

Fisheries development conference to be April 7-8

HOOPER BAY — The Western Alaska Fisheries Development Conference — April 7 and 8 in Bethel — will provide the first-ever opportunity for residents of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to review the extent of Bering Sea commercial fisheries and to examine participation opportunities that may exist for village corporations, communities and individuals, according to sponsors.

The conference will feature speakers from island and coastal villages who are currently taking part in the Bering Sea fishing industry, representatives of large fishing companies and organizations, government administrative and regulatory agencies and Alaska Native corporations involved in fisheries.

"The Bering Sea is Our Ocean, Too," is the theme for the conference, and organizers say that time is running short for Bering Sea coastal communities to "get their feet wet" and participate in the \$1.9 billion a year industry.

"We have to start taking a long view of the future," conference organizer Mark Springer said. Springer is assis-

tant to the mayor for the City of Hooper Bay, the main sponsor of the event.

"Up until now the main emphasis in the fisheries area has been political. We lend the good name of our fishermen's associations to lawsuits, we endorse and support actions taken in Washington, D.C., in the international arena, but we still don't see much tangible benefit," he said.

"Nobody has ever sat down with Western Alaskans and tried to make business connections, employment connections. No one has emphasized the opportunities that have existed. And now, with the Bering Sea on the verge of being dominated by a handful of 'supertrawlers,' it might almost be too late."

Kokechik Fishermen's Association, made up of Chevak, Scammon Bay and Hooper Bay fishermen, and Kuskokwim College are cooperating with the City of Hooper Bay in putting on the conference.

Those who want more information may write to Springer: City of Hooper Bay, Box 37, Hooper Bay 99604; or call 758-4311.