

HEAD-HUNTERS SHRINK HERDS

Meat Crises Mocked By Disregard Of Game Law In Bristol Bay Region

By MARGIE BAUMAN

Perennial problems of head hunters in the Southwestern Alaska bush appear not to be slacking off, even in the face of skyrocketing food costs — much to the disgust of those who hunt to live rather than for trophies.

The highly emotional issue of head hunters — those who kill game simply for trophies — was raised before the Human Resources Committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives Inc. meeting Saturday in Fairbanks.

chaired by Tanana Chiefs Conference President Mitch Demientieff, Clark delved further into

(Continued on Page 6)

"Last week down at Ugashik, I saw a plane land half a mile from the village and 'bang, bang, bang' — three caribou," said Robert Clark, committee member from Bristol Bay Native Corp. They took some of the game, but not all."

"It's been going on for years," said Clark angrily. "We thought it would be less of a problem this year because of the meat crisis, but it's not."

For Bristol Bay area residents, who found another year of financial disaster in the 1973 fishing season, the issue may be a particularly bitter one.

"If the hunters were from our area alone, we could control it, but most of them are out of Anchorage," said Clark, who recommended at one point that all village residents in the Bristol Bay region be deputized to help catch the head hunters in the act.

After the lengthy Human Resources Committee meeting,

Head-Hunters...

(Continued from page 1)

the problem of the head hunters whom Bristol Bay villagers would like to see out of their area.

The problem is not unique to Southwestern Alaska, notes Alaska State Trooper Cpl. Bill Valentine, with the troopers division of fish and wildlife protection, at Fairbanks.

"I think a lot of the objection is simply that people object to non-resident hunters," said Valentine. Still, he feels that non-resident hunters are not solely responsible for the problem.

Valentine figures the problem is not so much the out-of-state hunter, who may spend \$7-8,000 in pursuit of his trophy head and leaves much of that money right in the state economy, when he departs.

Clark thinks the value of such hunters to the state economy may be one reason the state is not cracking down on them. "We're really a minority on this . . . and unless we get the state legislators behind us, we're going to lose," he said.

Valentine figures "it's a problem we can cope with because of the cooperation of the guides, provided the number of guides don't get any bigger or forests any smaller."

Valentine says the guides are aware of the regulations and in general have been cooperative.

State law dictates that the hunter who takes a trophy animal must also salvage the edible portion of the meat. Some guides

simply bring the meat into villages to be shared by residents, if the hunters on their charter flight doesn't want it. Others do not, says Clark "and we sure could use the meat."

"In my area (Clark's Point) I have to go 50 to 100 miles to get caribou and moose," he said. "Very few local people can get game close by any more. In the Ugashik and Iliamna areas, they have to go at least twice as far as they used to go for game."

All of which makes it tougher for the Eskimo, Indian and Aleut people who call the Bristol Bay region home. "The whole economy of the area is fishing and this year, of course, it's been a disaster," said Clark. "Even when it's good, we prefer wild game."

The situation for subsistence hunters is compounded further by an increasing number of harbor seals, said Clark, who wears around his neck the claw of the first harbor seal he ever caught.

"There are too many harbor seals around the Egegik, Cinder River, Port Heiden and throughout the Bristol Bay region - because of restrictions of the sea mammal act - and they are eating up the fish," said Clark.

Restrictions of that federal legislation allow the taking of certain sea mammals for subsistence purposes, but not for sale. The walrus population is also increasing "and there is no justification for not allowing Native people to hunt them," Clark said.