

Video produced in Kotzebue receives award

JUNEAU — Reacting to a U.S. House panel vote June 29 on a measure to put off oil and gas development in Bristol Bay, Gov. Steve Cowper praised the efforts of Alaska fishermen, conservationists and his Washington, D.C., staff.

The House Appropriations Committee voted 29-22 in a bipartisan vote to impose a one-year moratorium on oil and gas development in the bay, the site of a \$1 billion-a-year fishery and home to one of the world's largest collections of marine mammals.

"This victory is a major step for all Alaskans because it shows that our views are being heard in Washington," Cowper said. "Alaska is an energy state, and usually we welcome oil and gas development. But the risks of development in Bristol Bay are simply not worth the relatively small amount of oil that may be there."

Cowper said the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill proved that the current ability to respond to spills in open seas is inadequate at best.

The vote came on a Fiscal Year 1990 appropriations bill. It forbids the secretary of the Department of the Interior from spending any money on drilling or exploration in Bristol Bay and on lease sales in seven other states, including Massachusetts, Florida, California, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington and Oregon.

It also directs the Interior secretary to study possible methods of buying back \$114 million worth of leases already bid and opened for tracts in Bristol Bay. Cowper proposed a lease buy-back following the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill.

The action must next be approved by the full House and Senate.



photo by Chris Cushman