

Sheffield applauds court decision on Delta geese

Special to the Tundra Times

JUNEAU — Governor Bill Sheffield applauded the federal district court's dismissal of a lawsuit brought against the cooperative Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta plan to protect four species of geese. The plan, developed by the State of Alaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta villagers, and the State of California is designed to reduce the take of four species of Arctic nesting geese.

"I am very pleased that the court's decision allows the cooperative plan to continue," said the governor. "This means that cooperation between government and the residents of the delta to protect the birds can go on. The court's decision provides support for this year's cooperative effort to halt declines in these goose populations."

On January 24, the federal district court issued a final judgement in *Alaska Fish and Wildlife Federation and Outdoor Council v. Jantzen*, dismissing all of the plaintiffs' claims.

The plaintiffs sought to block im-

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plementation of the plan because they claimed it would not be effective in reducing the harvest of geese.

The governor said that the cooperation shown by residents of the delta was recognized by the court. "The residents of the delta have pitched in to make this plan work to protect the geese. The people of the delta are to be commended for reducing the harvest of geese in our cooperative effort to resolve this important resource problem."

The court also agreed with the Alaska Federation of Natives, in-

tervenors in the suit, and held that the implementation by Congress of the migratory bird treaty of 1918 between the U.S. and Canada did not prohibit subsistence spring waterfowl harvests in Alaska. However, it appears that there are other avenues available to regulate the harvest of waterfowl.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta goose management plan resulted in agreement to halt the harvest of cackling Canada geese, the species in greatest decline, by Alaska subsistence and sport hunters, and by California hunters. It also substantially reduces the take of white-front, black brant, and emperor geese, and provides for monitoring, verification, and enforcement.