

Whaling may face no more challenges

The Associated Press

Fairbanks — Unless there's an unexpected decline in the population of bowhead whales, the secretary of International Whaling Commission says it's unlikely there will be further attempts to abolish subsistence whaling.

"We have a specific management policy on subsistence hunting that says we should take into account the cultural and nutritional perceptions of

people who depend on the population in this way," according to Ray Gambell, the IWC's secretary since 1976.

"The biological factor is not the only one. So, at the moment, there isn't a specific challenge that would bring about an end to bowhead whaling."

Gambell, who's on vacation from his job at the IWC's offices in Cambridge, England, is a visiting professor at

the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.

The IWC does hope to impose a worldwide "pause" in commercial whaling, beginning in the winter of 1984-85, so that research can be conducted on whale populations and biology, Gambell said. But the "pause" will not ap-

ply to subsistence whaling, he said.

Concern over declining bowhead numbers prompted the IWC in 1977 to propose an end to subsistence hunting by Alaska Eskimos. In response, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission was formed, and the whalers negotiated a quo-

ta system that allowed them to continue to hunt.

The 1984 and 1985 quotas, totaling 45, amount to an annual harvest of about one-half of one percent of the estimated population — well below the 2.5 percent harvest rate considered safe for other whale species.