

State sues to stop NPR-A sale

The Associated Press

The state has filed a second suit against the Interior Department in connection with the scheduled July 20 sale of oil and gas leases on 2.2 million acres of land in National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

In the latest suit, the state asked U.S. District Court to prohibit the federal government from disbursing money received from bids on submerged lands included in the sale to which Alaska claims ownership.

The state claims that any

proceeds from the sale of lands beneath navigable lakes and rivers should go into an escrow account until the ownership of those lands has been determined.

It said several of the 84 tracts on which exploration rights are to be sold include lands beneath navigable waters under disputed ownership.

The state had previously filed suit to block the July 20 lease sale on grounds that caribou calving grounds and prime waterfowl habitat in the area would not be protected ade-

quately from oil exploration.

The city of Barrow and two of its residents have also asked

U.S. District Court to halt the sale until the Interior Department complies with provisions

of both the National Environmental Policy Act and the Alaska Lands Act.