

The right decision

We'd like to applaud the recent decision by the U.S. Department of Interior to extend the deadline for people to send in written comments on the draft Arctic National Wildlife Refuge report.

The Jan. 23 deadline has been extended to Feb. 6, giving people another two weeks to comment on the report, prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Whether the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain is opened to oil exploration, development and production will be one of the most important issues affecting Alaska under consideration in Congress this year.

The report states that there is substantial oil and gas potential in the Coastal Plain and that exploration should proceed to determine the extent of that potential. The voices of the people of the Arctic who would be directly affected need to be heard before Congress rules on that issue.

It's unfortunate that the Interior Department did not see fit to grant Gov. Steve Cowper's request for two additional hearings on this vital report. Hearings were held recently in Anchorage, Kaktovik and Washington, D.C. Cowper had requested additional hearings in Fairbanks and Arctic Village, both of which would feel the effects of opening the coastal plain.

But we are pleased the department did at least extend the comment deadline.

We would encourage readers who have a concern about ANWR to send their comments by Feb. 6 to the:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Refuge Management
2343 Main Interior Building
18th and C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240.

We also welcome letters to the editor and guest columns on this issue.

SAMPLE COPIES

This week marks the second week of a bulk mailing promotion we're starting here at the paper in an effort to increase the number of our subscribers. We plan to send sample copies of the paper to villages throughout Alaska, choosing different areas of the state each week. Included with these copies is a form for subscribers to fill out.

We are facing serious financial difficulties here, and Alaska's economic difficulties only make our situation worse. Getting people to subscribe to the *Tundra Times* is one of the best ways we can improve our situation.

At the same time, we feel there are many important issues facing the Alaska Native community this year. This newspaper is now in its 25th year, and we'd like to continue to offer the Native community valuable news and information.

A payment of only \$20 a year brings readers 52 issues of the newspaper.