

Steps Made to Move Fur Seal Research to Alaska

The first step toward moving the Federal fur seal research program to Alaska has been taken by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

C. Howard Baltzo, program director, said the bureau has asked for funds for suitable laboratory facilities in Alaska for its seal research work. The location has not been chosen, but it could be in Western Alaska to bring it closer to the fur seal harvest in the Pribilof Islands.

Baltzo also said the bureau was "making progress" toward transferring the administration of the entire fur seal program to the Alaska division from the Northwest regional headquarters in Seattle. It will "almost certainly" be

transferred to Juneau within the next year or two, he said.

Processing of the fur seals is handled primarily by Fouke Fur Co. of St. Louis. An experimental contract with Pierre Laclede Fur Co. was terminated this year; three other smaller firms, including Pacific Seal Co. of Anchorage, are experimenting with small lots of pelts "in hopes of someday competing with Fouke."

The harvest for this year is expected to be 55,000 bachelor seals and 15,000 surplus females. Baltzo noted that the fur market was now poor on an international scale, and profits from the seals could be down.