

# Sound whale study inconclusive

The North Slope Borough, the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and the Acoustical Society of America recently had a scientific workshop on the effects of man-made noise and vibration on Arctic marine wildlife.

The workshop was conducted by the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in San Diego. The first such workshop in history, was organized by the Inupiat bowhead whalers to determine the state of scientific knowledge about how noise from associated with Arctic off-shore oil and gas operations could affect the bowhead whale, and other marine life.

Acoustical impact upon the whale was identified as a problem about which the government knew too little when U.S. District Court Judge Aubrey Robinson, Jr., District of Columbia, enjoined the Secretary of Interior from proceeding with the Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Lease Sale.

The Inupiat are concerned that the whale's migratory route would be affected by offshore operational noise resulting from Beaufort Sea lease sale development activity. When the cities of Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik brought suit against EXXON's Duck Island offshore exploratory drilling operations in 1978, they complained about the lack of data on marine acoustical impact. (See Tundra Times December 27, 1978 issue) The results of this research were

not disclosed until the workshop.

Almost 100 attended the workshop. 'Among bio-acousticians and those needing to play catch-up ball on the Beaufort Sea Environmental Impact Statement, this conference was of major significance,' according to a Borough spokesman.

Final results are yet to be published by ASA, but already emerging is the priority placed on comparative ambient noise, propagation studies and more complete bioacoustic studies of the bowhead, the ringed seal, and certain marine birds. Also lacking are source level measurements.

The Inupiat have approached the State for aid in obtaining this data. NSB officials are negotiating a settlement of the Beaufort Sea Lease Sale litigation now before the Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C. - litigation that is holding up the awarding bids.

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