

Stevens seeks to 'right D-2 wrong'

One of U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens' "Number One targets in this congressional session will be to right the wrong done to sports hunters" when hunting on some federal lands was restricted to local residents only.

Speaking at his last at-home press conference held before the opening of this congressional session, Stevens promised to continue his battle to open some 12 million acres of land to hunters no matter where they live.

Stevens said the lands he wishes to open to sports hunters is land which was closed to them with the passage of provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Act.

Those provisions stated that certain lands surrounding federal parks such as the Gates of the Arctic, Wrangell-St. Elias preserves and Mount McKinley

National Park, can only be hunted by local residents.

Hunters from other areas outside the local area cannot hunt in the area.

Stevens called the provisions, which he said were added by the "Alaska Coalition" of environmental groups, grossly unfair to sports hunters. He said it can result in bad game management because of possible depletion of game resources in other areas where great numbers of sports hunters are forced to hunt.

Stevens said he expects opposition to his plan from many of the "Alaska Coalition" again this year but he also said he expects other environmental groups to support the proposal because it will result in good game management.

"It makes no sense to have the areas open to hunting only for those who live in the area,"

he said.

Stevens also said he will introduce a bill to allow fishermen to use tax money which has been set aside for improving and replacing fishing vessels to also use that money to improve and develop on-shore processing plants.

Such tax money can now only be used for off-shore vessels. Allowing the money to be used for on-shore improvements would allow the development of sites to process bottomfish, a rapidly growing coastal industry.

Stevens said he also will support a federal move to force tougher drunk driving laws on states by withholding federal highway money if such measures aren't imposed.

He said he expects that eastern and midwestern legislators will again lead a move to strip tax revenues from Alaska.