

Clark changes OCS leasing

By Linda Lord-Jenkins

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U.S. Interior Secretary William Clark has removed some offshore oil tracts from the 1984 and 1985 leasing schedule but has refused to remove a planned leasing for offshore areas near Kaktovik where whale hunters conduct subsistence whaling activities.

Clark said in a letter to Gov. Bill Sheffield that the Kaktovik area has too great a potential for high oil and gas deposits and there is too much oil industry interest in leasing the tract for him to remove it from the leasing schedule.

Clark did, however, make several concessions on oil leasing schedules in other areas, including reducing the size of two proposed sales, and removed one tract from consideration in the Bristol Bay area.

He also agreed to limit lease sales to no more than three per year.

Clark also deleted Sale 85 in the Barrow Arch from the five-year oil and gas leasing schedule to conduct a further assessment of operations in heavy ice conditions.

North Slope Mayor Eugene Brower Said Monday the Clark

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Barrow Arch deleted, Kaktovik continues

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decision "Sounds like a good news for the people of the North Slope." Brower said he would review the decision regarding the Kaktovik tracts but was pleased with the other announcement.

The specific actions include:

- * Deletion of Sale 92 in the North Aleutian Basin which is near the Bristol Bay salmon fisheries. The area has "high geologic potential and received heavy nominations from the oil industry."

- * Deletion of some areas of

Sale 92 in the North Aleutian Basin which were of greatest concern to the fishing industry in Alaska. The deletion will not affect areas with high geologic potential and have received heavy interest from the oil industry.

The new leasing plan covers an area south of 56 degrees, 30 minutes and west of Port Moller and constitutes a reduction of about 83 percent of the initial planning area originally scheduled for leasing. All of Bristol Bay east of Cape Newen-

ham and Port Moller would be deleted.

Because of the deletions the sale will be delayed from April to August of 1985.

- * The Diaper Field proposal in the Beaufort Sea will be eliminated in areas of low hydrocarbon potential and sales of nearly half of the acreage in the planning area will be deferred. This includes the Kaktovik areas.

- * In the final notice of sale for the Navarin Basin, the state will be given the power to determine if the leasing oil company possesses the ability to contain and clean up oil spills in the transportation, storage, transfer and loading stages of oil development.

Gov. Bill Sheffield, who had sought many more changes in the offshore leasing schedules, was still studying the Clark plan, according to deputy press secretary John Greeley.

Greeley said that "At this point we are still analyzing what

they are talking about in their letter. We are going to be in touch with a lot of groups who have concerns about this from fishing groups, environmental and subsistence groups and seeing what the people think about what Clark has said."

Greeley said that the state also is reviewing other matters that have an effect on the leasing schedule in Washington D.C. Those matters include the status of a U.S. Supreme Court decision that stated the states have no right to impose state restrictions on activities in the offshore areas that are governed by the federal government.

The Interior Department budget which is being reviewed also is being watched because the final budget "may affect the pace and scope of the leasing program in the future," said Greeley.

U.S. Sen. Frank Murkowski said the modifications are a "good and fair compromise be-

tween the Department of the Interior and the State of Alaska . . . The schedule reflects a consistency which is important to the orderly exploration and development of Alaska's energy resources.

Sheffield said he was "grateful" that Clark saw the need for more public participation in the OCS leasing process . . . but was "disappointed that Clark didn't see fit to accommodate more of Alaska's concerns."

Sheffield said his disappointment stems from Clark's failure to provide more funding for environmental studies to keep pace with increases in the amount of acreage offered for lease . . . and also, while we believe providing a share of OCS revenues to coastal states to help offset the impact of offshore development is critical, the Secretary stated his opposition to OCS revenues sharing legislation pending before Congress.