

# Judge tells Watt to modify offshore oil leasing

WASHINGTON (AP)—Federal appeals court Tuesday told Interior Secretary James G. Watt to revise the rules for offshore oil leases approved by the Carter administration — a task Watt has already begun.

The U.S. Court of Appeals said Carter's Interior Department violated several provisions of federal laws when it approved a five-year leasing program on June 16, 1980.

But the three-judge panel did not nullify the proposed leases, which include eleven sales in the Gulf of Mexico, six in the Atlantic, four off California and ten off Alaska.

The leasing program was challenged by Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. of California and four of the state's agencies, the State of Alaska and one of its boroughs, North Slope, and four environmental groups.

The appeals court said former Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus made seven specific errors, including identifying and leasing areas as "California" when the law said the

locations should be specific in the leases.

The court said Andrus also erred in failing to consider the relative environmental risks and the effects on marine

life in the offshore areas, failed to properly balance environmental and economic factors and did not "quantify" environmental costs.

The judges noted that those

challenging the leasing rules informed the court that Watt is in the process of preparing a revised five-year program covering the years 1982-86.

The challengers suggested,

and the court agreed, that Watt's actions provide a convenient opportunity to revise the leasing rules while letting the leasing process go forward.