

December 15, 2023

Chairman Pete Stauber  
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources  
Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20515

**RE: Questions for the Record from Legislative Hearing on H.R. 6285 “Alaska’s Right to Produce Act of 2023”**

Dear Chairman Stauber,

Thank you for your questions for the record following the November 29, 2023 legislative hearing in the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources regarding H.R. 6285 “Alaska’s Right to Produce Act of 2023.” Below I have included your questions in bold, and my responses are below each bolded question.

1. **You made mention in your testimony that you were handed the 1,400 page, ANWR draft SEIS in-person on September 25 then asked to consult on it the next day.**
  - a. **Can you expand upon that story? Why do you think DOI was in such a hurry?**

I was contacted by BLM on the evening of Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup>, notifying ICAS that there would be a public meeting and Section 810 meeting on the evening of Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup> in Utqiagvik. ICAS, along with other North Slope organizations and local and regional governments, contacted BLM to reschedule the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting because of local subsistence hunting and whaling preparations, as well as a community event for the outgoing North Slope Mayor, parent-teacher conferences, and a tribal transportation conference happening in Anchorage. Despite these requests, the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting still went forward and there were only seven or eight people in attendance. Please note that there were NO decision makers there for either BLM or FWS, which to my knowledge is a requirement for a public meeting.

At that meeting, I was handed the over 1,400 page ANWR draft SEIS document. After the poorly organized and attended public “meeting,” we were then asked by BLM and FWS if we would like to consult with them before their team headed to Venetie the following day. Due to the fiber optic cable break which caused internet, cellular, and telephone interruptions across the North Slope from mid-June to September 19<sup>th</sup>, I had been unable to view, let alone download the over 1,400 pages of the ANWR draft SEIS prior to the September 25<sup>th</sup> public “meeting.” And even after the cable was repaired, ICAS continued to experience slower and interrupted internet and phone service.

Utqiagvik and other coastal Alaskan communities on the North Slope, Northwest, and Western Alaska were with severely limited communication capabilities for over three

months, during which the September 6<sup>th</sup> announcements and subsequent documents for the ANWR draft SEIS and NPR-A proposed rule were released. And when we asked about the fiber optic break, DOI representatives stated they did not know there was an issue with communication systems, despite BLM working with one of the providers for a redundant overland cable.

I cannot speak to BLM's motivations, but I will add that they told us at the meeting in Utqiagvik that the reason why they could not reschedule the public meeting was because of member of the foreign press from Washington D.C. was present. That reporter then stood up and forcefully rebutted DOI's claim.

In our estimation, BLM seemed in a hurry to get a consultation on their "books" so they didn't have to return to Utqiagvik.

**b. Has the public meeting from September 25<sup>th</sup> been rescheduled?**

No.

BLM and FWS stated at the September 25<sup>th</sup> event that it would not count as a public meeting because there were no decision makers present. On at least one other occasion another DOI representative reassured that there would be a *legitimate* public meeting, with decision makers, in the future. To date, we have never heard when that meeting would happen.

We had an informal meeting with BLM on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at our offices in Utqiagvik and I stated that I wanted two separate meetings on the NPR-A proposed ruling with a side-by-side explanation of the proposed changes and a separate meeting on ANWR closer to the closing of the comment period. Those consultations have not been scheduled due to various reasons, including BLM's insistence that consultation can be conducted after the public comment period closes.

**c. Have there been any legitimate public meetings in the region on the ANWR Draft SEIS?**

I don't know of any public meeting on the North Slope, including in Kaktovik, the only community located within ANWR. And as stated above, there has not been a rescheduled meeting for Utqiagvik.

Thank you again for the invitation to testify as an elected official of the regional tribe representing the only communities living in the areas impacted by DOI's mandates, which your bill seeks to reverse. We stand with Kaktovik's elected leadership and its community on these issues. I also want to thank you and Chairman Westerman for taking up and passing the bipartisan H.R. 6285 at the December 6, 2023 full committee markup.

Please let me know if you or other committee members have further follow-up.



Doreen Leavitt  
Secretary

Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope

Cc: U.S. Representative Mary Sattler Peltola