

In the Matter Of:
MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF NPR-A

Public Meeting - Nuiqsut

November 01, 2023

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TRANSCRIPT**

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MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF THE
NATIONAL PETROLEUM RESERVE IN ALASKA

PUBLIC MEETING

NUIQSUT, ALASKA

NOVEMBER 1, 2023

Transcript of Proceedings

Pages 1 - 59, inclusive

1 NUIQSUT, ALASKA

2 WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2023

3 5:32 P.M.

4 -oOo-

5 SEAN SOLIE: All right, folks. Can everyone
6 hear me? I imagine you can. Okay. Great. If this is
7 too loud, just wave your arm and I'll turn it down. I
8 don't want to blow any eardrums tonight.

9 But I just wanted to start off and say thank you
10 and welcome to the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Rule
11 public meeting. We really appreciate you all being here
12 tonight and being with us.

13 With that, my name is Sean Solie. I'm a part of
14 a consulting team that is assisting the Bureau of Land
15 Management in this public meeting. So in a few minutes
16 here we're going to kick off the presentation, run through
17 the agenda. Steve here will introduce members of the BLM
18 team.

19 But prior to doing all that, I wanted to just go
20 ahead and make a land acknowledgement for the lands that
21 we are on today and that we are discussing this evening.
22 So before we begin, we want to acknowledge the Inupiat
23 people, whose unceded traditional and ancestral lands we
24 are discussing today. Thank you for inviting us into your
25 community and for taking time out of your evening to meet

1 with us. We really appreciate it.

2 We honor the Inupiat who live in these lands and
3 in this region since time immemorial and the future
4 generations to come for being stewards of these lands and
5 waters. We recognize that the traditional people in these
6 regions have and continue to gather and harvest food as
7 well as care for and sustain the land. We pay our
8 respects to you. We feel privileged to be working on your
9 land and we truly value your input and guidance. So
10 thanks again for coming and meeting with us tonight.

11 Just a few items that I want to run through. If
12 you haven't signed in, please make sure you go do that
13 next to Lindsay there at the table in the entrance. We do
14 have some snacks over here to our right. Please take as
15 many as you would like. Don't leave us to bring them
16 home. We don't need any more sweets. We've had plenty.

17 And with that, we're going to go ahead and kick
18 off with the agenda. So first off, we'll cover the
19 meeting purpose and logistics. We've gone through the
20 welcome and opening remarks. Steve will introduce the BLM
21 team.

22 We'll go into the reason for the proposed rule
23 and then we'll move into some of the content on the rule:
24 protection of the surface resources, the current
25 management of Special Areas, designating and amending

1 Special Areas, as well as the management of oil and gas
2 activities in Special Areas. And then finally,
3 subsistence use and co-stewardship opportunities.

4 We'll move into next steps and wrap things up
5 with a general discussion and a period for comments. And
6 on comments and questions, we are happy to take your
7 questions during the presentation. It's roughly about a
8 20- to 30-minute presentation, depending on how many
9 questions we do have. So if you have a question, please
10 raise your hand and we'll go ahead and address it.

11 But in terms of public comment, those will come
12 after the general Q and A. In that case, if you have a
13 comment that you would like to make, please just raise
14 your hand and we will bring the mic to you and you can
15 begin your comment. We're not going to -- given that
16 there's only a handful of us in the room, we're not going
17 to limit your comments to three minutes. But do try to
18 keep them in consideration of everyone else. And we ask
19 that your input and your words are also respectful of
20 everyone.

21 We have a court reporter here, Deirdre, who is
22 going to be recording all of those. The comments that are
23 made tonight will all be considered for the record and be
24 a part of the final decision on the rule-making.

25 And with that, we do have some additional ways

1 that you can comment. There are comment cards if you
2 prefer to not speak in front of people. We have comment
3 cards and you can fill those out and mail them in or just
4 submit them to us, hand them to us and we'll take those.

5 We also have the website where you can go on and
6 search for the E-ruling-making portal. So if you go in
7 there and type in NPR-A, you'll have an opportunity to
8 submit your comments that way as well. And then of course
9 we have the mailing address for those that like to go the
10 old, classic way.

11 One last thing. The comment deadline is
12 November 17th, so please take note of that.

13 Again, thank you so much for inviting us into
14 your community tonight. We had a great dinner just down
15 the road. Glad there was coffee, because I got a little
16 sleepy after it.

17 But with that, I'll hand it over to Steve to
18 introduce the BLM team.

19 STEVEN COHN: Thanks, Sean.

20 Okay. So I'm Steve Cohn. I'm state director
21 for the Bureau of Land Management here in Alaska. And I
22 want to thank you all for joining us tonight, and thank
23 you for inviting us into your community here in Nuiqsut.
24 And we're looking forward to having this dialogue tonight
25 to talk about the rule-making -- proposed rule-making for

1 the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

2 So before we share more about the proposed rule,
3 I wanted to just give a quick overview. Obviously you all
4 are very intimately familiar with the area from a sort of
5 federal Department of Interior perspective. This
6 23-million-acre swath of public lands, roughly a hundred
7 miles west of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,
8 50 miles west of Prudhoe Bay, extends from the North Slope
9 of the Brooks Range to the Arctic Coast.

10 As I'm sure many of you are familiar, in 1923
11 President Harding designated this area as an emergency oil
12 supply for the U.S. Navy. In 1976, Congress passed the
13 Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act and the management
14 of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska was
15 transferred to the Department of the Interior's Bureau of
16 Land Management, where the management resides today.

17 And as I know you all know, the NPR-A is home to
18 two large caribou herds, polar bears, many other kinds of
19 wildlife, millions of migrating shorebirds, thousands of
20 waterfowl who rely on it for breeding.

21 As you also know, this area has provided food
22 and resources for Alaska Native people for a millennia,
23 and 40 Alaska Native villages continue to rely on the
24 region for subsistence.

25 We have a team of agency folks here. I'll

1 introduce them. We have Bonnie Million here. Marni
2 Salmon. Dave McCassick. And I'd like to now introduce
3 and turn over the mic to Nada Wolff Culver, who is our
4 principal deputy director for the Bureau of Land
5 Management.

6 And thank you again for taking the time. I know
7 evening time and time away from family is precious, so I
8 really appreciate you all coming out tonight to be here
9 with us. And looking forward to the conversation. And
10 we're going to have plenty of time for questions and
11 comments.

12 So this will be a good chance, I think, to just
13 spend more time talking about this proposed rule-making.
14 I know there's been a lot of questions about it. And this
15 is a chance for us to really just dig into it and talk
16 about it in more detail.

17 NADA WOLFF CULVER: Thanks, Steve.

18 So before we got into talking about the details
19 about the rule, we just wanted to start with explaining
20 what we're doing here, other than eating snacks, which is
21 a federal rule-making process.

