

AFN speaks on subsistence

The Alaska Federation of Natives regards the failure of the State Senate leadership to deal responsibly with the subsistence issue during the past session as extremely unfortunate for all Alaskans. Despite the best efforts of the Sheffield administration and the prompt cooperation of the House of Representatives, the Senate refused to act. That failure now has the effect of creating a political and economic confrontation among Natives and non-Natives; rural and urban residents; and commercial, sport and subsistence users. It is a situation which rural Alaskans did

not want and worked diligently to avoid.

The irony is that, at least in the short run, those Alaskans who will be most harmed by the resulting regulatory chaos will be urban residents, particularly those involved in sport or commercial uses. But there should be no doubt as to the long-term intention: the destruction of the subsistence priority for rural Alaskans. This threat to the survival of those who depend most heavily on fish and game is now a primary concern of AFN, particularly because the Senate's failure to act has now placed

Alaska out of compliance with requirements of Federal law.

At its March meeting, the AFN Board of Directors voted to seek (under the authority of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) federal intervention and oversight in the management of Alaska fish and game, if the State Legislature failed to act on the Governor's amendatory legislation. It is important to note that the AFN Board did not take such action immediately but chose to give the Legislature every opportunity to remedy the situation here in Alaska. Respon-
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sible action by elected State officials has always been regarded by AFN as preferable to any federal intervention. Now, however, the actions of a handful of Senators, under intense lobbying pressure from such groups as the Outdoor Council, have regrettably left us with no alternative.

During the next several weeks, AFN, in concert with regional and village organizations, will examine alternative strategies for seeking federal intervention and oversight. AFN is currently in consultation with attorneys to select the most appropriate steps to implement this policy.

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