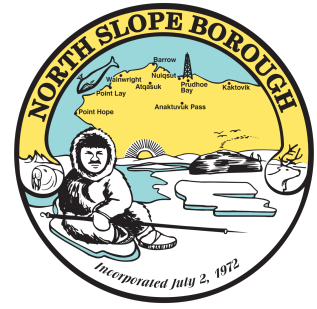


# North Slope Borough

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

P.O. Box 69  
Barrow, Alaska 99723  
Phone: 907 852-2611 or 0200  
FAX: 907-852-0337



*Josiah A. Patkotak, Mayor*

## PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Cale Green  
[cale.green@north-slope.org](mailto:cale.green@north-slope.org)

July 8, 2024,

### North Slope Borough Files Suit Against Bureau of Land Management

Late last week, the North Slope Borough filed suit to challenge the final rule for the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM released this final rule in violation of requirements for meaningful consultation of tribes and without adequate assessment of economic impact. The rule would **significantly and irrevocably harm** the North Slope's right to self-determination and ability to provide essential services for residents. This suit is filed alongside the complaints of the Voice of the Arctic Inupiat and the State of Alaska, demonstrating the unity of North Slope communities and Alaskans in opposing the BLM's unjust and unilateral action to harm the livelihoods of the residents of the North Slope.

“When I was sworn in as Mayor of the North Slope Borough, I made a solemn promise to protect and provide essential services for the people of the North Slope Borough. The BLM *claims* to act on our behalf but what they are truly doing is undermining my ability to fulfill that fiduciary obligation,” said **Mayor Josiah Patkotak**. “We on the North Slope don't have the luxury of keeping quiet and waiting for a new industry to swoop in and replace our largest economic driver. We have to speak up for our future as a people.”

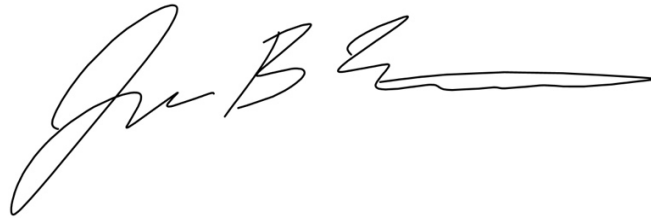
The North Slope Borough houses the entirety of the NPR-A, and represents the ancestral homelands of the Inupiat people. The North Slope Borough is the largest employer in the region and provides the majority of essential services depended upon by residents, including public safety services, utilities, education, public health services and wildlife and subsistence management. These services are funded by taxes on infrastructure within the Borough - taxes which account for **95% of the Borough's revenue**.

In crafting this rule that would so dramatically affect the people of the North Slope, the BLM **failed to engage** the local government with jurisdiction and enforcement responsibilities, tribes, regional associations, and communities themselves. Had the BLM consulted with the people most impacted by this rule, they would have learned how crucial economic opportunity is for

preservation of Inupiaq culture. Without jobs, housing or economic development, the people of the North Slope will be forced to leave their ancestral lands, leaving behind the traditions and language that are the bedrock of the culture.

Members of the North Slope Iñupiat Tribes, Village Corporations, Regional Corporations, and their elected leaders have been **unanimous in their opposition to the rule.**

In light of the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Loper*, which removed the Chevron Deference, the North Slope Borough is taking proactive steps to incorporate this precedent into its regulatory framework. By aligning our policies with this landmark decision, we aim to ensure that our administrative actions and interpretations of ambiguous statutes are carried out with a heightened level of judicial scrutiny. This approach underscores our commitment to transparency, legal integrity, and the protection of our community's rights and resources. Furthermore, the Borough remains steadfast in its adherence to NEPA and the Regulatory Flexibility Act, ensuring that environmental and economic impacts are thoroughly assessed and that small entities are considered in the rule-making process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe B. E.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

###