22 And this is an overview of how the federal
23 rule-making process generally works, because it's
24 different than what you might have been involved in before
25 where, for instance, you're commenting on a project or an

1 Integrated Activity Plan, and in this situation what
2 happens is Congress passes a law, in this case, the Naval
3 Petroleum Reserves Production Act that Steve mentioned.
4 Then the agency determines a need for regulations, drafts
5 a proposed rule, and puts it out for comment.

6 And that's where we are right now. We're in the
7 public comment phase. After we receive comments, we
8 review them and we make up dates to the rule. We respond
9 to your comments and we make adjustments. And then we
10 publish a final version of the rule and then it takes
11 effect.

12 And in this situation, Congress passed the Naval
13 Petroleum Reserves Production Act back in the 1970s, and
14 the BLM issued regulations back in the 1970s. Congress
15 then updated the act in 1980, but we have not updated our
16 regulations.

17 So we wanted to talk about why we're doing this.
18 And what we're effectively doing is updating an existing
19 regulation called Management and Protection of the
20 National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska. And the name of it
21 is helpful because we're both managing the Reserve, the
22 oil and gas part, and protecting the resources.

23 So the reason we're doing that, as I mentioned,
24 these regulations are from the late 1970s. Since that
25 time Congress has updated the rule -- the law itself. But

1 the need for the update has become more obvious with the
2 passage of time, because we've been learning about the
3 lands that this law applies to, we've been seeing the
4 effects of climate change, and we're also learning about
5 the experience the BLM has had in implementing this law
6 since 1977.

7 So what we're looking to do is update the
8 regulatory framework for both managing and protecting
9 surface resources throughout the National Petroleum
10 Reserve-Alaska and Special Areas that, again, haven't been
11 updated since 1977. We want to respond to the
12 dramatically changing conditions in the Arctic because
13 those are affecting natural environments, they're
14 affecting all of you, and we want to enhance management
15 consistency. And we'll get into the details of that, but
16 right now we don't really have a comprehensive regulatory
17 framework that our folks can look at and you all can hold
18 us to in managing the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

19 Right now we have standards and language in an
20 act, in a statute, in regulations, in policies and plans,
21 and in guidance documents. So by putting this together,
22 we would make sure that we are meeting our legal
23 obligations under the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production
24 Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and other
25 authorities to the best of our ability.

1 So the formal goals of the proposed rule are to
2 ensure maximum protection of Special Areas, the surface
3 values; to protect subsistence activities; and to ensure
4 balance for managing surface resources in addressing
5 future oil and gas activity in the Reserve. These are
6 kind of the three big elements of the law we'll be talking
7 about as we move through these slides.

8 So I'm going to take a minute and go through the
9 detail of this. As Sean mentioned at the beginning, if
10 you have a question as we're going through, please feel
11 free to raise your hand and we can answer it then. We'll
12 have another chance for questions after we get through the
13 regulatory text and then we'll have comments as well.

14 So again, this is a rule that addresses
15 management and protection of the National Petroleum
16 Reserve in Alaska. And one of the things we wanted to
17 emphasize, because we know we're asking you to read many
18 things these days, is that the regulation itself is
19 digestible. The current regulation is about four pages.
20 Our proposed updated version is about five pages. So
21 while there's a lot to think about here, there aren't as
22 many words as you might think. I'm not going to read
23 every word out loud to you today, although that might be
24 faster than explaining it, but we're going to go over some
25 of the key concepts and changes that we are proposing in

1 this rule.

2 So first, we're going to address the provisions
3 of the proposed rule that address protection of surface
4 resources and identifying Special Areas. So in the
5 original regulation, there was a stated purpose for the
6 rule, and what we've done is really update it to
7 incorporate more direction from the Naval Petroleum
8 Reserves Production Act itself.

9 So the idea here is the purpose of the
10 regulations are to provide procedures for protection and
11 control of the environmental, fish and wildlife, and
12 historical and scenic values, including mitigating the
13 significantly adverse effects of oil and gas activities on
14 surface resources and ensuring maximum protection of
15 significant resource values in Special Areas.

16 I just want to leave this slide up for a second,
17 because that is a mouthful. These words come directly
18 from the statute. So in the statute, Congress gave the
19 BLM three directions: managing oil and gas for production
20 in the Reserve, to mitigate significantly adverse effects
21 of -- reasonably foreseeable significantly adverse effects
22 on surface resources; and assuring maximum protection of
23 significant resource values in Special Areas.

24 So the idea of this regulation is to help us
25 weave those together and make sure that we are complying

1 with, to the best of our ability, that direction from
2 Congress, as well as the direction in BLM's Organic Act,
3 which directs us to take action necessary to prevent
4 unnecessary or undue degradation of our resources.

5 So we're going to start with the protection of
6 surface resources. Right now the section in -- even
7 though the statute tells us to protect surface resources,
8 the current regulations have a section just called
9 "Protection of the Environment." That did not seem
10 particularly specific, so we've gone back to the language
11 of the statute, which is "Protection of Surface
12 Resources," more closely tracking the direction from
13 Congress.

14 And what this rule would do is maintain a lot of
15 original language but add some more to try to clarify how
16 we're trying to implement. It would establish new
17 standards and procedures for managing and protecting
18 surface resources in the NPR-A from these reasonably
19 foreseeable and significantly adverse effects of oil and
20 gas activities. This is coming in part because, in 1980,
21 Congress directed the secretary to mitigate these effects
22 from oil and gas activities through necessary or
23 appropriate conditions, restrictions, and prohibitions.

24 The current regulations require the BLM-
25 authorized officer to take action to mitigate or avoid

1 unnecessary surface damage and to minimize ecological
2 disturbance throughout the Reserve to the extent
3 consistent with the requirements of the act for the
4 exploration or the Reserve.

5 The proposed rule would update this paragraph
6 to, again, more closely track with the act itself and
7 provide further clarification, recognizing that, in some
8 circumstances, the BLM may delay or deny proposed
9 activities that would cause reasonably foreseeable and
10 significantly adverse effects on surface resources.

11 The proposed rule would spell out new procedures
12 for protecting surface resources in the NPR-A. As
13 mentioned before, Congress directed the BLM to protect
14 surface resources in the NPR-A. But the current
15 regulations don't fully explain the scope of that duty.
16 So the proposed rule would fill that gap. It would also
17 direct the BLM to manage oil and gas activities in
18 accordance with the Integrated Activity Plan, which I
19 think many of you are familiar with.

20 This regulation would then enshrine our current
21 practice that has been going on since 1998 to manage the
22 NPR under a plan called an Integrated Activity Plan, or an
23 IAP. These plans have been invaluable for evaluating
24 management options, engaging the public, and guiding
25 decision-making. The proposed rule would make that a

1 requirement that the BLM maintain an integrated activity
2 plan, help guide our authorizations, and it would also
3 give way if it conflicted with the regulations.

4 The proposed rule would also require the BLM, in
5 every decision concerning oil and gas activity in the
6 NPR-A, to adopt measure to mitigate the reasonably
7 foreseeable and significantly adverse effects on surface
8 resources, and to take particular care with surface
9 resources that support subsistence.

