

# **English Bay says 'no'**

**From Our Anchorage Bureau**

A coalition of Natives, environmentalists and fishermen last week asked a federal court in Washington, D.C. to halt or delay the Lower Cook Inlet oil lease sale scheduled for February 23.

The coalition alleges that the sale might have a disastrous effect on the culture of Natives in the area and on the fisheries and other resources of the Inlet. The group bringing the protest includes the village of English Bay, an Aleut village, Trustees for Alaska, an environmental law firm, the North Pacific Fisheries Association, the Alaska Conservation Society, Friends of the Earth and individual fishermen.

The group charges that the Secretary of the Interior failed to take steps to keep offshore oil development from destroying the lifestyle of English Bay. They also claim that development stemming from the sale endangers fisher resources, land

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# English Bay ...

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and marine mammals and birds and would create haphazard growth on the Kenai Peninsula.

Ed Hoffman, Alaska manager for the federal Outer Continental Shelf program, said, "I am proceeding with instructions that the sale will go on February 23."

Oil industry representatives also indicated they must proceed on the assumption the sale will be held.

Hoffman said the decision by former Interior Secretary Thomas Kleppe to hold the sale was "well-considered." He added that Kleppe addressed "the major environmental questions raised by environmental groups and Natives."

Cecil Barnes, president of Chugach Natives, Inc., the regional Native corporation with which English Bay is affiliated,

said he had no comment on the sale at this time. He pointed out that English Bay and the nearby village of Port Graham had conflicting points of view on offshore oil development and that he could not take sides. He expressed sympathy for the village point of view, but questioned whether all the options had been looked at.

Speaking at a seminar in Anchorage on offshore development, English Bay spokesman Arnold Melsheimer said the village had a contribution to make to the world by remaining a traditional, rural Native village and suggested other Native villages would someday thank them for saying no to oil.

"We do not intend to be impacted by something so contrary to our lifestyle in a forceful and sudden manner," Melsheimer said.