

# Interior Secretary Watt to tour Bristol Bay

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JUNEAU — During a week-long tour of Alaska next month, Secretary of Interior James Watt will survey Bristol Bay where he has recommended that offshore oil lease sales be stepped up, despite Gov. Jay Hammond's protests.

Watt also is scheduled to tour Glacier Bay. Conservationists there want to protect the habitat of the endangered humpback whale, but cruise ship owners are pushing to take more tourists into the national park.

Vernon Wiggins, Watt's special assistant in Alaska, said his boss will also visit Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau the week of Aug. 10.

Wiggins said Watt tentatively will arrive in Anchorage Aug. 10 for a press conference and to

speak at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon. He'll attend the first meeting of the Alaska Lands Use Council. The panel is charged with implementing the Alaska lands legislation — one of Watt's top five priorities, Wiggins said.

On Aug. 11, Watt will travel to McKinley National Park. Wiggins said McKinley "is probably one of the prime examples of deteriorating national parks. It is a perfect example of needing to do something to make a park usable." He said Watt shares his concerns.

Watt is to address the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce later that day.

The secretary is to be in the Bristol Bay and Katmai areas Aug. 12 to assess the impact of his plans to speed offshore oil exploration.

Hammond and Department

of Natural Resources Commissioner John Katz have voiced strenuous objections to Watt's plans. Katz said "there are very strong economic, environmental

and resource problems" with quickly opening new offshore areas to oil drilling.

Wiggins said Watt will trek to Glacier Bay Aug. 14 to assess the

emotional controversy over the impact that cruise ships touring the bay have on the habitat of the endangered humpback whale.