10 The BLM would do that by, for each decision,
11 documenting the consideration of reasonably foreseeable
12 effects, including indirect and cumulative effects and any
13 uncertainty concerning the nature, scope, and duration of
14 potential effects, and also document how that analyses
15 inform the choice of mitigation measures.

16 So this is something we're adding, is to
17 specifically acknowledge that there is uncertainty and
18 make sure we talk about what that uncertainty might be,
19 how we've done our best to provide for it in mitigating
20 effects.

21 So, again, this would build on the existing
22 language, which provide that the authorized officer may
23 limit, restrict, or prohibit use of and access to lands
24 within the Reserve, including Special Areas. And we're
25 also noting that its authority applies to protecting

1 subsistence use and resources.

2 So I think Steve is going to walk us through
3 some detail on the existing Special Areas.

4 STEVEN COHN: Thank you. So in the original
5 law, in the 1976 Petroleum Reserve Act, there were two
6 areas identified as Special Areas with the requirement to
7 manage for maximum protection of those values:
8 Teshekpuk Lake and Utukok River Uplands. In addition, in
9 subsequent planning efforts in those Integrated Activity
10 Plans, three more Special Areas have been identified over
11 time: Colville River, Kasegaluk Lagoon, and Peard Bay.

12 So the proposed rule discusses those five
13 existing Special Areas and provides an overview of the
14 significant resource values for each existing Special
15 Area, things like wildlife habitat, cultural resources,
16 recreational access, and subsistence. The proposed rule
17 also reiterates that management of these areas will
18 address existing and additional values that might be
19 identified by the process in this next section, which I'll
20 go over. And like the existing regulation, the proposed
21 regulation would require the boundaries of the Special
22 Areas to be depicted on maps available for public
23 inspection, but also ensure that they are available on the
24 BLM's website.

25 So let's look at the next slide. So this is a

1 map of the existing Special Areas. This probably looks
2 very familiar to anyone that's been involved in BLM's
3 planning efforts over the last, well, more than 20 years.
4 These areas have been identified through those plans.
5 This is the plan -- the map from the most recent
6 Integrated Activity Plan in 2022. And this is the current
7 Special Areas, which total a little less than half of the
8 Petroleum Reserve.

9 So just quickly to run through them, there's a
10 Special Area in the Colville about 2.44 million acres,
11 encompassing the Colville River and two of its main
12 tributaries. It was identified primarily for significant
13 habitat for raptors and other bird species, large --
14 highest concentration of moose on the North Slope, world-
15 class paleontological deposits, and, as you all know, an
16 important corridor for subsistence and recreational
17 activities.

18 Kasegaluk Lagoon Special Area, which encompasses
19 approximately 97,000 acres, was identified because it is
20 rich in wildlife, including migratory birds, and has
21 especially high values for marine mammals. It also
22 features tidal flats. And subsistence activities take
23 place in the lagoon, as well as recreation.

24 The Peard Bay Special Area borders the
25 Chukchi Sea along the northern boundary of the NPR-A, and

1 the Special Area covers 107,000 acres. It includes
2 haulout areas in near-shore waters for marine mammals in a
3 high-use staging and migration area for shore birds and
4 water birds.

5 And now these are the two that were identified
6 in the law. Though, to be clear, the law did not specify
7 an area. The law didn't draw a map. So the current area
8 is what has been identified through the current Integrated
9 Activity Plan.

10 So the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area currently
11 includes 3.65 million acres. It provides important
12 nesting, staging, and molting habitat for a large number
13 of ducks, geese, and swans; prime calving and insect
14 relief habitat for the Teshekpuk caribou herd; and
15 overwintering habitat for fish. And as you all know, the
16 Special Area is of special importance to subsistence users
17 because of the caribou, fish, and other wildlife resources
18 in the area, and long-standing subsistence use of the
19 area.

20 And the last of the Special Areas, again, this
21 is one identified in the statute, in the law, is the
22 Utukok River Uplands. It encompasses 7.1 million acres.
23 So by far the largest of the Special Areas. It includes
24 prime calving and insect relief habitat and the most
25 intensely used summer movement area for the Western Arctic

1 caribou herd. In winter, this herd is within reach of
2 subsistence hunters from over 40 villages in Northwest
3 Alaska.

4 And just quickly to run through. So we talk
5 about -- talking about the areas themselves, the values
6 are identified in the designation of those areas, and just
7 a quick overview of the types of management frameworks
8 that are in place currently to protect those values. So
9 in all Special Areas -- so the current management Special
10 Areas is set out with the current Integrated Activity
11 Plan. It involves various layers of leasing, protection,
12 and infrastructure availability.

13 In all Special Areas infrastructure prohibitions
14 do not apply to subsistence structures, single-season
15 exploratory wells and infrastructure, and activities at
16 existing gravel pads.

17 So a quick overview of each of the five Special
18 Areas. Again, Teshekpuk Lake at 3.65 million acres.
19 Currently, the current Integrated Activity Plan,
20 86 percent of the Special Areas is closed to leasing for
21 oil and gas. New infrastructure is permitted but not in
22 the area right around the lake.

23 In the Utukok River Uplands, just over 7 million
24 acres, 91 percent of that is closed to leasing. New
25 infrastructure is prohibited, except a strip around the

1 northern boundary. The Colville River, 2.4 million acres
2 is open to oil and gas leasing. New infrastructure is
3 permitted, except along the river, and only essential
4 roads and pipeline crossings.

5 Kasegaluk Lagoon and Peard Bay are closed to
6 leasing. New infrastructure is prohibited except
7 essential pipeline crossings, including for offshore
8 development.

9 So that's kind of where thing stands now with
10 the current Integrated Activity Plan. Those five areas,
11 in total, over -- close to about half of the NPR-A itself
12 with existing management regarding oil and gas leasing and
13 infrastructure development. All of those areas, of
14 course, are open and available for subsistence use, as
15 every acre within the National Petroleum Reserve available
16 for subsistence.

17 So let me pass it back to Nada.

18 NADA WOLFF CULVER: So now we're going to dive
19 into the changes in regulation that address how the
20 Special Areas are designated and amended.

21 Both the statute itself and the regulations talk
22 about Special Areas, they anticipate that the secretary
23 identify new Special Areas, but they don't specify a
24 process for designating or amending or changing Special
25 Areas. As we've been talking about, we've mainly been

1 doing that through the Integrated Activity Plans.

2 So this is a new section. It builds on language
3 in the current regulation that we've removed from the
4 previous section, moved it to this section, so easier to
5 follow, and the idea for that is to provide clarity for
6 stakeholders and ensure that the BLM is fulfilling its
7 statutory obligation to assure maximum protection of the
8 significant resource values of these Special Areas.

