

Tagging Rules Proposed for Walrus Catches

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed new regulations which would require "reporting and sealing" of all walrus, polar bear, and sea otter catches. Concerning walrus, the only animal affected in the AVCP region, the regulations would do two things.

First they would require the hunter to:

- 1) Report each walrus catch within 30 days of the take. This would consist of filling out a form describing the dates and location for the kill, transportation used, rifle caliber and sex of the animal.
- 2) Present the tusks for tagging. FWS has devised a special method to mark the tusks without marring the value of the ivory. The tusk is

be harsh, potential penalties could be stiff, with as high as a \$20,000 fine and one year in jail for flagrant violations.

The reporting and tagging will be performed by an authorized representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service. The draft rules anticipate the representatives will be available in Mekoryuk, Hooper Bay, Quinhagak, Togiak, Kipnuk, Tununak, Scammon Bay, Kotlik, Stebbins, and possibly other communities. AVCP has urged FWS to have a Native representative in every village to make reporting reasonably convenient.

FWS is developing these rules under authorities granted it in the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Act placed a moratorium on the taking of all marine mammals. However, it ex-

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numbered with a dye which is invisible unless exposed to ultraviolet lamps.

Secondly, any person holding tusks which were taken since 1972 would have to get them tagged (there are no reporting requirements for this ivory) within 180 days of the implementation of these rules.

Although FWS does not expect punishment for violations will generally

empted Alaska Natives from this requirement, allowing them to take marine mammals for subsistence and handicraft purposes. Congress amended the Act in 1981 and directed the Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor the Native harvests.

The basic intent of this law is to provide harvest and biological data on the

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level of the marine mammal take, to assist in proper management of these species and to help control the illegal black market operations in raw ivory.

The Fish and Wildlife Service is holding hearings in our region throughout the month of February. At deadline time for this newsletter, hearings had been held in Mekoryuk and Toksook. Approximately 25 people at-

in the villages of Kipnuk, Hooper Bay, one of the coastal Yukon Delta river villages and in the Togiak region. These hearings provide an opportunity for people to hear about the proposed rules and to express their support for or opposition to them.

If you did not have the chance to be heard at one of these hearings and would like to comment upon these rules, write to:



tended in Mekoryuk and 70 people from Toksook and Tununak attended the Toksook hearing.

In Mekoryuk, residents raised many excellent and probing questions concerning the handicrafting process and possible enforcement actions. FWS has promised to provide them with additional information. A village meeting is also planned so that villagers can develop additional comments.

In Toksook, there was a division of opinion, with most people opposed to the rules. People were concerned that the rules were unnecessary government interference and could lead to future problems for Native people.

Additional hearings will also be held

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After completing the hearing process, FWS will review the comments it has received and decide whether to cancel or modify the rules in response to them. A final version of the rules is not expected until this summer at the earliest, so there will be no reporting necessary for the spring walrus catch.

If you would like additional information on these proposed rules, call the Natural Resources Program, collect if you would like, at 543-3521.