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Successful NPR-A Lease Sale Marks Long-Awaited Milestone for North Slope Iñupiat Self-Determination

Anchorage, AK – Today’s successful lease sale in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) is a major achievement resulting from sustained policy reforms and prioritization of North Slope Iñupiat voices by the Trump-Vance administration and Congress. These efforts have restored meaningful opportunities for responsible onshore resource development on their Iñupiat homelands long advocated for by local elected leaders.

“Today’s lease sale proves what we have been saying for years: when there is meaningful policy in place supporting responsible onshore development, industry interest will follow,” said **Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) President & CEO Nagruk Harcharek**. “Over the past year, we have supported the Trump-Vance administration and Congress’s efforts to build more durable policies affecting our homelands. This successful NPR-A lease sale is a gratifying reminder our work that will strengthen our self-determination for generations to come.”

North Slope Iñupiat communities have long supported responsible resource development opportunities within the NPR-A given their proven economic benefits to the region, which support Iñupiat culture and subsistence. Over 95% of the North Slope’s tax revenue is derived from taxation on resource development infrastructure and supports essential services like schools, health clinics, modern water and sewer systems, and world-class wildlife management and research supporting Iñupiat subsistence traditions. The proliferation of these services is directly connected to an [increase](#) in average North Slope Iñupiat lifespan from just 34 years in 1969 to 77 years today.

“Today’s lease sale is an exciting step in the right direction for Atqasuk, who has stewarded the NPR-A for millennia,” said **Native Village of Atqasuk President Mary Bordeaux**. “We have seen firsthand how responsible development improves our community, and we look forward to working with the federal government and industry representatives to advance projects beneficial to both our economy and Iñupiat culture.”

Responsible resource development in the NPR-A, which local communities and elected leaders support, is an expression of Iñupiat self-determination. The North Slope Iñupiat have stewarded the NPR-A for millennia, and their Indigenous voices must play a central role in determining their homelands’ future. This includes development opportunities on their ancestral homelands to provide the foundation necessary to preserve Iñupiat self-determination.

“As the North Slope’s Regional Alaska Native tribal government, we exist to advocate on behalf of our people,” said **Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Executive Director Morrie Lemen**. “We support responsible onshore development, represented by today’s successful lease sale, because it benefits our communities, coexists with our subsistence traditions, and ensures our Iñupiat self-determination.”

The outcome of today’s lease sale underscores the impact of VOICE’s advocacy and strong collaboration between North Slope Iñupiat organizations to secure durable federal policies that respect local priorities.

Iñupiat voices played a central role in advancing these policy changes, enabling today's successful lease sale. Looking ahead, VOICE will continue to ensure that the North Slope Iñupiat's voices are heard at every policy and development conversation affecting the region.

“Today's successful lease sale is another win for North Slope Iñupiat self-determination in our ancestral homelands and a significant step toward a more prosperous future for our communities,” said **Rex A. Rock, Sr., Arctic Slope Regional Corporation President & CEO**. “This milestone is evidence that the North Slope's voice is strongest – and can deliver meaningful outcomes for everyone – when we are unified.”

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About Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

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. In 2024, VOICE was the first organization to file a lawsuit against the Bureau of Land Management to challenge the 2024 National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) 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.