

RurAL CAP supports Sheffield on subsistence

The series of House Resources Committee hearings on the imminent crisis over allocation of fish and game resources, saw rural interests speak out strongly in favor of passage of the Governor's Subsistence bill before this legislative session comes to a close. The bill was introduced following the recent Alaska Supreme Court decision in the Madison case, which struck down state regulations that effectively determined who is and is not eligible for subsistence hunting and fishing permits. As a result, so many more people are now eligible for subsistence permits, that it will put a severe strain on the state's fish and game resources.

Speaking on behalf of the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), Gordon Jackson, as RurAL CAP Board President, stated: "Through their regulations, the Fish and Game Boards have been doing a good job of managing this situation for the past three years. Without some mechanism for maintaining that order, chaos will result." Jackson was echoing the sen-

timents of a resolution passed by RurAL CAP's Board of Directors at their quarterly meeting in Juneau last month.

Jackson continued, "If something isn't done soon to correct the problems resulting from the Madison decision, the State may be forced to stop all commercial and sport fishing during the coming season in order to accommodate the increased number of people who, in the absence of effective regulation, are able to get subsistence permits. The Legislature must take action before this session is over."

RurAL CAP's Subsistence Department Director, Vernita Zilys, also testified in favor of prompt action on the Governor's bill. "Governor Sheffield's subsistence bill would restore order to the harvesting of fish and game, by more strictly defining personal use and subsistence use of fish and game," she said. "The bill would insure that those who are most dependent on the resources for their survival would have access to those resources."