9 So the proposed rule would require that every
10 five years BLM would evaluate new or existing Special
11 Areas, whether we should have new ones. We would look at
12 the existing ones. We would evaluate whether there are
13 additional values and whether there were additional
14 measures needed for maximum protection. We would do this
15 using best available scientific information, including
16 indigenous knowledge and other best available information
17 concerning subsistence use and resources. So, again,
18 setting out that process.

19 The process could happen in the land use
20 planning process through another Integrated Activity Plan
21 or separately with public participation and consultation
22 in either approach. The BLM can also adopt interim
23 measures to assure maximum protection of significant
24 resource values for lands that are being considered for
25 designation as a Special Area.

1 We've set the five-year time frame for doing
2 this evaluation based on how rapidly conditions are
3 changing here and how much information is coming in.
4 Also, it's a time frame we use for our land use plans more
5 broadly to check in on them across the country to see if
6 they need to be updated.

7 The public can also recommend Special Areas for
8 the BLM to evaluate. And the proposed rule reiterates the
9 BLM must adopt measures to assure maximum protection of
10 significant resource values. It doesn't identify what
11 those measures are. It leaves those to be tailored to
12 each of the Special Areas as they're designated, and we'll
13 talk about that a little bit more, because the rule is
14 focused on how oil and gas activities are managed in this
15 project.

16 The proposal would also provide that BLM can
17 only undo, remove a Special Area designation from an area
18 when the significant values that supported the designation
19 are no longer present. So if important wildlife habitat
20 which was originally part of the reason for designating
21 the special area is no longer present, then the
22 designation would no longer be present.

23 This approach does not apply to the
24 Teshekpuk Lake and Utukok River Uplands Special Areas.
25 Because they were mentioned in the original statute by

1 Congress, we are interpreting that to mean that we cannot
2 make a change to remove those Special Areas. Only
3 Congress would be able to do that.

4 So otherwise, the other three, before we would
5 remove a Special Area designation or for any others that
6 might be added before the BLM would be able to change that
7 and remove a Special Area designation, we would provide
8 the public with an opportunity to review and to comment
9 and consult with federally recognized tribes and Alaska
10 Native Claims Settlement Act corporations.

11 So we're going to move on to the next section of
12 the regulation which addresses management of oil and gas
13 activities in Special Areas, because, again, that's what
14 the regulations are looking at, management of oil and gas
15 activities.

16 So the proposed rule would be more specific than
17 the current regulations regarding the mechanisms for
18 assuring maximum protection of significant resource values
19 in Special Areas. The current regulations paraphrase the
20 requirement of the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act
21 to provide maximum protection and provide some examples of
22 measures that the BLM could potentially take to assure
23 maximum protection, such as changing types of airplanes
24 that might be used.

25 The proposed rule would add a new section to

1 establish new standards and procedures for achieving
2 maximum protection of Special Areas' significant resource
3 values, with a specific focus on addressing impacts of oil
4 and gas activities. Of note, this section would
5 affirmatively establish that assuring maximum protection
6 of significant resource values is the management priority
7 in a Special Area.

8 The proposed rule requires that, for management
9 of oil and gas activities in Special Areas, BLM must adopt
10 maximum protection measures for each significant resource
11 value. Leasing and infrastructure is required to conform
12 to the current Maps 2 and 4 from the current Integrated
13 Activity Plan, which would be published along with the
14 final rule, and those limitations would apply unless the
15 BLM makes revisions in accordance with the regulations to
16 amend the Special Areas.

17 There's a presumption against leasing and
18 infrastructure on land allocated as available for those
19 activities in Special Areas unless there's specific
20 information clearly demonstrating that oil and gas
21 activities can be conducted with no or minimal adverse
22 effects on the significant values of the Special Area.
23 There's an exception for that limitation for valid
24 existing rights, for infrastructure for local communities
25 and subsistence, and for drainage if there's another

1 federal lease where we would be applying no surface
2 occupancy protection.

3 This section also discusses that BLM, in order
4 to achieve maximum protection, may need to delay or deny
5 or revise proposed activities. In addition, if the BLM
6 cannot avoid adverse effects, the BLM has to prepare a
7 statement of adverse effect, documenting the decision to
8 address the resource values affected, how they're
9 affected, and any justification for proceeding with those
10 effects.

11 So this next slide is a map of a leasing
12 management in reference -- in Map 2 of the Integrated
13 Activity Plan. So again, the proposed rule would require
14 that leasing and infrastructure in the current Special
15 Areas conform to these two maps that are in the current
16 Integrated Activity Plan. These maps are in the IAP.
17 They're also on our website. And the idea would be we
18 would publish them with the rule.

19 This map shows areas of the NPR-A that are
20 opened and closed to oil and gas leasing. And it reflects
21 that approximately 11.8 million acres are open to
22 leasing -- those are the tan areas -- while approximately
23 11 million acres are closed, the purple. That includes
24 most of Teshekpuk Lake, Utukok River Uplands Special
25 Areas. The map also shows those areas that are open to

1 leasing but subject to a no surface occupancy restriction.
2 Those are the turquoise areas. And then it also shows
3 areas that are outside of BLM's subsurface authority.
4 That's the hashmark area.

5 Next map. This is Map 4 from the current
6 Integrated Activity Plan, also available in the record of
7 decision and on the project website, and this map shows
8 the areas of the NPR-A that are available or unavailable
9 for new infrastructure. It shows that new infrastructure
10 for oil and gas is prohibited on approximately 8.3 million
11 acres, limited to essential infrastructure on
12 approximately 3.3 million acres, and permitted on
13 approximately 10.8 million acres.

14 And we mentioned before that there's an
15 exception often for what's considered essential
16 infrastructure. Right now there's not a definition in the
17 regulation, but we are asking for input on whether we
18 should be more specific and include a definition. There
19 is one in the current Integrated Activity Plan stating
20 that essential means the proposed infrastructure is
21 necessary for development and production on a valid,
22 existing onshore or offshore lease, and no other feasible
23 and prudent option is available. So we're looking for
24 feedback in particular on that, and it's discussed in the
25 rule itself.

1 So these restrictions on Map 4 on infrastructure
2 and Map 2, the previous one, would apply to new oil and
3 gas leases and infrastructure, and they, again, are
4 further detailed in the Integrated Activity Plan.

5 So we are seeking feedback on this approach. So
6 instead of detailing every acre that might be opened or
7 closed for leasing or infrastructure, trying to ensure
8 that we have a floor of management that is codified right
9 now for these Special Areas, addressing how leasing and
10 infrastructure are managed. It's how we are trying to be
11 efficient while being specific and incorporating these
12 land use allocations, restrictions, and stipulations
13 without reprinting all of the text that's already in the
14 Integrated Activity Plan, which I don't know if Jamie
15 brought her hard copy. Okay. It's like this. So we
16 didn't want to reprint all that language.

