

Measure now awaits Sheffield's signature

Subsistence bill passed by Legislature

by **Jim Benedetto**

Tundra Times editor

The Senate and House gave eleventh-hour approval to a bill which limits the subsistence preference to rural residents of Alaska, narrowly avoiding the threatened takeover of fish and game management on state land by the federal government.

The Department of Interior had set a deadline of June 1 for state action to guarantee the subsistence preference as required under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Some state legislators attempted to force the issue with the federal government by attaching a "needs-base" amendment to the subsistence bill, which would have required those intending to qualify for subsistence rights to prove their income was below the federal poverty level. The amendment, attached to the bill by Sen. Rick Halford (R-Chugiak), would have placed the bill in direct opposition to federal law, which prohibits restricting subsistence on the basis of income level.

Halford's version of the bill was re-

jected by the Senate 11-9. Those voting for the Halford version were: Don Bennett (R-Fairbanks); Jack Coghill (R-Nenana); Edna DeVries (R-Palmer); Jan Faiks (R-Anchorage); Paul Fischer (R-Soldotna); Rick Halford (R-Chugiak); Tim Kelly (R-Anchorage); Betty Fahrenkamp (D-Fairbanks); and Pat Rodey (D-Anchorage).

On the House side, the bill was quickly approved late Saturday night, by a vote of 24-16, but was scheduled for reconsideration on Sunday.

Those voting against passage of the subsistence legislation that would avert federal takeover of fish and game management over 60 percent of the state, were: Reps. Virginia Collins (R-Anchorage); Sam Cotten (D-Eagle River); Mike Davis (D-Fairbanks); Steve Frank (R-Fairbanks); Walter Furnace (R-Anchorage); Alyce Hanley (R-Anchorage); Roger Jenkins (R-Anchorage); Ronald Larson (D-Palmer); Andre Marrou (L-Homer); Terry Martin (R-Anchorage); Mike W. Miller (R-North Pole); Fritz Pettyjohn (R-Anchorage); Randy Phillips (R-Eagle River); John Ringstad (R-Fairbanks); Mike Szymanski (D-



Eskimo woman drying fish near Onion Portage.

photo by Robert Belous

Anchorage); and Rick Uehling (R-Anchorage).

Gov. Sheffield is expected to sign the legislation if it wins final approval in the House.

In a prepared statement issued by the Governor's Office after the Senate

vote on Friday, Sheffield said that he looked forward "to signing this measure into law so that fishermen and hunters across the state can know what the rules are. Our long struggle to bring fairness and enforceability to our fish and game laws is almost over."