

House, Senate panels tour state

by **Steve Pilkington**
for the Tundra Times

Members of congressional committees involved in deciding whether to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration and development are visiting Alaska this week.

Also expected to be considered by
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the panel members will be a proposed land exchange between Alaska Native corporations and the Department of the Interior.

Expected to be among those visiting ANWR are Sens. Frank Murkowski and Ted Stevens and Rep. Don Young.

The committees touring ANWR will be the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee and the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

The committees will be visiting the village of Kaktovik, as well as the Prudhoe Bay oil field.

The land trade, which will require a vote by congressional members, involves 891,000 acres of land throughout Alaska to be traded by the Alaska Native corporations in exchange for 166,000 acres of subsurface lands in ANWR held by the Interior.

The 891,000 acres of land to be traded to the Interior have been valued at \$538.7 million, with an average value per acre of \$602.

The trade is an attempt by Interior to increase its holdings of valuable wildlife and recreation lands while Native corporations are hoping to see profits from subsurface oil and gas production.

When congressional members meet again after the August recess they will continue working on the trade, but Bill Horn, assistant Interior secretary, feels that the trade will not be completed before early 1988.

Interior Secretary Donald Hodel will be in Anchorage Aug. 17, after visiting ANWR with the committee members.