17 But we really would like your input on whether
18 or not we're accomplishing our goal or if the maps have
19 enough information. Is there a better approach that we
20 could be taking? Are there additional definitions that
21 should be included in the rule? And I know some of you
22 have already been thinking about these, and we will look
23 forward to that when we get to the comment part of the
24 evening so we can record those officially.

25 So now I'm going to move into the last kind of

1 shorter new sections of the regulations which address
2 subsistence use and co-stewardship in Special Areas.

3 So because BLM recognizes the overriding
4 importance of subsistence resources to communities in and
5 around the NPR-A, we're proposing to add a new section.
6 There are over 40 communities that use the NPR-A or the
7 resources in supports for subsistence, and all of these
8 communities rely on subsistence resources, many of which
9 include caribou, fish, and waterfowl are concentrated in
10 the Special Areas.

11 So the proposed rule would add a new section
12 that would require the BLM to manage Special Areas to
13 protect and support fish and wildlife and their habitats
14 and the associated subsistence use of those areas by rural
15 residents as defined in the Department of the Interior's
16 Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in
17 Alaska. It would also require that the BLM ensure there
18 is appropriate access for subsistence use to and within
19 Special Areas while still assuring maximum protection of
20 the significant resource values of the areas.

21 And this is the last new section that we've
22 added. The proposal would add a section encouraging the
23 BLM to explore co-stewardship opportunities for Special
24 Areas, including co-management, collaborative and
25 cooperative management, and tribally led stewardship. And

1 this provision would advance the government's commitment
2 to strengthening the role of tribal governments in federal
3 land management, which has been emphasized in this
4 administration in a presidential memorandum, a secretarial
5 order from the Secretary of the Interior, and by BLM
6 policy. So that is our overview of the rule.

7 SEAN SOLIE: All right. So as the slide says,
8 we need to hear from you. Your input is critical in these
9 rule-making processes and just in the overall changes to
10 any statutory and regulatory framework.

11 So, again, thank you for coming and joining us
12 tonight. We really appreciate you being here. For many
13 of us, this is our first time to Nuiqsut, and I was told
14 by Chad sitting there next to Lindsay, it's taken him ten
15 times to attempt to get here for him to be successful. So
16 yeah, we're really thankful and glad that we were able to
17 make it and got a good weather window.

18 So with that said, again, the public comment
19 period gets closed on November 17th, just about a week
20 before Thanksgiving. So keep note of that. And we will
21 have additional forms when we post it on the BLM NPR-A
22 website. So please take a look at that and just kind of
23 stay on top of any new changes and things of that nature
24 and new information relevant to this.

25 And then with that, I just wanted to highlight

1 the other ways, other than providing verbal comments
2 tonight, that you can comment on this new rule-making. So
3 we have the online option. We also have the mailing
4 option. You can submit that. You can hand them to us.
5 If you fill out one of those comment cards, we'd be happy
6 to take those and make sure that they're included in the
7 record.

8 And yeah, so with that said, I think we'd like
9 to go ahead and open up the room for some questions and
10 public comments. If you are making a public comment
11 tonight, we would just ask that you would clearly state
12 your first name and last name. Spelling it would be
13 really helpful too. We do hopefully have you signed in on
14 the comment sheet so we can always go back and cross-
15 reference, but it would be helpful if you spelled your
16 name as well.

17 And then if you're speaking on behalf of a
18 specific entity or on behalf of an organization, please
19 state that as well just so that we have that. And
20 Deirdre, our wonderful court reporter, can make sure to
21 get that recorded properly. We are open to questions. I
22 should have made that clear as well. We're open to
23 questions, not just formal comments for the record. We're
24 here to answer to the best of our ability.

25 So with that, who wants to be the first brave

1 soul to ask a question?

2 NADA WOLFF CULVER: Sean, not to scoop you
3 there, but you can actually have questions too.

4 SEAN SOLIE: Yes. Yes, sorry. Yeah, we are
5 open to questions. I should have made that clear as well.
6 We're open to questions, not just formal comments for the
7 record. We're here to answer to the best of our ability.

8 So with that, who wants to be the first brave
9 soul to ask a question? There we go.

10 VERNON EDWARDSSEN: I don't have a question. I
11 have a comment. [Inupiaq word spoken], Sean. [Inupiaq
12 word spoken] to the BLM staff, team, Steve and your team.
13 Thank you for coming up here to Nuiqsut. I appreciate it.
14 I think it's very important, this process.

15 So I want to introduce myself. I'm Vernon James
16 Molik [ph] Edwardsen. I'm the current chief
17 administrative officer of the North Slope Borough. I'm a
18 lifelong resident of Utqiagvik on the North Slope in
19 NPR-A. So I'd like to make a couple of key points here.

20 Today AFN, Kuukpik, NPR-A working group, NANA
21 Regional Corporation, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation,
22 Utqiagvik Inupiat Corporation, Inupiat Community of the
23 Arctic Slope, Arctic Slope Native Association, Voice of
24 the Arctic, the Governor of the State of Alaska, the
25 Lieutenant Governor of the State of Alaska all supported

1 an extension in the name of time, subsistence, and
2 teamwork, and the sheer details of the proposed rule.

3 Also, the whole Alaska delegation requested an
4 80-day extension of comment period for BLM's proposed
5 NPR-A rule. Members of the Alaska Congressional
6 delegation sent a letter to the Secretary of Interior to
7 request an 80-day extension to the comments of the
8 submission deadline for the Bureau of Land Management's
9 proposed rule on the land use restrictions in the National
10 Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

11 In the letter, the delegation wrote that the
12 initial comment period was insufficient. A ten-day
13 comment period extension is essentially meaningless. And
14 the comments -- the comment period must be extended to
15 provide enough time to actually and properly understand
16 and react to the rule.

17 Now our people have to travel on one of the most
18 sacred holidays in the North Slope Borough, Inuit Day, to
19 hope for a mere five-minutes meeting with the Secretary of
20 Interior, who, besides one off-Slope nonprofit NGO headed
21 by Louise Epstein, opposes responsible development, and
22 none of them oppose the long extension.

23 A few more bullet points. There was no
24 meaningful consultation on the proposed rules prior to
25 publication. Alaska Native groups have asked to be

1 consulted. No opportunity for in-person public comment
2 after the rules were published. The rules were published
3 during the fall whale hunts. Public meetings in Nuiqsut
4 and Atqasuk were canceled by BLM. North Slope leaders
5 asked for a 90-day extension of the public comment period.
6 Department of Interior only granted a ten-day extension
7 with no explanation of why the request by the North Slope
8 leaders for a 90-day extension was denied.

9 The economic analysis concludes no significant
10 impact -- economic impacts from the proposed rules. One,
11 the rules -- what the rules provide, that they override
12 the IAP if there is a conflict. Two, the Biden
13 administration characterized the rule as a major -- as
14 major steps to protect Arctic lands and wildlife and
15 further characterized it as bold actions.

