

# Alaska State Legislature

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## Representative Fred Dyson

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### **Rep. Dyson Offers Subsistence Solution**

#### **Ensures Knowles Team Can Consider Hammond, Hickel, Hanley Ideas**

(ANCHORAGE) – Rep. Fred Dyson (R-Eagle River) today proposed a constitutional amendment addressing subsistence rights for both urban and rural Alaskans, and called on the Knowles Administration’s subsistence task force to consider the proposal as it drafts an amendment for a likely special legislative session.

“Some of Alaska’s best minds have been grappling with the subsistence dilemma for years, and previous governors have already produced solid options that deserve attention,” said Dyson. “My amendment echoes language proposed by Jay Hammond, Wally Hickel and former Rep. Mark Hanley, and I want Knowles’ task force to consider their ideas, as well.”

The subsistence preference Dyson lays out in his proposed amendment would kick in whenever the harvestable surplus of fish or game in a game management unit (GMU) was less than the five-year average subsistence harvest. At that point, subsistence would become the highest-priority use, and subsistence priority would be allotted to those living within that GMU and to those who could show a five-year history of using or depending on the resource in that area.

“The genius of this approach is that it makes subsistence uses of wild resources the ‘highest and best use’ during times of shortage, and it gives the people the priority in their local area,” Dyson said. “This solution is similar in concept to proposals made by the Hickel Commission a decade ago, by Mark Hanley three years ago, and by Jay Hammond in the Daily News in August.”

Dyson said his amendment addresses Native concerns by enhancing and protecting local subsistence rights in urban and rural areas alike, and by eliminating the risk that subsistence rights would erode away from growing communities like Barrow or Bethel under a strictly “rural” subsistence preference. It should also reassure urban, non-Native residents and civil liberties advocates who value the Alaska Constitution’s equal protection and equal access guarantees, which were threatened under efforts by Knowles and former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to change state law to match federal mandate.

“By meeting the technical rural preference requirements in the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act, this amendment would also make it easier for Alaska’s Congressional delegation to win the minor changes in ANILCA we need to bring a final solution to one of Alaska’s most divisive and pressing issues,” Dyson said. “I hope that Governor Knowles will see the benefit of having his people consider this amendment as they draft their language.”

Knowles has charged a hand-picked, 11-member panel with drafting a rural priority amendment that he will present to the Legislature in a special subsistence session he plans to call this fall.

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