



**\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\***

June 5, 2026

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

## **Successful ANWR Lease Sale is an Important Milestone For North Slope Iñupiat Self-Determination**

**ANCHORAGE, AK** – Today’s successful lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge’s (ANWR) Coastal Plain is the culmination of decades of advocacy by North Slope Iñupiat leaders, in particular leaders from Kaktovik, for their right to self-determination on their homelands, including responsible exploration and development. This lease sale is the first of four sales mandated by law following the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025.

“Today is an important milestone for North Slope Iñupiat self-determination— particularly Kaktovik, the only community in ANWR,” said **VOICE President & CEO Nagruk Harcharek**. “Durable policies crafted in close consultation with North Slope Iñupiat leaders provide the foundation for responsible resource development opportunities in our region. This sale is the first in a series of legally required lease sales on our ancestral homelands, and today’s results give us cautious optimism that our North Slope Iñupiat self-determination is being centered in policy decisions made about our ancestral homelands.”

Kaktovik, the only community located within ANWR and whose people have stewarded ANWR’s Coastal Plain for millennia, has endured an uneven relationship with the federal government. The community was not consulted during the creation or subsequent expansion of ANWR and has been forcibly relocated by the federal government three times. Today’s successful lease sale is a monumental step in Kaktovik’s effort to determine the future of their community, economy, and culture on their ancestral homelands in the ANWR Coastal Plain. It is also worth noting that, in line with Kaktovik’s wishes, development would impact only a fraction of a percent of ANWR’s total land area.

“Kaktovik is pleased by today’s successful lease sale, which represents the culmination of years of advocacy by our community,” said **City of Kaktovik Mayor Nathan Gordon Jr.** “The Trump-Vance administration is doing the right thing by advancing policies, including those that permitted the sale, supported by our community.”

“Today’s successful sale proves that when our voices are centered in policymaking conversations, we can strengthen Kaktovik’s future and America’s energy security,” said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles Lampe**. “The Kaktovikmiut are the only people who live in ANWR — we have a right to exist and protect our economic and cultural self-determination. After decades of being treated as an afterthought by the federal government, our voices are finally being heard, and our right to make decisions about our ancestral homelands is being respected.”

Taxation of resource development infrastructure on the North Slope accounts for more than 95% of the North Slope Borough’s (NSB) revenue. The revenue generated supports community essentials, including education, health clinics and emergency responders, modern water and sewage systems, and world-class wildlife management and research supporting Iñupiat subsistence traditions. The proliferation of these services corresponds to average life expectancy on the North Slope more than doubling since 1969.

“For generations, the Iñupiat have shown that responsible development and our subsistence way of life can coexist,” said **NSB Mayor Josiah Patkotak**. “Today’s ANWR lease sale reflects continued confidence in that balance and in the ability of North Slope communities to help guide the future of our region—on our terms. We appreciate Secretary Burgum, the Trump-Vance administration, and our Congressional delegation for their engagement with North Slope communities throughout this process. We look forward to continuing that partnership to advance responsible development that supports our communities, boosts Alaska’s economy, and strengthens our nation’s energy security.”

This administration has ensured North Slope Iñupiat voices are included when drafting policies about their ancestral homelands. In June 2025, Department of the Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin visited the North Slope to speak directly with the North Slope Iñupiat. Secretary Burgum also visited the North Slope again in May 2026, further demonstrating the federal government’s commitment to meaningful engagement with North Slope communities.

“Today’s lease sale is the result of an inclusive policymaking approach that prioritized North Slope Iñupiat voices when it comes to responsible development in ANWR,” said **Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Executive Director Morrie Lemen**. “ICAS is pleased to support Kaktovik’s decades-long advocacy effort to advance their self-determination on their Coastal Plains homelands. We celebrate today’s outcomes as an example of respect for the Kaktovikmuit’s collective voice over outsiders who have no connection to our lands or people.”

“Today’s lease sale in the Coastal Plain sets the stage for strengthening the North Slope economic foundation and Iñupiaq cultural self-determination for generations to come,” said **Arctic Slope Regional Corporation President and CEO Rex A. Rock Sr.** “This is an important victory not just for Kaktovik, but for our entire North Slope community in our shared effort to reinforce and strengthen the economic base of our region.”

###

#### **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 elected leaders of federally recognized tribes, local governments, Alaska Native Corporations, 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.