16 And a few more points here. These proposed
17 regulations are rushed. Lack of formal tribal
18 consultation will impact the Inupiat traditional lands
19 over an area the size of the state of Indiana. The
20 administration should not ignore its trust responsibility
21 to the Alaska Natives. They should hold themselves to a
22 higher standard, starting with the rigorous environmental
23 analysis of impacts the rules will have on economic and
24 social development.

25 A working group of Alaska Native leaders was

1 established by President Obama in 2013 as a condition of a
2 rigorous multi-year environmental assessment of the NPR-A
3 land management plan known as the NPR-A working group.
4 That same working group's request for 90 days of
5 additional consultation and comment has been denied. The
6 rules were published during the critical fall subsistence
7 period where families are focused on whaling, fishing, and
8 hunting to fill their freezers. Nothing less than
9 adequate time for consultation, comment and rigorous
10 environmental analysis is [indiscernible].

11 In response to the proposed NPR-A rule, outside
12 interests in Lower 48 on October 17 ran media ads thanking
13 the administration for permanently locking up 13 million
14 acres of our traditional lands for conservation. This
15 occurred before our voices have been heard on a proposal
16 that is rushed, lacks meaningful consultation, and will
17 have significant and lasting economic impacts on our
18 region for many generations. This goes against the
19 principle of social and environmental justice for our
20 people.

21 A good public process requires respect,
22 patience, and a willingness to listen on all sides. The
23 public process on the proposed rules has deliberately
24 silence Alaska Native voices. Last minute meetings were
25 scheduled during key subsistence periods and were then

1 canceled with little or no notice. Where public meetings
2 were held, testimony and verbal questions were not
3 permitted and our voices have been silenced.

4 A formal environmental analysis is necessary and
5 should be done on a timetable which facilitates Alaska
6 Native involvement instead of political expedience.

7 [Inupiaq word spoken]

8 SEAN SOLIE: Thank you for your comment.

9 All right. Any other comments, questions,
10 concerns?

11 ROBERT [last name indecipherable]: [Inupiaq
12 spoken] When we first came here in '73 -- '72, '73, we
13 weren't impacted. As we grew older, we had houses.
14 Alpine grew up on the eastern side. But yet, still -- we
15 still have no voice. 50 years I've been here. I've seen
16 some of these kids grown up. I know who they are. They
17 are our future. This little girl right there is our
18 future. All little kids.

19 Our voices were never heard. We have made
20 comments but never voice on the black and blue paper. It
21 is a stepping stone with oil and gas leases with Kuukpik
22 Corporation. Now we have Native village, city that's
23 trying their hardest to make things very possible for this
24 village. It's really hard when you're living in an
25 environment that we were pretty much impacted.

1 And we have asked for a road for emergencies.
2 People going to hospital costs a lot. But still, let the
3 oil field runs dramatically changes our way of life, our
4 hunting, our trapping, our whaling. I have to go 90 miles
5 to go whaling to feed this village. I learned that
6 because it was passed down to me. And I pass it down to
7 my kids. I never said, you will not go.

8 Now I [indiscernible] my grandkids, their
9 grandkids to help minimize our costs, like a boat ramp by
10 Santos. You were Kuukpik oversize panel that asked for
11 these, not the village. Whaling captain, Kuukpik
12 oversize. Boat ramps right now that were going west. Why
13 we ask boat ramps? Just in case there's a blowout. We
14 have blowout at Alpine. We had how many blowouts in
15 Santos? There was more blowouts in the eastern side, but
16 nobody know.

17 But still our voices is not heard. We have
18 young people that making better and better voices than
19 when we first came, because we never had technology. You
20 guys had technology. North Slope Borough at Barrow had
21 technology. Prudhoe Bay had technology. Nuiqsut came
22 along with our technology. Now these young people have
23 technology. They have computers. I'm just learning about
24 my own phone, which I don't even really know about.

25 When we pass on, we pass it on to you so we can

1 all be heard. That's our generation of technology to pass
2 down to you guys that -- it's like from the whole Alaska
3 you guys learn. It's very hard for me to not respect the
4 people when the people respect it back to you for
5 comments.

6 Before you guys say a lot of things about NPR-A,
7 I know Barrow, Wainwright, Atkasuk want roads. So do we.
8 We want a permanent road, which we've been fighting for a
9 long time. Because right now Nuiqsut has no evacuation
10 plan. It may be in a plan, but where are we going to run?
11 We're just going to run south. Maybe by snowmachine, by
12 boat as far as we can go. We don't have an existing road
13 like you guys for evacuation.

14 Anything could happen up here in the
15 North Slope. It's all human-made error of mistakes. We
16 have learned from mistakes to voice our concerns. There
17 is a lot of concerns that have not been met with answers.
18 The answers are there. But how? How can you give us
19 answers when there is no answers at all? Thank you.

20 SEAN SOLIE: Thank you for your comments.

21 I saw some folks jotting down notes. So I feel
22 like there must be a couple others that have questions or
23 comments to make.

24 EUNICE BROWER: My name is Eunice Brower for the
25 record. I am a resident of Nuiqsut since 2010. I've been

1 born and raised in Utqiagvik, Alaska, in Barrow. My
2 family has a long history in the North Slope region. My
3 family has -- I have family in Kaktovik, here in Nuiqsut,
4 and Barrow.

5 There's some areas that I'm aware of that NPR-A
6 had exploration, drilling wells back in the '60s, I
7 believe, and those areas, they should have comparison of
8 what happened before in those abandoned drilling well
9 sites to learn from what kinds of changes there are to the
10 vegetation from those areas, if there has been any
11 regrowth back from tundra damage that has been before to
12 see how much has been grown back, restored over the many
13 years and the changes that are today.

14 A lot of things that I haven't seen yet on oil
15 and gas exploration, or what have you, have previously
16 done before. It would be good to see the back-then and
17 then the today pictures to see the comparison of what has
18 been done before and what we can look forward to. Because
19 I understand that our tundra vegetation is pretty fragile.
20 The seasons are very short for growing. They're short
21 seasons.

22 We are in an Arctic environment and it takes
23 very long time sometimes for the vegetation to grow back,
24 or sometimes it changes. Varies from each area. Because
25 on the temperature it's not always -- some seasons are not

1 favorable to grow back. Some seasons -- some years are
2 hotter than others, some are colder. It just varies with
3 temperature changes.

4 And in those areas, they need to be monitored.
5 It's very important for our subsistence. They depend on
6 the vegetation for their food. And for us to have a
7 healthy subsistence -- healthy wildlife, they need to have
8 a healthy environment. The vegetation is very important
9 for them. And that makes it important for me because we
10 subsist off of fish and the caribou and the moose and the
11 whale around our village.

12 A majority of our food comes from our
13 environment because the cost of living here to get it from
14 the store is very high. And the quality of it is not
15 good. But it's still good. And a lot of the times it has
16 to be flown in, and then we pay higher prices than what
17 sometimes what we can even afford. And a lot of times --
18 we're having to wait sometimes when they don't have good
19 weather and the planes can't fly here. So that makes it
20 even higher cost of living, having to depend on and
21 waiting for food be imported at the store. So we can't
22 always wait for that.

