



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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INTERIOR CERTIFIES ALASKA SUBSISTENCE HUNTING AND FISHING PROGRAM

Alaska's proposed program for managing subsistence use of fish and wildlife on public lands in the State is in compliance with provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Secretary of the Interior James Watt announced today.

"This is a significant accomplishment given the sensitivity of this complex issue," Watt said. "The State's proposals establish a workable program that meets the needs of rural Alaskan subsistence users--native and non-native--and satisfies ANILCA. Certification clears the way for the State to retain its traditional role in regulating fish and wildlife activities on the public lands and that is as it should be."

Watt said detailed implementation of the subsistence program would be the responsibility of the State. "Frankly, I'm delighted that State professionals with expert knowledge of local conditions will carry out the program."

Among the many provisions of the Alaska lands legislation enacted in 1980 was a requirement that laws be enacted and implemented by the State ensuring that rural Alaskans who customarily and traditionally engaged in subsistence hunting and fishing be provided a priority during periods of resource shortage.

(more)

Specifically the Act requires the State to provide priority for non-wasteful levels of subsistence use and establish regional advisory councils. If the State does not comply with ANILCA's provisions, the Act mandates management of subsistence activities on public lands by the Secretary of the Interior.

The Joint Boards of Fisheries and Game in Alaska approved the current subsistence definition and procedure regulations April 6. In December, the Boards also approved regulations which brought the State's regional advisory council system into compliance with ANILCA. The six regional councils will be comprised of local residents and will advise the State on fishing and hunting concerns, including subsistence, at the local level.

Secretary Watt said he had sent a letter to Alaska Governor Jay Hammond notifying him of the Department's certification of the State program. "I commended the State for the effort it has put into designing a program that complies with ANILCA," he said. "I believe the State plan is in the best interest of all Alaskans and look forward to its implementation."

The Secretary also said that he had told Governor Hammond the Department would make \$960,000 available to the State to reimburse costs incurred in setting up the regional advisory council system, as required by ANILCA.

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