

# Native foundation to survey village OCS concerns

The Alaska Native Foundation (ANF) is conducting an intensive effort to identify issues and concerns Western Alaska residents have over the coming Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lease sales and future developments in Western Alaska.

Sales in these areas are scheduled to begin in 1982 and continue through 1985.

"Only by identifying issues and their extent can steps be taken to seeking a solution on them," said Roger Lang, ANF president.

The Issue Identification Program (IIP) essentially is a research, data gathering, and analytical effort, and will take approximately six months.

"It's to the mutual interest of both the oil industry and the residents to determine what all of the real village and rural issues are," Lang said. "The better and more complete the information is right at the beginning, the better these issues and concerns will be met throughout the whole of the OCS process."

Judy Meidinger, ANF vice president, is in charge of the project. She and Lang pointed out that rural residents are very concerned about possible impacts of oil exploration and development, particularly on subsistence and village lifestyles.

"Rural residents have not had sufficient access to technological data or to information concerning the timing and impact of various stages of the implementation and development of OCS leases," Lang said. "We want to be in a position so that concerns about subsistence, the environment, employment opportunities, roads and pipelines, and the overall impact of development can be addressed as fully as they need to be from a village perspective and planning can begin."

"The federal and state governments hold scoping sessions and hearings, and eventually an environmental impact statement is produced," said Meidinger. "We want to make sure the most important rural concerns are constantly and consistently addressed throughout the whole process. Too often, these concerns are not given the attention to the extent they should be."

The effort is funded by Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO).

"They want to know what these concerns are just as badly as we need to know what theirs are," said Lang.

Lang and Meidinger said there were three major aspects to the program. The first, an intensive research effort into the basic information, is nearing completion. Native organizations; federal, state, and local governments agencies; and the industry itself were contacted during this phase of the program.

"The next step, to begin shortly, will be a series of meetings with organizations who represent the interests and concerns of the residents of the affected areas," said Meidinger. "We're going to meet with everybody concerned to find out what is really worrying them."

Meidinger said the need for the program has been recognized by leaders of the Native community, who have voiced their

support and helped to arrange the forthcoming meetings, and by industry representatives, who say they badly need good information about rural concerns.

So far, meetings are scheduled with non-profit groups from the NANA, Bering Straits, Calista, and Aleut Corporation regions, and with such issue ad-

visory groups as Nunam Kitlutsisti, the Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, and the Eskimo Whale and Walrus Commission.

In the third and final stage of the project, the results of the research and of the meetings will be examined and a comprehensive report will be

written. "Then we'll see where we can go from there," said Lang.

Both Lang and Meidinger pointed out the program might identify areas of conflict or controversy that might be difficult to solve. "But, we might as well find that out now rather than later," they said.