

Aleuts Ask Sea Subsistence Protection

Traditionally, the Aleutian people of Alaska were island and water people. They lived from the sea.

Also, more recently, the Aleuts suffered bitterly under the Russians.

To fit their peoples' unique land claims need, a new concept involving protection of "water subsistence rights" is expected to be injected into the Senate Interior Committee's discussion of Native Land Claims by the Aleut League.

The Aleut League, representing several hundred urban, lower 48 and Aleutian Chain Aleuts expects to write the Interior Committee about a plan to give Aleuts "exclusive water rights" to 50 mile stretches of water and land near village hunting sites.

According to Aleut League president Ilidor Philemenof, who was interviewed by the Anchorage Daily News, the Aleut proposal asks for "exclusive

(Continued on page 6)

Aleuts . . .

(Continued from page 1)

rights for 25 miles on either side of the village-designated hunting and fishing spots to five miles offshore and five miles inland.

"From the standpoint of the Aleuts, the claims bill should recognize our peoples' tremendous subsistence on the sea," Philemenof told "the Aleut League" at their meeting last week in Anchorage.

"The land is not that much of a question since we didn't have that much land," he said.

According to Les Miller, attorney for the League, the Aleuts will ask that Congress give some protection to the Aleuts' means of subsistence: the sea.

"To the extent that Congress can, without interfering with international and national law, protect the rights to the sea where the Aleuts derive their livelihood, we hope that some "water rights" can be worked out in the claims settlement," Miller said.

The proposal for sea protection would apply only to existing villages or campsites, not to abandoned village areas, the attorney said.

The Aleut League is also concerned that what Philemenof called "an unfair provision" which requires establishment of proof of one quarter blood may harm his people's land claims position.

Philemenof was the only Alaska Native who testified before the Senate Interior Committee at its recent hearings. Other Native groups decided to wait for announcement of the administration land claims bill provisions and then testify at later Senate Interior Committee hearings.