



February 23, 2023

Mr. Jeff Zients, Chief of Staff
Mr. Bruce Reed, Deputy Chief of Staff
Mr. John Podesta, Senior Advisor
Mr. Ali Zaidi, Senior Advisor
Mr. Steve Ricchetti, Counselor to the President
Ms. Louisa Terrell, Director of Legislative Affairs

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear White House Senior Officials,

I write to you today on behalf of the membership of the Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (Voice) regarding the Willow Project (Willow), a resource development project located in the ancestral homelands of the North Slope Iñupiat and within the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (NPR-A). VOICE is a nonprofit organization established in 2015 by the region’s collective Iñupiat leadership to speak with a unified voice on issues impacting the North Slope Iñupiat, our communities, our economy and our culture. The Willow Project is one of those issues.

Our board—representing 24 tribes, Alaska Native corporations, local governments, and tribal nonprofits across the North Slope of Alaska, in close proximity to the proposed project site—has issued its unanimous support for Willow through a formal resolution. We also made clear our support in a [formal letter](#) sent last fall to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, who despite multiple entreaties has declined to meet with the elected leadership of the North Slope.

There are many misperceptions about the local community’s stance on Willow, many perpetuated by groups with no connection to our people, our heritage, or our lands. **We write to make things clear: the majority consensus on the North Slope supports the Willow Project.** Its economic benefits to our communities are clear, as is Willow’s ability to coexist with our subsistence traditions. Anything less than the advancement of the Bureau of Land Management’s identified Alternative E would represent a generational economic setback to our people and region and imperil the traditions that form the bedrock of our Iñupiaq culture.

voiceofthearcticinupiat.org
3900 C St, Suite 302
Anchorage, AK 99503
info@inupiatvoice.org



Economic suppression by the federal government on the North Slope will force our people to leave our ancestral homelands thereby robbing future generations of Iñupiat of our rich culture and traditions. This is akin to the dark American history of cultural assassination and forced assimilation and re-location of many Native American tribes in the lower 48. This administration can choose to repeat history or empower indigenous people and communities to be self-determined.

We have sustained ourselves in the United States' most extreme and remote climate for more than 10,000 years by staying true to our time-honored cultural values. Recently, Secretary Haaland stated, "I think it's fair to say that, even to this day, no one knows my homelands better than it's original stewards and their descendants." We could not agree more. We understand our lands and communities better than anyone. And we know that resource development and our subsistence way of life are not mutually exclusive. We embrace this balance and urge the Biden administration to respect the future that we envision by advancing a Record of Decision (ROD) on Willow consistent with the project's minimum requirements as laid out by ConocoPhillips, without further deferrals, delays, or stipulations.

Further unnecessary reviews or limiting the project to fewer pads would render Willow economically unviable and terminate the project, presenting dire implications for our region's economy, the self-determination of the Iñupiat people, and the future of Alaska's North Slope.

The communities of the North Slope view Willow as meticulously planned to be compatible with the continued cultural, economic, and ecological interdependence we have adapted to over the last 50 years. Willow offers an opportunity to deliver vital economic outcomes to Alaska Natives while strengthening America's energy security for years to come. Willow has been carefully developed to coexist with our Iñupiaq American lifestyle and the wildlife that we rely on. This was achieved through a robust, years-long planning process that included 215 days of public comment and 25 public meetings to date. At every opportunity, our communities vigorously participated to ensure that our voice was heard and that concerns were addressed in the project's design.

If advanced, the Willow Project is estimated to generate hundreds of direct jobs and thousands of construction jobs, along with contracting opportunities for Native-owned businesses. The Bureau of Land Management estimates that Willow will result in approximately \$6 billion from federal royalties and state and local taxes. For local communities, more than \$1 billion in property taxes paid to the North Slope Borough would help provide essential services like education, police, fire protection, search and rescue, hundreds of local jobs, and more. Willow is also projected to add \$2.5 billion to the NPR-A Impact Mitigation Grant Program, which will

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support important community and social services, youth programs, and more throughout the North Slope.

The Willow Project also offers a valuable opportunity for the United States to seize its independence from international energy suppliers that do not share our environmental values. Oil produced in Alaska will be subject to more rigorous environmental standards than that produced by overseas partners like OPEC. In fact, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management [produced a report](#) during the Obama-Biden administration noting that “the production and transport of that foreign oil would emit more” greenhouse gases.

The Iñupiat have coexisted with responsible resource development for nearly 50 years, ensuring that our ancestral homelands and traditional subsistence lifestyles are protected while development occurs. Understanding and embracing that interdependence is paramount to the longevity of North Slope Iñupiaq culture and traditions. Willow will make it possible for our community to continue our traditions while strengthening the economic foundation of our region for decades to come.

Willow has bipartisan endorsement from the Alaska congressional delegation – Rep. Mary Peltola, Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, union backing, widespread support from the communities living in the North Slope, unanimous support from the Alaska House of Representatives, and support of the Alaska Federation of Natives. Willow has clear economic benefits for Alaska Native communities, Alaskan residents, and all Americans. We urge the Biden administration to advance the Willow Project without further delay or limitation. The livelihood of our people and the economic vitality of our region and communities depend on it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nagruk Harcharek".

Nagruk Harcharek
President
The Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

cc: U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan, Alaska
U.S. Representative Mary Peltola, Alaska
Governor Mike Dunleavy, Alaska
Tracy Stone-Manning, Director of Bureau of Land Management
Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs
Tommy Beaudreau, U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Interior

voiceofthearticinupiat.org
3900 C St, Suite 302
Anchorage, AK 99503
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Steve Cohn, Alaska Director
Raina Thiele, Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs and Strategic Priorities
PaaWee Rivera, Senior Advisor and Director of Tribal Affairs
Nada Culver, Principal Deputy Director

Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat Members

1. Arctic Slope Native Association
2. Arctic Slope Regional Corporation
3. Atqasuk Corporation
4. City of Anaktuvuk Pass
5. City of Atqasuk
6. City of Barrow
7. City of Kaktovik
8. City of Point Hope
9. City of Wainwright
10. Iļisagvik College
11. Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)
12. Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation
13. Native Village of Atqasuk
14. Native Village of Barrow
15. Native Village of Kaktovik
16. Native Village of Point Hope
17. Native Village of Point Lay
18. North Slope Borough
19. North Slope Borough School District
20. Nunamiut Corporation
21. Olgoonik Corporation
22. Tikigaq Corporation
23. Ukpeaġvik Inupiat Corporation
24. Wainwright Tribal Council

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