

### **Report of Sam Gosuk (hunter representative) for BBNA for Togiak Alaska**

In this report I looked at the past observations about seal and compared them with the present conditions of seal and the food that they eat.

In talking with several seal hunters in our village, I noticed several observations about the ice seals and their habitat. One the main answers of how different or same questions concern the weather or climate. Last year we had some cold weather that allowed most of the crossings to go hunting frozen. This included the sea. We had a shelf of ice in which to go on with our snow machines and pull the boat toward the edge of the ice on to the sea to go hunting for seal. I did not hear of anyone getting bearded seal in our area.

This year, the weather has been cold and did freeze the rivers and crossings. But, it has not been cold long enough for the bay to freeze and get a shelf of ice. There is almost no ice in the bay and if it was not moose season, we would be hunting for seal. When moose closes on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, we should be able to go out to sea to get seal.

One other observation I asked the local hunters is if they got any roe on kelp from the coaster waters near Togiak? I heard of only one person who did get the kelp. Usually in the spring, the herring, one of the food of seal come to the coastal area of Togiak and spawn. With them the seal come. So we had been able to get herring, roe on kelp, and seal for food in the spring. In the last several years I have observed that we are getting less roe on kelp and not as much herring. I have been told that the seiners from outside have started for several years to harvest the herring before they get on the area. I was hoping since the price of herring bought by Japanese has gotten much lower the past, that there would be less people getting the herring. Then, I heard that they indeed do get the herring before they go on land. Since the roe might not be as ready for spawning and bought by Japanese, this allows me to conclude that the seiners are possible getting the herring to be sold as bait.

One more observation that I see is that the Fish and Game biologists in our area determine the quota for catching herring by 'biomass' of whatever is left of it. As a result, there aren't enough herring to spawn where they used to spawn 30 years ago. At that time, where boats travel in the bay, there was so much herring that sometimes the herring would come out of the water behind us because they didn't have enough room in the water behind the boat. The amount of herring that we see and the spawn of them is important as a source of food both to people and seal. Because of this, I am considering asking the Traditional Council to write a letter to the Alaska Board of Fisheries to consider closing herring for at least a year to see if the numbers of the fish go up instead of going down each year.