

Limited entry study examined

If you sold, traded or bartered fish on the Upper Yukon and Lower Tanana rivers anytime between 1960 and 1975, the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission wants to talk to you.

According to Henry Mitchell, *Subsistence Director* for the Tanana Chiefs Conference in Fairbanks, the commission will be conducting a study in July and August to determine if the limited entry program meets the needs of the commercial fishermen in the Upper Yukon.

"The study is the result of numerous complaints and law suits by fishermen who did not know permits were required or felt they were discriminated against under the point system," Mitchell said.

When the Board of Fisheries established limited entry for the Upper Yukon, the point system was based on past participation over a six-year period, 1970-75. However, a commercial fishery did not exist on the Upper Yukon until 1974.

"Many people did not know the interim period would be closed so quickly, or else they were in the military or working on the pipeline at the time," Mitchell pointed out.

"Because the fishery was in its infant stage people were just not aware about fishing commercially and what it meant. There weren't many fish buyers for the commercial fisheries until about 1974, and many people just didn't bother to get a permit."

Because of those complaints and lawsuits, the legislature adopted two bills and a resolution relating to the Upper Yukon fishery during the last session. One bill establishes a *Legislature Limited Entry Study Committee* to review the legal and social and economic impact of limited entry and to determine whether limited entry in the fresh water fisheries like the Upper Yukon has caused unjust discrimination.

House Bill 290 requires registration of all Upper Yukon fishery participants to determine

how many unfairly excluded from the limited entry program, and Senate Concurrent Resolution SCR 22 directs the Limited information of fishermen who participated since 1960 and were not issued a permit.

Participation could include the barter and sale of fresh, smoked, and dried fish products.

Study teams made up of personnel from the entry commission and from the Tanana Chiefs Conference will be visiting all towns and villages as well as fish camps on the Upper Yukon and the Lower Tanana.

The commission is billing the study as a "registration". However, this registration is not an application for a permit. The information collected will be taken back to the legislature in

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January and might be used to broaden the class of activities that are considered to be commercial fisheries.

"All fishermen and their assistants whose catch was used for purposes other than personal and family consumption and who feel they should be allowed to apply for a permit are encouraged to talk with the study team," said Mitchell.

This applies to those who did not have a commercial gear license or registration in the past as well as those who have al-

ready been awarded an entry permit.

Interested fishermen should watch for public notices giving dates and locations when the study teams will be available in each area.

Exact times of arrival will be announced over the radio a day or two before the teams arrive in a village. Stops will also be made at fish camps along the rivers.

The tentative schedule calls for both teams to visit Nenana, Manley, and Minto the week of July 10-15. One group will then

fly to Eagle July 18 and work their way down river.
