

Stevens praised for stand on Bristol Bay

To Sen. Ted Stevens:

On behalf of the people of Bristol Bay, I wish to express my appreciation for your successful effort to convince the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee to support a moratorium on oil development for North Aleutian Basin OCS Sale 92.

This moratorium will give us additional time to conduct research on the biological values of the area and the potential impact oil development would have.

After years of frustration, the progress we have made on this issue in recent months is nothing short of astounding.

While the agreement between the appropriation subcommittees in Congress on the moratorium is a victory for us, I respectfully request you to reconsider your position on the Lease

Sale 92 buyback proposal.

The moratorium is helpful, but we would like to see steps taken to remove this sale from the lease schedule once and for all.

A Department of the Interior study of the repurchase options would be an important first step. I note that when the study is completed, Congress would still be under no obligation to implement a buyback. This would depend on the situation at the time.

As you know, hundreds of pages of documents have been produced already about the natural resources of the North Aleutian Basin/Bristol Bay region and the potential impacts from oil development.

There is no need to try to summarize them in this letter. It will suffice to say that potential risk exists to the renewable resources of Bristol Bay.

The main disagreement over the years has been whether the level of

risk is high or low and whether it is acceptable or not.

I know the oil companies' current development plans call for oil to be transported from offshore oil platforms to the Alaska Peninsula by an undersea pipeline.

This pipeline will then continue across the peninsula to an oil terminal on the south side.

While this plan, if followed, will keep tanker traffic out of Bristol Bay, it will not necessarily provide foolproof protection. Oil from a tanker accident on the peninsula's south side could be carried southwest by the ocean currents, then through False Pass and east right into Bristol Bay coating all the shoreline it touches along the way.

In addition, the Environmental Impact Statement points out that the exploration, drilling, construction and development phases present their own

risks, particularly to the millions of salmon smolt that migrate out of the bay every year.

The people of Bristol Bay have spent many years voicing their opposition to oil development in Bristol Bay. Many times it appeared no one at the federal level would listen to them.

Now, finally, due to your efforts and the support of your colleagues, the issue has turned around. Enthusiasm is building among the people who live and work in Bristol Bay as they see how close they are to winning on this issue.

I respectfully request you to fully support your constituents in Bristol Bay and do all you can — when the bill goes to conference committee — to see that the House language on the buyback study is adopted.

Sincerely,
Sen. Fred F. Zharoff, D-Kodiak