

# 'Framework guidelines' approved

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Tundra Times

Regulations that will allow the Department of Fish and Game to begin public hearings to seek comment on the takeover of marine mammal management in the state were approved late Monday by the Alaska Board of Game.

*(Because the Game Board took its action so close to our deadline, the Tundra Times will publish a full account of the action and its meaning in the April 18 issue.)*

The board unanimously approved three proposed regulations that will be one step in

the complicated process of state takeover and does not mean that the state will necessarily assume control of the marine mammals.

That point was one which board member Sarah Scanlan of Anchorage stressed as the board

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finally made its decision. Board members were concerned that their action would give the appearance to the public that they had made their decision in spite of testimony that tended to lean against takeover at the worst and in favor of caution at the best.

Of 23 people testifying at a public hearing last weekend, nine favored takeover, nine opposed it and five wanted more public comment, according to Brenda Johnson of Nome, the Board Chairman.

The regulations adopted by the board do three things. It establishes a framework for doing the necessary studies to provide information to support a takeover request.

It defines the "optimum sustainable population which is a population of marine mammals that is the largest supportable within the ecosystem while reproducing at a maximum level.

It also specifies the sea mammals for whom takeover is being sought as the sea otters, sea lions, ribbon seals, bearded seals, ringed seals, beluga whales, polar bears, walrus, harbor seals and spotted seals.

Before adopting the regulations, Scanlan voiced concern that they might be adopted without adequate comment from the villages that would be affected by the takeover. The federal government has mandated that subsistence use must receive a priority if the state decides to hold non-subsistence hunts. Villagers from the coast also must be given priority in terms of economic benefit from the hunt but Scanlan still said

she was not assured that the villagers would feel they had been listened to.

Representatives of the Kawerak Inc., non-profit regional corporation for the Bering Straits region, Nunan Kilutitsi, the environmental arm of the Association of Village Council Presidents, some Nunivak Islanders and individual villagers all asked that they be given more voice in regulations about marine mammal.

Caleb Pungowiyi of Kawerak said he was concerned that if non-Natives were allowed to hunt walrus, as regulations might allow, that walrus ivory might flood the market as mass reproductions produced in Seattle and harm village economies.

Matthew Iyta of the Alaska Walrus Commission said he is concerned that mostly outsiders would be able to conduct hunts in the area.

Paul Kiunya Sr. of Kipnuk said he thought outside guides, not villagers, would earn money from the hunt. "Nobody is going to get rich in the villages. Nobody is going to feed their families."

Now that the "framework" regulations have been approved, the Department of Fish and Game will begin hearings in the coastal villages to seek comment from villagers on their thoughts and suggestions on whether the marine mammals should be taken over and, if so, how that should be implemented.

Another scientific hearing will be held to gather information on the optimum sustainable population and that process will include comments from villagers as well as scientists.