



**BETHEL WATERFRONT**—The sea wall that protects Bethel from the Kuskokwim gave way last week in a two day storm leaving the main area of town virtually unprotected. The Corps of Engineers estimates it would cost \$4 million

to build a new one and that the property is not worth it. Buildings in the area are private property and the city doesn't have the money to do the job. Solution: wait and see.

—Photo by LAEL MORGAN

*Just Wait and See—*

## City of Bethel Washing Away

**BETHEL**—The town of Bethel is moving, going down river. Last week the seawall which protects the downtown area from the Kuskokwim washed out in two sections and now the waterfront is going, too, leaving great gaping holes on the main street.

"I have to drive three miles now to get to the Post Office," laments Peter Guinn who lives only a few blocks away from it. "It's not quite that bad, really,

I exaggerate. But you do have to detour and drive carefully."

"That's no place for Volkswagens," shrugged Dave Moore, a Bethel Heights resident. "They fall through the cracks."

There's little that can be done about it at this point, according to Dave Webb, city manager.

"The problem is that it's all privately owned land and the Corp of Engineers maintains it would cost more to protect than it's worth."

Last fall the wall was da-

(Continued on page 6)

# Bethel Washing Away . . .

(Continued from page 1)

amaged and repaired at a cost of about \$10,000 to the city, \$6,000 to the State Rivers and Harbors Project and \$10,000 to Northern Commercial which occupies a precarious position on the bank.

"The Corps of Engineers started a study on a new sea wall in 1966 and completed their report last September," Webb said. "They estimate it will cost \$4 million to build a sea wall and that there isn't \$4 million in property to protect."

Chief land users in the area are the Moravian Church, Northern Commercial, Swanson Brothers and United Transportation which leases from N.C. The Post Office, adjacent to N.C., is also threatened.

The area has been slowly eroding all summer but a heavy storm took out the bulk of the buttressing in two days flat last

week. (A Tundra Times photographer arrived at the scene one day later and more of the wall and earth gave way as she photographed the spot.)

The Corps estimates that if the wall is not replaced the town will wash out at a rate of 12 feet a year and about 25 feet per year in the area by the hospital.

Webb said repairs are just too much for the city budget but that he believes the bill should not be \$4 million, in any account.

"The Corps goes overboard when they design. We put \$19,000 into the wall and it's held up for five years," he noted.

As for city action, none is planned at present.

"We're going to wait until we get a pretty good hole before we bring it up," Webb said. "That's the only way to get some attention.