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Secretary Seeks Input for Review of Federal Subsistence Program

On October 23, 2009, Secretary of the Interior Salazar announced to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in Anchorage the initiation of a Departmental review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska. The review will focus on how the program is meeting the purposes and subsistence provisions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA), and how the program is serving rural subsistence users as envisioned when the program was begun in the early 1990s.

The Alaska Affairs office of the Secretary will lead this review effort. The Secretary has directed that the review be driven by input from subsistence users. **Comments and suggestions are welcomed and encouraged in this review.** In addition to legislative mandates, the review will include the structures and operations of the Federal Subsistence Board, the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, and budgetary issues. The Secretary has indicated his desire to complete the review and to consider recommendations for possible actions in the next several months.

Title VIII of ANILCA provides a priority for subsistence uses on Federal public lands in Alaska by “rural residents.” At the time of passage it was envisioned that the State of Alaska would meet these provisions and retain the management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands in Alaska. However, the Alaska Supreme Court subsequently ruled that State statutes providing a “rural” preference in the taking of fish and wildlife were

in conflict with the State constitution. Subsequent efforts to amend the state constitution to permit such a preference failed. Acting under the provisions of Title VIII, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture assumed management of the subsistence harvest of wildlife, and some fisheries, on Federal lands in Alaska in 1992. Following further court rulings, the Federal government expanded subsistence fishery management in 1999 to include certain navigable waters.

After nearly two decades of dual management, it is clear that the State of Alaska is not taking steps to regain management of subsistence uses on Federal lands and waters in the foreseeable future. With the assumption that Federal subsistence management will be in place for the long term, the Secretary has called for this review to ensure that the Federal management structures, procedures, operations, budgets and other elements best meet the goals of ANILCA and serve rural subsistence users.

Additional information about the review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program will be available shortly on the web at <http://www.doi.gov/subsistencereview>

Please send any comments or recommendations for consideration in this review:

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