

RurAL CAP concludes energy workshop

On January 9 & 10, the first of three citizens participation workshops on bush energy problems was conducted by the Rural Alaska Community Action Program at Circle Hot Springs. The choice of this geothermal (natural steam) site was a suggestive one, since one of the main objectives of the workshops was to "familiarize delegates with alternate energy resources to aid in community

and village energy planning."

The most important objective to these energy workshops was to give rural residents a hearing ear with regards to their energy problems: "The problems of providing electric power and heat are becoming a real concern all over the nation," said Sherry Valentine, RurAL CAP's energy director. "Especially here in village Alaska, the problem of providing affordable energy is be-

coming a matter of economic survival."

In the first workshop, delegates from Arctic Slope, Doyon, and Ahtna regions representing interior Alaska seemed very enthusiastic over the *similarity* of the problems they discovered they often share. High cost of fuel, lack of bulk storage capacity, poor housing design and insulation, the high cost of transportation, and the fact that

many villages do not yet have electricity, were all listed as very real problems currently facing rural people.

Surprisingly, the problems listed above were basically identical to the ones unearthed at the workshops held in Bethel on January 17 & 18, and Cordova January 24 & 25. And an interest in alternative energy, specifically wind and water power, remained a common denominator in each and every workshop.

As a resolution, the Circle Hot Springs group gave their support to RurAL CAP's efforts towards bush energy problems, especially in the form of these workshops.

In another resolution, the group urged Governor Hammond not to require a "one window" approach of all state agencies in dealing with the Northwest Alaskan Natural Gas

Pipeline before at least one public hearing is held, to allow for input from rural communities. The concern behind this recommendation is that the State Pipeline Coordinators Office has limited experience in dealing with rural Alaska communities, in contrast to other long-established agencies that would, nonetheless, be required to work through the SPCO.

All the information RurAL CAP obtained through these workshops will be channeled into the Citizens Participation Conference scheduled to be held in Juneau during the first week in March. From that conference, it is hoped that solid solutions to the often-critical energy problems plaguing rural Alaskans will be arrived at. Says Ms. Valentine, "we hope the new ideas generated will become the foundation of new energy policies and legislation for Alaska."