

Young backs seal treaty

Congressman Don Young has called on the federal government to allow the fur seal harvest to continue in the Pribilof Islands.

Anti-hunting groups and other wildlife organizations have mounted emotional campaigns to bring the government to terminate the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention which permits the harvest.

"Any course of action other than continuation of the present form will have significant, adverse effects on the economy, lifestyle and heritage of the Pribilof Islanders." Young stated in written testimony presented at National Marine Fisheries Service hearings in Washington, D.C. He also stated that "The Convention has not harmed anyone but has benefited both man

and seals and will continue to do so."

Young also contended that a suspension of the harvest would be a disaster for the Islanders because the proposed alternatives for the local economy would not work.

It has been suggested that commercial fishing and tourism be developed to replace the fur seals in the local economy, but Young points out that the trip to the Islands is a difficult costly one, unlikely to attract any tourists. He also contended that development of fisheries on the Islands would be prohibitively expensive at this time, concluding that, "By continuing the Convention, we can provide protection for the seals and for the people who have lived with them for centuries."