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North Slope Iñupiat Leaders Voice Support for ANWR Policy Shift That Will Unlock Indigenous Self-Determination

Washington, D.C. –Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) and its members support today’s actions by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) to revert to the 2020 Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Record of Decision (ROD).

VOICE’s members, which include the elected Iñupiat leadership of Kaktovik – the only community within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) – were unified in opposition to the previous federal administration’s unilateral actions on the North Slope, which occurred without meaningful consultation.

“As the sole community in ANWR’s 19.6-million-acre expanse, it’s vital that Kaktovik’s perspective be listened to and reflected in federal policy that directly impacts our ancestral homelands,” said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles “CC” Lampe**. “It is encouraging to see decisionmakers in Washington advancing policies that respect our voice and support Kaktovik’s long term success.”

“Today’s development is another indicator that the federal government understands and respects the importance of North Slope Iñupiaq self-determination,” said **VOICE President and CEO Nagruk Harcharek**. “We are pleased by Secretary Burgum and the Trump-Vance administration’s efforts to advance policies affecting ANWR that reflect our communities’ voices. Their efforts will create a strong foundation to build a stronger, more respectful relationship between Washington and the North Slope.”

"Developing ANWR’s Coastal Plain is vital for Kaktovik’s future," said **Mayor of Kaktovik Nathan Gordon, Jr.** "Taxation of development infrastructure in our region funds essential services across the North Slope, including water and sewer systems to clinics, roads, and first responders. Today’s actions by the federal government create the conditions for these services to remain available and for continued progress for our communities."

Over 95% of the North Slope’s tax revenue is derived from taxation of resource development infrastructure, not output. These funds support modern community infrastructure and services – which are ubiquitous in the Lower 48 but have only recently reached Alaska’s remote North Slope region – as well as world-class wildlife management and research departments supporting Indigenous subsistence traditions. The proliferation of these services is directly connected to significant increases in average North Slope Iñupiat life expectancy from just 34 years in 1969 to 77 years today.

“We thank the Trump-Vance administration for recognizing that unleashing American energy dominance begins on the North Slope,” said **North Slope Borough Mayor Josiah Patkotak**. “Reinstating the 2020 Record of Decision in ANWR reflects the overwhelming support for responsible development in our region. When Uncle Doug calls, I answer. And when I call, he answers. The ability to have a respectful conversation—whether we agree or not—reflects what a true partnership should look like between the Federal Government and the North Slope Iñupiat.”

“Engaging with our elected North Slope Iñupiat leadership is not only our legal right as a federally recognized Tribe, but also the most effective way to ensure policies truly meet the needs of those most affected,” said **Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Executive Director Morrie Lemen**. “We urge the Trump-Vance administration to continue this approach and achieve success where so many of its federal predecessors have failed.”

DOI’s announcement represents another positive development in the evolving partnership between the federal government and North Slope Iñupiat communities. After enduring decades of uneven relations with the federal government, recent congressional and federal policy changes and a historic visit by three cabinet-level officials to Iñupiat homelands in Utqiagvik have yielded progress for the North Slope.

“We are encouraged by the Department of the Interior’s actions to advance policies that reflect the perspectives of Kaktovik, the sole community located in the within the Coastal Plain,” said **ASRC President and CEO Rex A. Rock, Sr.** “We remain committed to supporting Kaktovik’s ongoing efforts to strengthen their community and build a brighter future.”

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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. VOICE was the first organization to file a lawsuit to challenge the 2024 National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska rule, which was crafted without meaningful engagement with those who live on the North Slope and presented serious risks to survival of Indigenous communities and North Slope Iñupiat culture.