23 A lot of the time we are very productive and we
24 continue to live our traditional and cultural lifestyle
25 where we're tied into the land and to the sea. That's

1 what helps sustains us. And I'd like to see more
2 protection on the vegetation, because sometimes it doesn't
3 replenish and sometimes it does. It just depends on the
4 temperature and the environment. Thank you.

5 SEAN SOLIE: Thanks for your comment, Eunice.

6 Anyone else? I feel like there's got to be a
7 couple other comments.

8 NADA WOLFF CULVER: Or questions.

9 SEAN SOLIE: Or questions. Yeah, again,
10 questions too.

11 PETER KOSBRUK: Peter Kosbruk. So my question
12 is, how does BLM anticipate to acknowledge all these
13 concerns our local community of Nuiqsut members have
14 brought forth to numerous meetings over the past 20 years
15 regarding resource development? Because we've heard them
16 loud and clear over and over, yet, we've seen no action
17 taken. No corrective measures were acknowledged to our
18 community by any means. Those are some of the things we'd
19 like to know as we witness all these impacts firsthand.

20 And it seems as a lot of these concerns brought
21 forth by our community members who witness these things
22 get pushed under the rug because we don't have any
23 acknowledgments or any communications of any kind or
24 corrective measures or, you know, what type of concerns
25 were brought forward to BLM's table and what BLM is trying

1 to accomplish with those concerns, if they even make it to
2 that table. Thank you.

3 STEVEN COHN: Thank you for that question,
4 Peter. Yeah, you know, I think there have been, as you
5 know, various -- both plans, land use plans, like the
6 Integrated Activity Plan over the years. So there was a
7 plan in 2013. It was updated in 2020 and then updated
8 again in 2022.

9 You know, I think those plans have done -- have
10 tried to account for all those issues that have been
11 raised and tried to put forward those stipulations that
12 would occur if there's leasing, new oil and gas leasing,
13 and also the required procedures for oil and gas
14 operators, lessees, if they move forward with development.
15 So those have been continuously evolving. And a number of
16 those have evolved, I would say, in direct response to the
17 issues that have been raised here in Nuiqsut and across
18 other communities in the North Slope.

19 Things like heights for pipeline crossings,
20 stream crossings of pipelines, all kinds of procedures
21 around winter use, ice roads, drainage of lakes. All that
22 kind of pages and pages and pages of restrictions in a
23 sense on how industry occurs have come out of those
24 planning processes and are, many of them, I think in
25 response to the issues that have been raised here locally.

1 In addition, the identification of the Special
2 Areas in those Integrated Activity Plans have been an
3 effort to try to account for impacts to subsistence by
4 identifying those areas that are most critical for
5 habitat, like the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area. And then
6 trying to put in place some restrictions in those areas
7 that we feel do the most we can to try to protect those
8 resource values in balance with development.

9 And then I would say also, when we permit
10 development, you know, and we've had several rounds of
11 permitting here, starting with CD5, Greater Mooses
12 Tooth 1, Greater Mooses Tooth 2, and now Willow, you know,
13 I think there's a constant effort to try to learn from
14 each development what worked well, what didn't work well,
15 and then try to continue to create a better kind of
16 management regime for how that activity happens.

17 So trying to always continue to improve the way
18 that we're engaging with the developer, with industry, to
19 try to have the best practices that we can think of at the
20 time to put into place. And many of those have also come
21 through issues that have been raised here locally as well
22 as other communities in the North Slope.

23 So -- but I hear your frustration and I think
24 there's -- there will always be room for improvement and
25 always be -- we'll always continue to need to be updating

1 the way that we're approaching both planning and then
2 resource -- how we're authorizing resource use and to
3 always be proactive to try to, wherever we can, mitigate
4 those impacts and continue to do that.

5 And it does -- it does hinge on these kind of
6 engagements, I think, to make that -- the outcomes of
7 industries' development, continue to make them better
8 for -- particularly for this community that's so close to
9 the development and has much to gain and much to lose in
10 how that development occurs, and so trying to make it the
11 best outcome is certainly our goal and something that we
12 are committed to continuing to work on.

13 PETER KOSBRUK: I thank you for that
14 explanation. I just want to acknowledge you forgot to
15 mention that you do have a local liaison office where
16 these concerns can be brought forward straight directly,
17 and that probably would help a lot.

18 But the question was, how is BLM going to get
19 out there and enforce some of these guidelines within
20 those permits? Because some of those guidelines, the
21 expectations aren't being met, and discussions with the
22 tribe and BLM before Covid, there was supposed to be a BLM
23 office opened here. Thank you. It's open.

24 But the vision we anticipated was to have
25 enforcing capabilities to go out there and oversee these

1 permits and these contractors and operators within the
2 areas so that we can have that firsthand encounter in
3 regards to some of these concerns our community members
4 bring forth in regards to resource development.

5 STEVEN COHN: That's a very good question. And
6 I don't know if I have a great -- if I have an answer
7 right now, but it makes me want to think about more in my
8 role what more should we be doing so that we can have that
9 ability to be responsive, as you're requesting.

10 We do have Jamie here certainly. Jamie and I
11 were talking earlier, you know, are there additional
12 capabilities that we would want Jamie or her office, in a
13 sense, to have. Currently, for example, our petroleum
14 engineering technician, who is, in a sense, a certified
15 inspector as development happens, drilling and all those
16 kind of things, you know, is not located here locally.

17 And though we appreciate having Jamie here as
18 someone who can be a direct liaison with the community, we
19 haven't provided her the training to be a petroleum
20 engineering technician. That's something Jamie and I have
21 talked about for a while. But that's the kind of thing I
22 would -- I would support us having more field presence
23 here. So I guess I'd like to continue -- leave that an
24 open question to figure out how we can engage on that
25 further.

1 You know, we -- for many years in the Petroleum
2 Reserve, we released -- BLM was doing the leasing, but
3 there wasn't proposed development, and it's only with GMT1
4 and GMT2 that we've seen actual development on federal
5 lands in the Petroleum Reserve. And now Willow, of
6 course, is a much bigger development, and so it is
7 contingent on us to really increase our capacity to be
8 responsive and to be on site as that development occurs.

9 So you give me something to think about that I
10 want to engage with my team on when I get back to my
11 office to ask these questions. So they're very good
12 questions. I appreciate you bringing them up. And let's
13 continue to engage on that and think about how we can be
14 better positioned to be responsive in realtime as
15 production activities happen, and then also how can we
16 continue to improve the way that we're engaging.

17 As proposals are coming forward, how do we
18 engage effectively on the evaluation of those proposals
19 and then ultimately in the adoption of decisions to make
20 sure that we have the best practices possible in those
21 decisions as development is authorized?

