

Nuiqsut and Kinalina dropped from hunt

Claiming that two villages, Nuiqsut and Kivalina, have traditionally landed few whales, the two villages were dropped from a list of villages which would be able to hunt for bowhead whales by 1983 under new quotas proposed by the Department of Commerce.

In 1982 and 1983 the village of Nuiqsut will be barred from hunting the bowhead whale and Kivalina will be barred from hunting bowheads in 1983.

The International Whaling Commission has proposed a three-year quota of 45 whales landed or 65 struck, whichever comes first. The United States is required to enforce the quota because it is a member of IWC.

The IWC quota has been a source of intense controversy among the North Slope Natives who depend on the whales for food. Environmentalists who

have also been in this controversy, although they do not have the immediate nutritional need faced by the Inupiat, claim that the subsistence whale hunts are endangering the bowhead whales whose population may number about 2,264 whales.

The IWC quotas have been in effect since 1978, but the quotas proposed by the IWC and conveyed to the Inupiat by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are phasing out subsistence whaling activities of the Inupiat.

The quotas proposed by NOAA would force subsistence whaling to decline from 17 whales landed or 25 struck in 1981 to 15 landed or 22 struck in 1982 to 13 landed or 18 struck in 1983.

The decline in the quotas are in the IWC's response to concerns that the whale population

would decline even if there were no hunting.

Nine villages will share in the quotas. Barrow will have the largest quota at four whales landed or six to seven struck.

Federal officials say they are eager to get responses from Natives before they make the controversial restrictions permanent. Dr. Lynn Haines, NOAA biologist, said, "There's nothing sacred about these numbers. If the Eskimos have something they'd prefer, we'd like to hear from them."

Under international law, the Alaska Eskimos are the only people allowed subsistence bowhead whale hunting.

Haines said NOAA tried to stay closely with the quotas set by the Eskimo Whaling Commission in cutting whaling to Nuiqsut and Kivalina. Used in obtaining these figures for the proposed takes were population and historical takes.

In October 1980, NOAA asked for comments before setting the proposed quotas. NANA Regional Corporations was the only one representing Native interests, while representatives from Defenders of Wildlife, Whale Center, Greenpeace, National Wildlife Federation and Environmental Defense Fund made their comments. The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission

was not listed as being heard from.

Comments on the proposed quotas will be accepted by NOAA until February 27, nearly two weeks following the planned Alaska Eskimo Whaling captains meeting to be held in Barrow February 11 to 14.

In 1983 the IWC will meet next to reconsider the quota system.