



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Slope Indigenous Leaders Applaud the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Actions on the North Slope

Anchorage, AK – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) and its 21 members express their cautious optimism to [today’s announcement](#) from the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) about its decision to re-open areas of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) and the Arctic Wildlife National Refuge’s (ANWR) Coastal Plain for development.

“We applaud today’s decision by DOI and Secretary Burgum, which upholds both the 2017 Tax Cuts and Job Act and overwhelming support from our community for development opportunities on the Coastal Plain,” said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles Lampe**. “As the only community within ANWR’s 19-million-acre boundaries, we have fought for years for our right to self-determination and local economic development in our Indigenous homelands. Secretary Burgum’s decision today suggests our community’s voice is finally being heard in Washington.”

VOICE’s membership, which includes the elected leadership of Kaktovik and Atqasuk, which is located within the NPR-A, were [unified in opposition](#) to the Biden administration’s decisions to take action on our homelands without meaningful engagement and consultation. Today, DOI’s announcement takes steps to correct these deeply flawed policies, reflects the region’s shared position, and expands opportunities for development on the North Slope in support of unleashing Iñupiaq self-determination.

“DOI’s latest actions bring us closer to closing the troubling chapter opened by the Biden administration with its attempts to restrict our self-determination in our homelands,” said **Native Village of Atqasuk President Mary Bordeaux**. “Our NPR-A homelands, which we have stewarded for over 10,000 years, are essential to our Iñupiaq culture and local economies that sustain our communities. Today, we move one step closer to ensuring that communities like mine may continue to practice our cultural traditions, build modern economies, and thrive for thousands of years more.”

Over 95% of the North Slope’s tax revenue is derived from taxation on resource development infrastructure. These funds support essential services, like schools, health clinics, modern water and sewer systems, and world-class wildlife management and research supporting Indigenous subsistence traditions. The proliferation of these services is directly connected to significant increases in average lifespan for the North Slope Iñupiat from just 34 years in 1969 to 77 years today – the [largest increase](#) of its kind in the United States over that period.

“VOICE has advocated tirelessly for durable policies and regular engagement with our North Slope leaders to support development opportunities in the region,” said **Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat President Nagruk Harcharek**. “It is vital to ensure that revenue streams supporting essential services and infrastructure, many of which are ubiquitous in the Lower 48 but have only arrived in our region within the last 50 years, and institutions managing our subsistence resources remain viable in the long term.”

Under the Biden administration, North Slope Iñupiat leaders were not consulted by the federal government prior to its actions in their Indigenous NPR-A and ANWR homelands. By excluding local Indigenous communities from the policymaking table, the Biden administration produced deeply flawed policies that would have imposed dire economic consequences on the North Slope Iñupiat's communities and culture.

“Today’s announcement by Secretary Burgum shows that this administration is taking a different approach than its predecessor by listening to North Slope Iñupiat voices,” said **Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Natural Resources Director and Tribal Secretary Doreen Leavitt**. “While these early executive and secretarial actions are promising, it is important that the Trump-Vance administration engage early and frequently with our North Slope leaders to ensure durable policy in our region that benefits our communities and advances our self-determination in the long term.”

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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, and it filed a lawsuit last year against the Biden administration’s deeply flawed National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) 2024 rule.