



Northwest Arctic Leadership Team

The Honorable Donny Olson
State Senate
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

January 31, 2012

Dear Senator Olson:

The Northwest Arctic Leadership Team (NWALT) writes in support of Senate Bill 180. As you know, NWALT is a partnership of the Northwest Arctic Borough, Maniilaq Association, the Northwest Arctic Borough School District and NANA Regional Corporation. It is our charge to maximize resources and reduce duplication of efforts to address issues affecting the people of Northwest Alaska while honoring and perpetuating our Iñupiat cultural heritage.

Enactment of SB 180 is essential for completion of long-needed construction and public works projects in the Upper Kobuk Valley, most of which have been put on hold for over a decade due to naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) in the local gravel sources. Projects delayed in Ambler add up to over \$10 million and include:

1. Airport runway extension and upgrades to Grizzly Bridge, which are necessary to reach the airport (the last improvement to the airport was in 1991 and to Grizzly Bridge was in 1976)
2. Upgrades to water and sewer services (last improvements in 1973 and 1982 respectively)
3. Building of new homes (last new homes completed in 1991 by the Northwest Inupiat Housing Authority)
4. Upgrades to existing dumpsite (opened in 1976 with no improvements since)
5. To secure the embankment protecting homes from river erosion

In Kobuk, a necessary addition to the school to accommodate students attending high school in the village has been delayed since grades 9-12 were made available in the village five years ago.

The use of NOA-containing material in construction and public works projects in the Upper Kobuk is necessary to the maintenance and improvement of local infrastructure so that residents may have the opportunity to enjoy a quality of life similar to that of residents who have the benefit of NOA-free gravel sources. Additionally, this legislation is a crucial part of the long-term solution to an important issue affecting rural Alaskans across the State, as well as proposed development projects such as the Ambler Mining District Access Project.



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We thank you for your advocacy on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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NWALT Co-Chair
Mayor
Northwest Arctic Borough

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NWALT Co-Chair
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