



February 17, 2023

The Honorable Josiah Patkotak
Alaska State House of Representatives
State Capitol Room 102
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Letter of Support for HJR 6

Dear Representative Patkotak:

As the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), I submit this letter of support for House Joint Resolution 6 (HJR 6), regarding development in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (NPR-A) and approval of the Willow project.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)'s recent issuance of a final supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) for the Willow Master Development Plan in the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (NPR-A) is a critical, nearly final, step towards concluding the extensive federal reviews that have been required for the project and advancing this responsible resource development opportunity for Alaskans. The preferred alternative included in the SEIS, alternative E, is firmly grounded in the record and extensive analysis that has occurred for the Willow project to date. Particularly, this alternative robustly protects the valued fish, wildlife, and subsistence resources of the area, and incorporates community input to arrive at a project that is both developable and very limited in its impacts. This is one of the reasons that the North Slope Borough, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and the Inupiat Community of the North Slope have all expressed support for the prompt issuance of a final approval for the project. The Department joins them in support of the development, and in support of this resolution and its prompt passage by the Alaska Legislature.

The North Slope has demonstrated over decades that oil and gas exploration, development, production, and transportation under some of the harshest environmental conditions in the world can occur safely and responsibly with the appropriate regulatory controls and environmental protections in place. Activities on the Slope must meet or exceed the high standards demanded by one of the most rigorous environmental regulatory regimes of any jurisdiction in the world for balancing development with the protection of resources using best management practices and mitigation measures. This rigorous regulatory regime continues to ensure that subsistence

practices can be sustained while providing economic benefits for residents in terms of health care, public safety, and education. The Department of the Interior (DOI) needs to recognize this reality and long factual history when finalizing the ROD for the Willow project.

DNR also continues to support a federal framework for managing the NPR-A that maximizes responsible oil and gas leasing and development throughout the NPR-A. The guiding legislation for NPR-A recognizes a need for the full commercial development of the Reserve's crude oil and natural gas to bring them to market, but layers of additional federal restrictions have clouded these purposes. The recent re-imposition of an Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) by the Biden Administration that largely mirrors the 2013 Obama Administration IAP (and the failure to schedule any lease sales in the NPR-A) shows that this unfortunate trend is accelerating. The State of Alaska continues to fight for these rights to be properly deployed through a fair and balanced IAP, and prompt, efficient approvals for activity in the NPR-A consistent with the federal statutory purposes identified for the NPR-A.

Resources from the NPR-A can power America, support thousands of family-supporting jobs, and greatly benefit the people and communities of Alaska. Responsibly developing NPR-A resources is an important step towards our energy independence as a Nation and this importance is more clear than ever with multiple international events threatening the free flow of global energy supplies. Fortunately, the United States no longer needs to choose to rely on other countries for the oil and gas resources that power our nation if we continue to develop our own. The federal government has an opportunity—and truly an obligation—to authorize development in the NPR-A to strengthen our energy independence and avoid reliance on foreign countries. The Department of Natural Resources appreciates your sponsorship of HJR 6.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Boyle".

John Boyle
Commissioner-Designee

Cc: Laura Stidolph, Governor's Legislative Office, Director