

October 10, 2023

Mr. Steve Cohn
Alaska State Director
Bureau of Land Management
222 W. 7th Avenue
Number 13
Anchorage, AK 99513

Re: Request for a 90-day extension of the deadline for comments on the BLM's Proposed Rule for the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve: Alaska

Submitted via email to: scohn@blm.gov

Dear Mr. Cohn,

The City of Atkasuk, for a number of reasons, believes BLM has not provided sufficient time for North Slope communities to properly digest or consider the full implications of the the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s Proposed Rule for the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). I write to **request a 90-day extension of the deadline for comments on the Proposed Rule.**

Although the notice of availability for the Proposed Rule was posted on September 7, 2023, our community only recently emerged from a three-month, region-wide broadband crisis that left an area the size of Minnesota with patchwork connectivity and download speeds unable to accommodate the Proposed Rule.

Local internet and telephone service was restored on September 19. Our community has not had sufficient access nor time to review the Proposed Rule and, as a result, we are hard-pressed to offer meaningful feedback within the short 60-day comment period offered.

The people this Proposed Rule affects the most are expected to read, digest, and provide meaningful feedback in an unreasonably short amount of time. If the timeline isn't arbitrary enough, the current public comment period directly coincides with vital subsistence activities underway in North Slope coastal villages. It is imperative that the administration observes the timing of our subsistence traditions when planning its public consultation period, whether the request for comment or in-person public meetings, on issues with a profound impact on our communities.

This announcement was made by the federal government without warning or consulting the North Slope Iñupiat. Despite living in these lands since time immemorial, we learned of the decision through the press, rather than from the administration itself.

This is no way to partner with Alaska Native communities. Going forward, we urge the BLM to do better in what is clearly an inconsistent and uneven relationship with the North Slope Iñupiat.

In light of the above subsistence, access, and timing challenges, it is clear that our communities will require more than 60 days to fully engage with BLM on the Proposed Rule. In line with the extension the NPR-A Working Group is requesting, **the City of Atkasuk requests a 90-day extension to the comment period.**

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug Whiteman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

Douglas Whiteman
Mayor