the Fairbanks area in 1949 enabled a moose herd outside that area to reach a peak about 15 years later.

Predator control also is viewed as essential to increase the moose population and the group recommended that the wolf reduction program be continued.

Acting upon the recommendation of Alaska Federation of Natives representative Roy Huhndorf who also is the Cook Inlet Region, Inc., chairman, the group included a recommendation that local residents be included in any attempt to hunt predators.

Huhndorf had recommended that a bounty be placed on wolves but the fish and game representative said that with wolf pelts bringing as much as they are, he doubted that a bounty would add much incentive.

Although the topic of wasting edible meat has been a hot spot in the subsistence issue, a Game Board representative said the problem isn't great.

Tom Scarborough of the Alaska Sportsman's council recommended that an education program be instituted in the Native villages to show the residents how to preserve meat. Scarborough contended that much meat brought in by subsistence hunters is wasted due to improper preservation methods.

He also recommended that village-wide cold storage lockers be constructed to aid in better meat preservation.

Huhndorf contested that recommendation by saying that if meat is wasted by hanging out it is usually because village hunters are forced by the hunting season to shoot their meat while the weather is still too warm. He recommended that seasons for the village areas be sahped around the weather so that meat hanging for use can be put out when the weather is colder for better preservation. The group supported that recommendation.

Although few hard facts and figures were available on the effect of subsistence activities on game and fish stocks, a partial report on subsistence use of the Nelchina Caribou herd was given by a Game Board representative.

There are 1600 permits issued to hunt that herd, 150 of which were for Tier II or subsistence users. The game board would grant permits to up to 150 subsistence users and if more than 150 persons applied, the overflow applicants would be placed in the

general drawing for other permits.

The Game Board representative said that only 54 Tier II permits were sought. But upon questioning from Huhndorf, the representative admitted that he had heard numerous complaints about the manner of publicizing the application process for those permits. He said that an advertisement was printed in a local newspaper and some radio advertisements were broadcast but many subsistence users were in fishing camp and may have missed those notifications.

Rep. Ken Fanning presented a state publication which included notification of the subsistence classification for the Nelchina herd but admitted it is only mailed out to persons who have obtained licenses in the past.

State Sen. Vic Fischer and Rep. Eric Sutcliff both said they had never heard of that publication and Huhndorf pointed out that most subsistence users haven't had permits in the past so wouldn't have received that paper.

As the afternoon wore on the crux of the subsistence battle was brought out by state Rep. Ramona Barnes of Anchorage who talked about many of her Anchorage-based constituents who traditionally have been able to go down on the Kenai to fish for unlimited King Salmon but who are now restricted from "filling their freezers as they always have. Most of the people I know in South Central

(Alaska) go fishing and consider themselves subsistence users — that is, personal use users — They, too, have

traditionally fished to put food in their freezer and now they can't and they resent

the fact that any part of society has access that they don't have."