



**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

**Date:** September 18, 2024

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A statement from Nagruk Harcharek, President of the [Voice of Arctic Iñupiat](#) (VOICE). VOICE is a nonprofit organization established in 2015 by the region's collective elected Iñupiat leadership and is dedicated to preserving and advancing North Slope Iñupiat cultural and economic self-determination. Its members include local governments, Alaska Native Corporations, federally recognized tribes, and tribal non-profits across the North Slope of Alaska. On behalf of its 21 members, VOICE has filed a lawsuit challenging the Department of the Interior's rule affecting the North Slope Iñupiat's ancestral homelands in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A), and its Board of Directors passed a resolution opposing the Bureau of Land Management's Request for Information (RFI) affecting Special Areas in the NPR-A.

"VOICE unequivocally condemns the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Request for Information (RFI) aimed at imposing additional land use restrictions in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A). Its actions are a direct violation of the North Slope Iñupiat's inherent right to self-determination in our Indigenous homelands. DOI's continued interference threatens to devastate our regional economy, destabilize our communities, and erode a culture that has thrived in harmony with our land for thousands of years.

"It's telling that the most vocal supporters of DOI's RFI are groups who do not reflect the region's majority consensus and lawmakers who neither represent North Slope constituents nor have any meaningful connection to Alaska — let alone the North Slope. Together, they are manufacturing a false narrative that does not reflect our region's broad opposition to the RFI.

"These groups do not represent popular opinion on the North Slope. They hailed DOI's deeply flawed NPR-A rule earlier this year — a decision made without any meaningful engagement with the people who live in the affected area. Now, they disingenuously claim to support 'meaningful partnerships with Tribes,' while blatantly disregarding the Indigenous voices that live in the affected areas. Their hypocrisy is deeply offensive to the North Slope Iñupiat, and we will not be silenced by their performative 'support' for Indigenous communities in our region.

"Policies that are forced upon us without our input threaten to dismantle our regional economy. More than 95% of our region's tax revenue comes from development infrastructure on the North Slope — funding jobs and essential services like water and sewer systems, schools, health clinics, and wildlife research that sustains our subsistence traditions.

DOI's reckless actions put all of these vital resources — and our communities and culture — at serious risk.

"This RFI is the latest in a series of deeply flawed processes and policies from the federal government affecting our ancestral homelands. The stakes for our communities are high. That is why VOICE filed a lawsuit to challenge DOI's NPR-A rule on behalf of its 21 members in June this year. The federal government must allow the courts to resolve our case instead of rushing to enact additional processes to permanently alter Special Areas within the NPR-A in ways that do not align with our communities' needs, longstanding land management practices, or congressional intent.

"It's past time for the DOI, lawmakers from the Lower 48, and groups that do not represent popular will in our region, to practice what they preach. They must listen to the voices of the North Slope Iñupiat — the true stewards of the NPR-A for thousands of years — and respect our right to decide the future of our lands, waters, communities, and our Iñupiaq culture."

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