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North Slope Iñupiat Leaders Welcome DOI and BLM Call for Nominations and Comment on ANWR

Washington, D.C. – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) and its members are encouraged to see the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issue a Call for Nominations and Comment for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). In 2017, VOICE’s Board of Directors — which represents the majority of elected officials in the region, including those from Kaktovik, the only community located within ANWR — unanimously passed a resolution supporting responsible exploration and development on ANWR’s Coastal Plain. Today’s announcement follows DOI’s [announcement](#) in October that they would be reverting to the 2020 Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Record of Decision (ROD), Congressional action in December which nullified the 2024 ANWR ROD, and is the first step towards ultimately setting a date for a lease sale.

“We’re excited to see DOI and BLM continue to move forward with plans for responsible onshore development in ANWR,” said **VOICE President and CEO Nagruk Harcharek**. “The North Slope Iñupiat — including the people of Kaktovik, the only community in ANWR — have fought for our right to self-determination on our lands for generations. This process now represents an important opportunity for the federal government to continue meaningful engagement with the North Slope Iñupiat.”

Taxation generated from development infrastructure makes up over 95% of the North Slope Borough’s revenue. This funding in turn provides North Slope Iñupiat communities with critical public infrastructure and services including schools, health care facilities, emergency response services, modern water and sewer systems, and a nationally recognized wildlife management and research program that sustains our subsistence practices. These services are directly attributable to more than doubling the average lifespan on the North Slope since 1969.

“For the people of Kaktovik, responsible onshore development on ANWR’s Coastal Plain is about our ability to provide for our families and sustain our community for generations to come,” said **Kaktovik Mayor Nathan Gordon, Jr.** “As the only community located within ANWR, our voices must be central to this process.”

As comments from this process are reviewed and a lease sale date is ultimately set, it remains paramount that the federal government continue to prioritize North Slope Iñupiat voices and treat us with respect. Thankfully, we have already seen a marked improvement in this over the past year — when DOI announced the reversion to the 2020 Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum [named](#) Kaktovik leader Charles Lampe as someone whose voice he had considered when making this decision. As development in ANWR begins to become more tangible, now is the time to redouble this commitment.

“When the federal government works with us as true partners, we can protect our culture and wildlife while also supporting the economic foundation our communities rely on,” said **Kaktovik Iñupiat**

Corporation President Charles “CC” Lampe. “We expect this process to continue in that spirit of collaboration and mutual respect.”

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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.