

NORTH SLOPE News



April 2007

Edward Saġgan Itta, Mayor

Oil (development) and water don't mix

We used to think of oil and gas activity as something that happened far away from most of our communities and our hunting grounds. But in recent years we have seen major changes. Alpine brought development within view of Nuiqsut, then exploration took off in NPR-A, where many people have subsistence camps. Now there is a great deal of interest in prospects around Teshekpuk Lake, the most sensitive subsistence wildlife area in the region.

At the same time, there is activity in the Brooks Range foothills and moving close to Barrow, Atqasuk and Wainwright. The high price of oil has also created a new wave of interest in offshore exploration.

Through it all, my administration has held steady in our response. First, we have supported responsible onshore development. Teshekpuk is a special case, and I have opposed the federal government's current leasing plan there because of its unique wildlife and habitat values.

Second, I have opposed all offshore development, just as every mayor before me did. Development in the Arctic Ocean is not acceptable to our communities, because it threatens the bowhead migration and the other marine mammals that thrive in these waters. The bowhead is sensitive to industrial noise, which carries great distances under water. Drilling and production involve enormous risks in broken or shifting ice. Oil spills are impossible to contain and clean up. As far as I am concerned, oil and water do not mix. It's a disaster waiting to happen, and if a disaster occurs, we are the people who will be directly and profoundly affected.

The federal government is well aware of our concerns, but it doesn't seem to influence their plans for offshore oil and gas activities. The environmental risk assessment for Lease Sale 202 – the Beaufort Sea

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2nd Annual Sobriety Walk a success

In celebration of Sobriety Awareness Month, the North Slope Borough Health Department hosted the Slope-wide 2nd Annual Sobriety Walk.

Atqasuk, Anaktuvuk Pass, Barrow, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Point Hope, Point Lay



and Wainwright all participated. The Sobriety Walks emphasize making healthy choices. Most of the villages, including Barrow, held their Walk on April 21st. The Village Liaisons and the Health Department's CHAP and Health Clinic staff helped organize and host the events. During the Sobriety Walk, participants held signs that read "Just Say No," and wore buttons that

read, "I Walk For Sobriety!" Every village had a great turnout. There was a total of 349 participants slope-wide (this number does not include Kaktovik's participants because their Walk is scheduled for April 28th). The organizers from the villages reported that many elders participated in the Walks in support for sobriety and healthy lifestyles. After the Walk, each village celebrated with refreshments and family-oriented door prizes, such as board games, camping gear and cooking utensils.

We look forward to next year's Sobriety Walk and seeing even more participation!

Congratulations!

Officer Joe Pruitt

April 2007 Employee of the Month



Officer Joe Pruitt was hired by the North Slope Borough Police Department on August 23, 1989. During his 18 years of service, Joe has served the North Slope wearing many hats as police officer.

He found his passion as a DARE officer teaching the children to "just say no" to drugs and alcohol. People across the North Slope know Officer Pruitt as "PSO JOE," a title he wears proudly. He not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk, and has always strived to make the North Slope a healthier place to live.

Winners!

Whaling Captains Mukluk Race

Agvitchiaq Crew, 1st Place
Olemaun Crew, 2nd Place
Sherrick Crew, 3rd Place

Whaling Crew Sled Race

David Leavitt Crew, 1st Place
Ben Itta Crew, 2nd Place
Marchie Nageak Crew, 3rd Place

Whaling Crew Tea Race

Luther Leavitt Crew, 1st Place
Marchie Nageak Crew, 2nd Place
David Leavitt, 3rd Place

