

Legislative fight helps subsistence

The Associated Press

Subsistence fishermen and hunters benefitted, at least temporarily, in the massive fight that has been going on in the state legislature for the past four days.

The new House coalition leadership was founded, in part, on a commitment by Republicans that no action will be taken this session on the state subsistence law, many House lawmakers say.

Rep. Ken Fanning, L-Fairbanks, who has been designated as Resources Committee co-chairman, said Monday that Republicans and Libertarians have pledged to back off their session-long bid to kill the subsistence law, and to stymie efforts by House Democrats to amend or repeal the law.

Fanning said he and Rep. Eric Sutchffe, R-Unalaska, who

has been tapped as Resources co-chairman, will work this fall with coalition loyalists Reps. Al Adams, D-Kotzebue, and Ramona Barnes, R-Anchorage, who is to be speaker of the House, promise to delay consideration of the subsistence law until September.

Anchorage businessman Sam McDowell, aingleader of the drive to get rid of the subsistence law, said the compromise sounds workable to him, but some Native leaders say rural Alaskans stand to lose from the deal.

Marlene Johnson, vice chairwoman of the board of the Sealaska Corp., said "the laws on the books at this time are fine and needed. I Don't see any reason for a compromise." Sealaska is the Southeast Alaska regional native corporation.

At issue is a 1978 law which
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Subsistence issue put to rest for session because of flap

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gives subsistence users a priority claim to fish and game when resources are tight. Sportsmen argue that the law should be tossed out to give all Alaskans an equal right to wildlife resources.

and rural residents say the law is needed to protect their livelihoods and lifestyles.

Adams, who is slated to take over the Finance Committee, said he is confident that a compromise can be achieved through

the joint efforts of sportsmen, native leaders and lawmakers.

But Fanning, who advocates repealing the subsistence law, is less optimistic. He said he doubts there is a solution that is acceptable to everyone, and

that the issue likely will be resolved by an initiative being circulated to repeal the law and all tools used to discriminate among fish and game users.

Initiative-backer McDowell said Ken Fanning and Ramona Barnes have been doing every-

thing they can to repeal the law. I trust them completely" in their pledge to negotiate a compromise on the issue. He added, however, "we are going full-steam ahead on the initiative. It doesn't make any difference to us what they do in Juneau."