

BY THE
ALASKA BOARD OF FISH AND GAME
AND
COMMISSIONER, ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

see also #79-47-PB,
#79-5-JB,
#81-9-JB

While fish and game resources were once a crucial factor in the survival of all Alaskans, a growing population segment is becoming partially or totally independent of these resources. This change is the result of advanced food production technologies elsewhere, rapidly improving logistics, and a growing immigrant population whose demands mainly involve recreational and non-consumptive resource uses. Nevertheless, direct domestic utilization of fish and game is still vital to the maintenance of most rural Alaskans and is an essential supplement to the larders of some urban citizens. Beyond directly satisfying food requirements, home consumption of fish and game tends to preserve indigenous cultures and traditions and gives justification and gratification to a strong desire possessed by many to hunt and fish. The latter functions seem genuinely important to the physical and psychological well-being of a large number of Alaskans.

The very rapid changes occurring in Alaska now give rise to grave concerns that the accustomed contribution of fish and game to subsistence economies will be threatened. By reason of culture, location, economic situation or choice, large numbers of people will find it impossible to abandon or alter their way of life at a pace paralleling changes brought by new shifts in land status and ownership, nonrenewable resource developments, road extensions and transportation improvements and a phenomenal rate of population growth. In recognition of the above facts and of the responsibilities mandated to the Board and the Commissioner, the following statements which express the views of these authorities are considered necessary and timely.

The existing variety of cultures and life styles in Alaska are of great value and should be preserved. While limitations on the productivity of fish and game must discourage continued increases in the numbers of subsistence type resource users, domestic utilization is still of fundamental importance to many Alaskans, and accordingly it is assigned the highest priority among beneficial uses. Within legal and biological constraints, fish and game will be allocated to subsistence users on the basis of need. It is understood that the needs of individuals, families or groups will differ in type and degree and that subjective judgments will unavoidably be necessary in weighing actual need. Elements considered in establishing the level of need include culture, custom, economic status, alternative resources, location, and voluntary choice of life style. It is further understood that subsistence requirements will not make equal demands on all resources in all areas, and that recreational, commercial and nonconsumptive uses will continue to be permitted where and to the extent that they do not truly interfere with or jeopardize subsistence resource use. It is the expressed intent of the Board and Commissioner to be guided by the above stated policies in fulfilling their duties of managing Alaska's fish and game in the face of drastic changes in land status, nonrenewable resource development, and economic and social changes.