

Subsistence comments sought from Alaska public

The Federal Subsistence Board has announced communities or areas in Alaska that are being proposed for rural and non-rural status, and people are being asked to comment on the recommendations from now until Dec. 10.

"I want to emphasize," said Walter O. Stieglitz, Federal Subsistence Board chairman and regional director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, "that the decisions of the board are preliminary and that we have proposed these communities for rural/non-rural status."

"We will carefully review public comment and any additional information before making a final decision," he said.

Federal subsistence regulations that went into effect July 1 require the board to make a determination of rural and non-rural status by Dec. 31.

Public meetings will be held in each of the areas proposed for non-rural status and in other communities throughout Alaska this month and next month.

The Federal Subsistence Board is composed of the Alaska heads of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Forest Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The board made its decision following an analysis. Federal staff who prepared recommendations for the board worked with the Subsistence Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute for Social and Economic Research, the Alaska Department of Labor and the planning departments of several communities.

The first step in developing the recommendations was to aggregate communities that exhibit a high degree of social and economic mixing into one community. The criteria used were:

- Do 15 percent or more of the working people commute from one community to another?

- Are daily or semi-daily shopping trips typically made?

- Do the communities share a common school district?

When the aggregation of communities was completed, they were placed in population categories as follows:

- Less than 2,500

- Between 2,500 and 7,000

- 7,000 and greater

Communities were then tentatively categorized as rural/non-rural, based on population.

Rural communities were identified as those with a population of less than 2,500, and communities with a population of 7,000 or greater were identified as non-rural.

No assumptions were made at this step about those communities with populations between 2,500 and 7,000.

The 2,500 population level was selected because it is a figure used by the Census Bureau to divide rural from non-rural, according to the board.

The 7,000 population level was chosen because Ketchikan was about that size when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed, the board said.

It was identified in ANILCA as the smallest non-rural community and is considered an indicator of congressional intent.

The next step was to evaluate community characteristics other than population. They were analyzed using the following criteria:

- Economy

- Fish and game use

- Transportation links

- Community infrastructure

- Educational institutions

Communities with populations greater than 7,000 proposed as non-rural include the Municipality of Anchorage, the Kenai area, the Wasilla area, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Juneau area, the Ketchikan area, the Kodiak area and the Sitka area.

Communities with populations between 2,500 and 7,000 proposed as non-rural include the Homer area, the Seward area, Valdez and Adak.

All other communities in Alaska are being proposed for rural status.

Comments on the proposed rural determinations and other issues on subsistence should be addressed to: Chairman, Federal Subsistence Board, c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage 99503, Attn: Richard S. Pospahala.

Additional information is available by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service Subsistence Office at 267-1461 (Hearing impaired may call 786-3487).