

# Watt may ask justice department to halt North Slope whaling probe

Secretary of the Interior James Watt may ask the justice department to back off on its grand jury investigation of North Slope whalers for allegedly violating international whaling quotas.

Alaska Rep. Don Young said, following a meeting with Watt last week, "I believe we're going to see in the future a withdrawal of punitive action." Young added that Watt had agreed to bring the bowhead whaling controversy up at a cabinet meeting.

The investigation was started last fall at the instigation of the justice department. The grand jury has yet to return any indictments.

Young said he has written to Attorney General William French Smith, asking him to reconsider the investigation. "I hope the Reagan administration will

see the injustices of this whole problem," Young said.