

Resolution supporting Norton Sound suits

Another voice joined in the cry against the Norton Sound Oil and Gas Lease Sale Number 57 which the Department of the Interior conducted on March 15. Shortly afterward, members of the Bering Straits Coastal Resource Service Area Board gathered together in Unalakleet and passed a resolution supporting suits filed against the sale by the villages of Gambell and Stebbins, and by the Association of Village Council Presidents.

In the resolution, the board cited subsistence resources and uses as being the primary issue requiring protection in the Bering Straits CRSA. It was noted that the board has consistently opposed offshore oil and gas exploration, development and production, and has advocated onshore development as an alternative.

The Bering Straits CRSA also noted that despite requests directed to U.S. Interior Secretary James Watt through Alaska Governor Bill Sheffield to delay the sale, the two reached a memorandum of agreement to hold it anyway. The board believes subsistence resources

and uses will be threatened as a result of the sale.

The board then requested Kawerak, Inc., to join AVCP as a plaintiff in that group's suit, and requested that Kawerak seek funding from regional villages and organizations willing to join in the battle. The resolution concluded with a statement of support for the separate suit filed by the villages of Stebbins and Gambell.

Another lease sale, which also poses a potential threat to subsistence resources and which is opposed by Native and conservational groups is scheduled for the St. George Basin area of the Bering Sea on April 12.

Governor Sheffield is currently having a lawsuit prepared to fight the sale if Secretary Watt will not accept certain stipulations on oil drilling, transportation and local involvement. Watt did accept similar stipulations in the Norton Sound Sale, but subsistence users felt the stipulations fell far short of protecting the wild resources on which they depend.