

Delay urged in Norton sale

U.S. Sen. Frank Murkowski has urged Interior Secretary James Watt to delay Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lease sale No. 57 in Norton Sound and lease sale No. 70 in the St. George Basin.

"Development of the oil resources off Alaska's coast can help decrease our reliance on imported oil and help build the state's economic base, but it must be done wisely and with proper regard for the region, its inhabitants and other valuable natural resources," said Murkowski. "It is unwise to proceed with these two lease sales without taking proper environmental safeguards," he added.

In a letter to Watt, Murkowski urged that Norton Sound lease sale No. 57, scheduled for November, be delayed until a supplement to the final environmental impact study is completed and a Coastal Management Plan fully implemented in the area.

Murkowski noted that the State of Alaska cancelled its plan to offer state lease sale No. 38 in the Norton Sound Basin due to many reasons, including a new understanding concerning the resource base and industry's interest in the tract.