



**\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\***

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Contact: [voiceofthearctic@marathonstrategies.com](mailto:voiceofthearctic@marathonstrategies.com)

## **Biden DOI's ANWR Record of Decision and Minimized Lease Sale Undermines the Economic and Cultural Sovereignty of the North Slope Iñupiat**

*BLM's final ROD was crafted without meaningful consultation with North Slope Iñupiat communities, including Kaktovik, the only Indigenous community located within ANWR*

**Anchorage, AK** – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) and its 21 members object to today's [release](#) from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of the final Record Of Decision (ROD) for the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program [Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement](#) (SEIS) and announcement of a minimized second lease sale for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's (ANWR) Coastal Plain.

"Though our communities welcome the potential for a successful lease sale, we are clear eyed about the administration's intent and flawed process that got us here. This final ROD and notice of a lease sale is a deliberate attempt by the Biden administration's Interior Department to kneecap the potential of development in ANWR," said [Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat President Nagruk Harcharek](#). "This minimalist ROD goes against the wishes of the North Slope Iñupiat, particularly those in Kaktovik—the only community located within ANWR. It is a disingenuous move designed to meet the minimum legal requirements outlined by Congress while undermining any economic potential in our region—a bad faith effort that jeopardizes the economic and cultural future of our communities for political gain."

North Slope communities, who want to advance the self-determination of the Iñupiat, have historically supported development projects in the region and a lease sale on the Coastal Plain, are dissatisfied with the Biden administration's decision to finalize a ROD that does not reflect their shared position and intentionally minimizes development opportunities. This inadequate ROD exemplifies the federal government's flawed policy approach to this issue, including its decision to issue an unnecessary SEIS in the Coastal Plain. VOICE, along with the elected leadership of Kaktovik, the only community within all of ANWR, were [unified in opposition](#) to the Biden administration's decision to issue an SEIS after it unilaterally [canceled active leases](#) in ANWR and the NPR-A.

The ROD is a desperate measure built on a poor foundation of hasty policy moves and flawed processes that will not lead to durable public policy. But more importantly, the ROD and the process that produced it is disrespectful to North Slope Alaska Native communities like Kaktovik, who overwhelmingly reject the federal government's unilateral policy decisions in the region.

However, the federal government chose not to include Kaktovik or other North Slope Iñupiat communities in policy discussions that produced the ROD or policies leading up to it.

“As the only community that exists within ANWR, Kaktovik should have been included at the policymaking table throughout this policymaking process,” said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles Lampe**. “There’s a reason that the people of Kaktovik voted over 75% in favor of the Trump-Vance political ticket. This current administration keeps adding insult to injury with their flawed processes, falsely claiming to work with those who this will most affect. Our region voted to close this deeply troubling chapter with the current federal government in the hope of building a new relationship characterized by better engagement and cooperation with the only people that live within not only ANWR, but the Coastal Plain.”

While VOICE and its members are in strong support of an advancement of a congressionally mandated lease sale in the Coastal Plain, the federal government’s decision to release an unnecessary [final SEIS for ANWR](#) came less than 24 hours after a strong majority of voters from across the United States firmly rejected the Biden-Harris administration’s policy agenda in the 2024 election.

“We will fight to preserve the economic and cultural strength of our people, even in the face of a desperate Biden administration intent on advancing flawed land management policies during its final hours in office,” said [Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Tribal Secretary and Director of Natural Resources Doreen Leavitt](#). “We see this ROD for what it is: a defeated administration treating our people as a political football in a Hail Mary attempt to score political points before it leaves office. But we are not a political football. We deserve to be at the policymaking table to help shape policies that impact our homelands and advance our self-determination.”

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#### [About Voice of the 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. In 2017, VOICE’s board passed a resolution in support of opening the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas exploration and development.