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Anchorage, Alaska

Walrus hunting may be exempted

By LAURY ROBERTS

The likelihood that hunting of walrus by Alaskan Natives may soon be exempt from state regulation, has officials wondering how the use of tusk ivory can be managed.

The 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act imposed a moratorium on walrus hunting, but allowed Natives to continue to take a certain number of walrus for the purposes of subsistence and creating handicrafts. The law also permitted the state to petition the federal government—which it did immediately—to regain management authority.

During the past three years of state control, coastal villages were allotted walrus on a quota basis, totalling 2,300 animals per year. This was recently raised to the federal limit of 3,000. Ivory was initially regulated by a permit system for the buyer and seller.

After requests from villagers, the Alaska Board of Game a year ago replaced the permit system with a tagging method. Now, once the tusk has been sealed, there is no restriction on how the owner may dispose of it.

This month a U.S. District Court judge denied a motion to dismiss a case filed by Alaska Legal Services challenging the state's authority to regulate Native take of walrus. The case stems from the arrest of two Togiak residents who allegedly illegally hunted walrus on sanctuary islands in Bristol Bay. The hunters were never prosecuted, however.

While the lawsuit still is technically unresolved, the opinion in the denial for dismissal, which acknowledges the Native exemption from regulation, likely will be issued as a final judgement.

"We've proved our case, the judge agrees. Only the procedural steps are left," said Don Clocksin, chief counsel for Alaska Legal Services. "We're not willing to wait. Walrus time is now. We'll insist on immediate action from the feds."

The order has left state officials in a quandary over the ivory question. "I didn't read into the decision that state management of ivory is pre-empted," said Greg Cook, executive director of the Board of Game. "Can the use of ivory and the taking of walrus

be separated?" Cook's comments came during a meeting last week among representatives from several state departments.

Much ivory leaves the state in the hands of "outside" firms which fly into villages and drop a lot of cash. Without the former permit system in effect there is ready enticement for a black market ivory trade.

"There will be a greater black market and less ivory for carving under an open process and no regulation at all," said Ron Somerville, Game Division director for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

While Assistant Attorney General, Liza Fussner, said there would be no "immediate imposition" of the court decision, Clocksin told officials, "This group of people will have absolutely no authority over what you're talking about."

The group agreed to refer the dilemma to the Alaska Walrus Commission, comprised of representatives from six whaling villages who first convened the panel last summer in Gambell. The commission was expected to consider the ivory trade question at its April 24 meeting in Nome.



EXCHANGE SIGNED — Guy Martin (left), Asst. Secretary for Land and Water Resources, Dept. of Interior; Joseph G. Wilson, President and Chairman of Goldbelt, Inc., the Juneau-based Native urban corporation; and Rupert Cutler, Asst. Secretary for Conservation, Research, and Education; seal deal exchanging Southeast lands. See story, Page Three.

Beaufort Sea sale reviewed

Public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed December Beaufort Sea oil and gas lease sale is scheduled for mid-May and June. The North Slope, the area most affected by the sale, has reservations whether the sale should go forward as planned and is critical of the DEIS released in March. The region's views on the sale and the impact statement were prepared by the North Slope Borough's public information office and are printed as submitted below. Further comment is invited on this major issue which affects all Alaskans. Ed.

By William H. DuBay
NSB Information Office
for the Tundra Times

The office of BLM's Alaska Outer Continental Shelf has announced the hearings to be held to receive official public commentary on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Beaufort Sea Federal/State Oil and Gas Lease Sale scheduled for this December.

Hearings are set in the following places: the new community center at Kaktovik on May 15; in the all-purpose room of the school building at Nuiqsut on May 16, in Fairbanks on May 17, and in the assembly room of the North Slope Borough headquarters in Barrow on June 4.

Public hearings on the North Slope Communities will start at 7:30 p.m. The hearing in Fairbanks will begin at 9 a.m. in the Schaible Auditorium at the University of Alaska.

Presiding officer for the hearings will be Hank Nolden, chief of the Environmental Assessment Branch in the Minerals Division for BLM in Washington, D.C.

The Draft Statement

The DEIS consists of two volumes containing 387 pages of text along with 200 more pages of bibliography and appendices plus some 12 separate maps. It is available on a first-come-first-served basis at the OCS Office, 700 A Street, in Anchorage. The statement concerns the environmental impact of the proposed sale which involved 86 blocks consisting of 514,193 acres of mostly submerged lands in the near-shore area of the Beaufort Sea. The acreage lies between the Canning River and the Simpson Lagoon. Because of the jurisdictional dispute over some of the property, the Federal government and the State of Alaska have decided

to hold the sale jointly and resolve the jurisdictional disputes at a later date.

In summary, the DEIS states that all blocks pose some degree of pollution risk to the environment. The risk potential is related to adverse effects on the environment and other resource uses which may result principally from accidental or chronic oil spills. Socioeconomic effects from onshore development will have State, regional, and local implications.

The report remarks by way of introduction:

Several mitigated measures may be applied which will reduce the type, occurrence, and extent of adverse impact associated with this pro-

(See BEAUFORT, Page Seven)

Hopson leads delegation to Greenland inauguration

Mayor Eben Hopson led a 12-person delegation to Godthaab, Greenland, Wednesday to attend the inauguration of Greenland's home rule government on May 1, 1979.

Mayor Hopson was invited to participate in the inaugural as Chairman of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. In addition to addressing Greenland's new "Landstring" or assembly, Hopson will convene a meeting between the Inuit Circumpolar Conference Executive Committee and leaders of Greenland's "landsstyre" or parliamentary leadership.

Accompanying Hopson to Greenland will be State Representative Phillip Guy, (D-Kwethluk), and former State Senator Willie Hensley, Kotzebue. Hopson will also be accompanied by his wife, Rebecca, staff aides, Jon Buch-



North Slope Borough Mayor
Eben Hopson

holdt and Emily Nusunginya, North Slope Borough Legal Consultant Charles Cranston; and Rev. Charles White, former pastor of Barrow's Upkeagviak Presbyterian church, now an NSB consultant on circumpolar affairs.

While in Greenland, Hopson will meet with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference's Executive Committee and Greenlandic community leaders about Greenland's official participation in the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

Hopson is traveling to Greenland at a time when Danish foreign service officers are visiting Alaskan communities to build upon the new Alaska-Denmark bottom fisheries agreement recently negotiated by the Hammond administration. Greenland's participation in the new Alaska-Denmark fisheries cooperation will be discussed.



Former State Senator
Willie Hensley

April 25, 1979