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## Groups Sue Again Over Oil Drilling off Alaska

By JIM CARLTON

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A coalition of environmental and tribal groups filed a challenge Wednesday to a federal air-emissions permit for a Royal Dutch Shell RDSA -0.56% PLC drilling ship, the latest legal maneuver aimed at stopping the oil giant's exploration plan off Alaska's Arctic coast.

The Obama administration gave Shell the go-ahead last year to move forward with plans to drill for oil in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas. The coalition's court challenge targets a ship that Shell plans to deploy for drilling in the Beaufort Sea starting as early as mid-July when the sea-ice clears.

Shell's opponents said the challenge is part of a strategy to appeal as much of Shell's plan as they can, in hopes a court will block it. "We don't think there should be drilling

in the Arctic, period," said Rebecca Noblin, Alaska director of the Center for Biological Diversity, one of eight groups that filed the challenge in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

"History tells us opposition groups will use the courts in an attempt to stall our program at every turn," said Curtis Smith, a spokesman for Shell's Shell Alaska division. "Our recent filings make clear we have no intention of sitting back and waiting for that to happen."

Anti-drilling groups have filed at least four other challenges against the project since the Interior Department in October said it would uphold nearly 500 oil-drilling leases in the Chukchi Sea that legal challenges had blocked since 2008.

Shell has filed two suits against the coalition since February in federal court in Anchorage, Alaska, as a preemptive move to seek court judgments on some other permits the company said it believes the opponents will challenge. Those suits, as well as the challenges, are all pending.

The latest challenge alleges Shell's vessel and support fleet will pollute the Arctic air. Shell officials said the Environmental Protection Agency, which issued the emissions permits under the Clean Air Act, has found the ships would pose no significant impact to the air.