

Cowper, Stevens disagree

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be opened to oil and gas exploration, but not before a thorough study of how that might affect the 180,000 animals in the Porcupine Caribou Herd, Gov. Steve Cowper told a U.S. Senate committee last week.

Cowper disagreed with a U.S. Department of the Interior report that dismisses the notion of a "core calving area" on the refuge's coastal plain.

He told the committee there is an area where the herd gives birth to its young every year, and that it is important to protect the health of the young calves, and the vitality of the herd.

In testimony delivered Thursday, Cowper called for a seven-year state and federal study to better define that core area and determine how development would affect it.

Gov. Cowper also clashed with Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens, who said the governor's attention on a core calving area might torpedo ANWR legislation that might come out of Congress.

At a press conference in Anchorage Friday, Cowper downplayed his differences with Sen. Stevens, saying he believes they are closer to agreement than the heated exchange in the Senate committee room might imply.

Both Stevens and he favor development, said the governor, and both

(Continued on Page Five)

● ANWR

(Continued from Page One)

want to see it done safely.

"What we're dealing with here is a national wildlife refuge," Gov. Cowper told reporters. "We've got to take steps to protect it."

He said Stevens, who is not a member of the Senate committee but was allowed to speak, might have been shooting too much from the hip in criticizing Cowper's position.

He said Stevens came in late, fired off a few "hostile" questions, and left shortly after the exchange with Cowper.

The governor was also asked about how he views the involvement of Native corporations in the debate, since some corporations are hoping to complete land trades that would give them a potentially lucrative stake in oil development in ANWR.

"Native corporations are not monolithic," he said. "Obviously, they're all concerned that development can't affect it (the refuge) in an adverse way. But they have differing concerns."