Nigliq Calling Contest

Corrine Danner, 1st Place
Forrest Deano Olemaun, 2nd Place
Nora Adams, 3rd Place

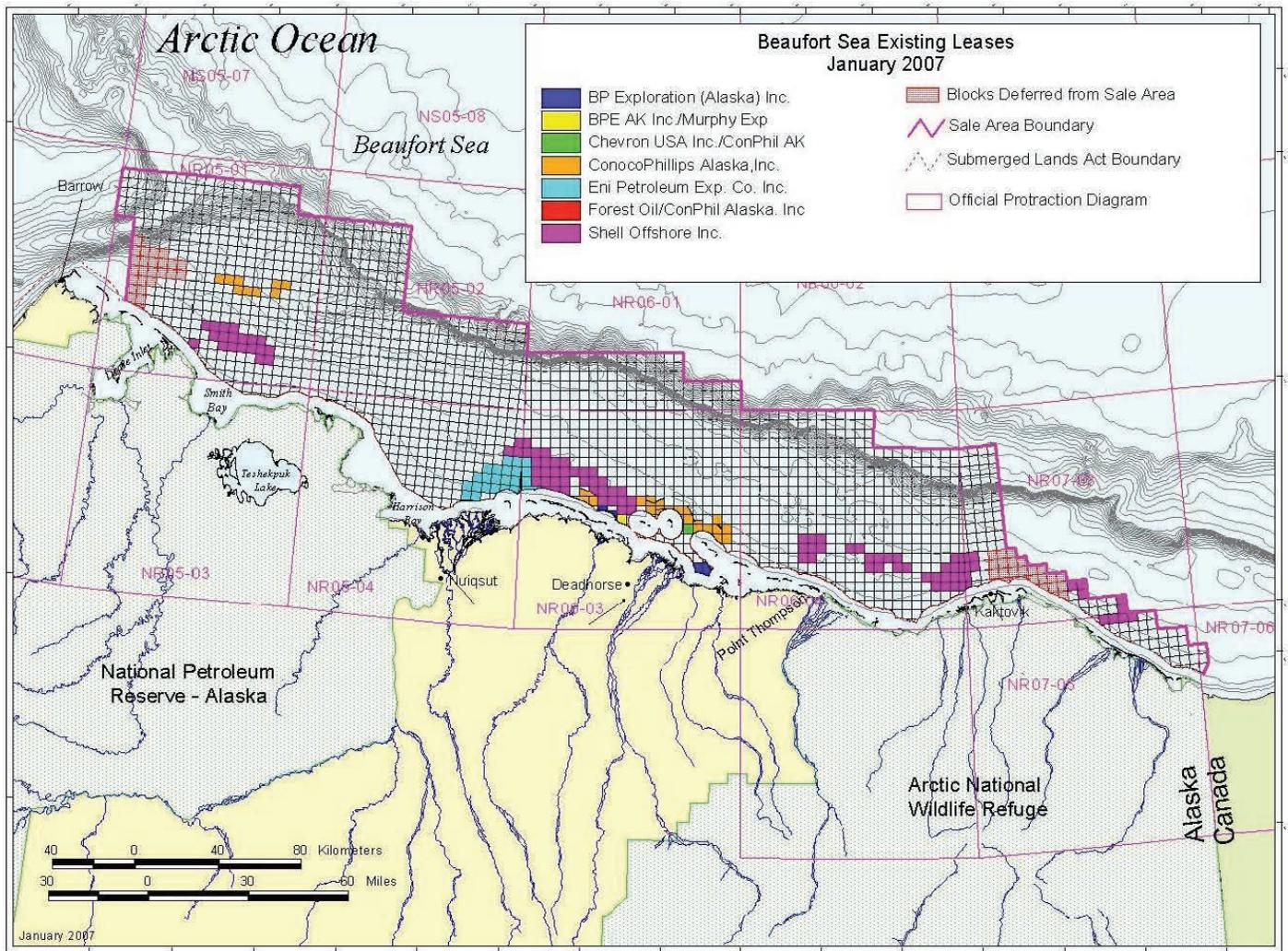
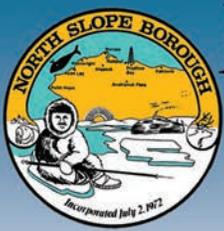
Pinochle Contest

Olemaun Crew, 1st Place
David Leavitt Crew, 2nd Place
Hopson II Crew, 3rd Place

Famous Quote!

"Graduation is only a concept. In real life every day you graduate. Graduation is a process that goes on until the last day of your life. If you can grasp that, you'll make a difference."

— Arie Pencovici



MMS U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Alaska OCS Region

Oil (development) and water don't mix (continued from pg. 1)

sale held last week – was a poorly prepared analysis based on outdated information. It showed that the Minerals Management Service (MMS) is clearly more interested in developing oil and gas than in protecting the nation's most important natural resources – its lands and waters.

Because MMS had not seriously looked at some of the risks involved in Lease Sale 202, I felt we had to challenge it in court. At the same time, I knew it would be an uphill battle. We asked a federal court to stop the lease sale and require MMS to conduct a thorough environmental impact study. On April 12, the judge denied our motion to halt the lease sale, and it went ahead as scheduled on April 18.

More than 500,000 acres were leased, and most of this newly leased acreage is farther offshore than existing leases. Shell had more than 90 percent of the high bids in the sale, reflecting their very aggressive return to the North Slope in recent years. At this time, I am considering whether or not to appeal the judge's decision to a higher court.

While MMS was holding Lease Sale 202, we were looking at what happens after a lease sale – exploration. MMS recently approved Shell's three-year plan for Beaufort Sea exploratory drilling on earlier leases, a plan which would bring an unprecedented collection of drill ships, icebreakers, supply vessels, tugs and a giant oil tanker into Beaufort waters this summer, along with seismic ships and various aircraft.

Was this much activity anticipated in MMS's planning process? I doubt it. Will it divert the bowhead migration farther out to sea and threaten the success of the hunt and the whalers' safety? This is our worst fear.

Faced with another inadequate environmental review, again I felt the borough had to act on behalf of our whalers. Together with AEW and ICAS, we asked a Department of Interior review panel to order a complete Environmental Impact Statement for Shell's exploration plan. I am hoping the Interior Department will step up to the plate where MMS struck out. If not, we may have to pursue another legal challenge as our last option.

I don't like to fight the government in court. I consider it a last resort, but I believe the situation is getting desperate. Many of our whalers and their families and others in our communities say they feel the same way. Like me, they believe we can stand up and speak out now, or we can stand by and hope that others will take care of us, others who do not know this place the way we do, others who will not have to live with the effects of mistakes that are made in the rush to find new riches.