22 SEAN SOLIE: Did that answer your question,
23 Peter?

24 PETER KOSBRUK: Yes, it provides great insight.
25 Looking forward to the discussion.

1 SEAN SOLIE: All right. Still have plenty of
2 time for questions and comments.

3 PETER KOSBRUK: I do have one comment. Peter
4 Kosbruk, lifelong resident of Nuiqsut.

5 And this is just what you're going to have to
6 expect when you schedule things in and around important
7 times for each and every one of our communities on the
8 Slope. We have different holidays and traditions that are
9 not federally recognized. Some of the things we do, we do
10 to sustain our lives and keep living, and the inability to
11 come and advocate for some of the things we traditionally
12 and truly believe in, we can't -- some of us can't do that
13 because we're out there right now checking our nets,
14 because we just got off of work or, you know, we're still
15 traveling back from AFN. Or we're out there trying to
16 catch caribou and home preparations for the long winter we
17 have ahead.

18 This is what you're going to have to expect, and
19 this is something our community has brought forward time
20 and time again. We're -- the scheduling and timing of
21 these public interactions are very, very busy times for
22 our community. If it's not traditionally, it's something
23 locally going on, and we are one of the most busiest small
24 communities here on the Slope. It's 24 hours a day, seven
25 days a week, 365 days a year we have to deal with the

1 impacts that you gave permission for people to come out
2 here and provide. Thank you.

3 SEAN SOLIE: Thank you, Peter.

4 Any other comments? If we're not seeing any
5 more comments, I think we'd be happy to open up the room
6 just for kind of an open house. We do have some folks
7 here that -- oh, you've got a question.

8 EUNICE BROWER: Eunice Brower for the record. I
9 do have some questions on, when they do oil and gas
10 activities, if there's some sort of blowout or some sort
11 of gas leak that's probably uncontrolled because of the
12 type of environment that is being drilled -- the
13 permafrost and could be human errors or whatever it may be
14 that's causing the blowout -- if there ever would occur on
15 the BLM land, what type of activities do you help with
16 emergency management process? Would you be involved in
17 that process to help ensure the community is safe?

18 And there's times when they had a blowout
19 previously before, and it was uncontrolled gas releases
20 and it affected the community. It affected the people
21 with prior respiratory -- some people have COPD or asthma
22 or other conditions that affect the respiratory system.
23 In what ways would you guys be able to assist or make sure
24 that there is an alert system for some incident occurring,
25 such as a natural gas blowout or a -- what have you from

1 these exploration or natural gas activities that are
2 occurring on these lands or Special Areas?

3 And if that were to occur, what would your --
4 what would be your procedures in ensuring that it wouldn't
5 affect the community or if the community had to evacuate
6 because of these incidents occurring from oil and gas
7 activities?

8 Because sometimes that can happen. Some people
9 are not prepared to evacuate or there's no other way to
10 evacuate because there's no permanent road, and
11 identifying an evacuation center and all those proper
12 steps to ensure that people are safe within our community
13 from these other oil and gas activities occurring around
14 and near the village.

15 STEVEN COHN: Thank you, Eunice. That's, of
16 course, a very important question. You know, I didn't
17 come prepared to talk about all that. And frankly, I have
18 a -- I've got a team of experts, really -- both our
19 petroleum engineers, our petroleum engineering
20 technicians, our permitting experts who kind of live and
21 breathe that stuff all the time, so I'd want to involve
22 them in the answer to you.

23 So if it's okay, I'd like to -- and Bonnie here
24 can help do this. We can schedule some time following
25 this meeting and we will review all that with you and with

1 anyone you'd like to have participate in that. I know we
2 met earlier with NVN. If this is something you would like
3 to have a briefing for NVN, basically a presentation on
4 emergency response, it's a very good question. Of course,
5 Jamie -- we'd like to have Jamie involved in that.

6 And then I think it does -- it is a good
7 opportunity to have dialogue about, do we have enough in
8 place contingency-wise, and if we need to either improve
9 or change or modify the way we're approaching safety and
10 those kind of high-risk events, let's get in that cycle
11 of dialogue about that, because the proximity of the
12 community here to development is certainly -- I can
13 totally understand why it's a top-of-mind concern, and so
14 I want to make sure we have my team in place that has some
15 of that information and then we can get into that
16 conversation and then we can see if there are gaps that we
17 need to be working on.

18 Just the fact that you have the question and
19 don't have -- and that information is not readily
20 available to you makes me think there's always more we can
21 be doing to communicate that.

22 I've got a five-year-old and a seven-year-old at
23 home, so I know -- I'm aware. I'm with you.

24 SEAN SOLIE: That was a great question. Do we
25 have any other for BLM? There we go.

1 JEREMY KASAK: Jeremy Kasak. I work with the
2 city, but I do go out hunting throughout the summer most
3 of the time.

4 The past two years I've been noticing there's
5 been a lot of permafrost dying, land drops. Would you
6 guys be able to do some studies and figure out how many is
7 there? Because I do know there's about four. I showed
8 Jamie quite a few. She did take the coordinates with her
9 iPad, but there is some good areas that our permafrost is
10 thawing.

11 I just drive the road, and if I see something
12 that looks unusual -- like any other permafrost -- so
13 there's those four areas. The one in between
14 [indiscernible] and CD5, that is the worst one. And
15 that's like right in between the bridge and CD5, is what I
16 know. Should be able to find it maybe in Jamie's
17 information. Because they did fly through that area with
18 the helicopter, I believe.

19 STEVEN COHN: Just so I'm clear on your
20 question, is this thawing that's happening along the roads
21 themselves or out -- or off away from the roads?

22 JEREMY KASAK: Off away from the roads. Mostly
23 off --

24 JAMIE KASAK: The one that he mentioned right
25 there is off the road, but we went to one by -- close to

1 GMT1 that goes right by the road. And I've got pictures I
2 can show you.

3 STEVEN COHN: Do you have a sense, is the
4 thawing happening because of the development or the
5 thawing is happening just because of changing climate
6 conditions?

7 JEREMY KASAK: The climate change is what I
8 notice. It happened a little bit after 2022, August,
9 because it was raining the month of August, that whole
10 month. So that's kind of how it probably happened, is
11 that permafrost part. The climate being warmed.

12 STEVEN COHN: Yeah, it's a great question. And
13 I know there's -- there's just so much research going on
14 around the state on changing permafrost conditions. BLM
15 has -- I would say we're not the leading agency on that
16 kind of research, but we, of course, do a lot of
17 permitting for sciences that do that kind of research,
18 whether it's U.S. Geological Survey or the State of Alaska
19 or the university or others.

20 So I think for years we supported what was
21 called the North Slope Science Initiative. We still do.
22 The North Slope Borough was a member of that. And the
23 intent was to be kind of a one-stop shop clearinghouse for
24 all research on the North Slope. We still support that,
25 but not at the level that it used to be.

1 But it does raise the question. You know, I
2 think your question is an important one, because I think
3 the permafrost issue is very significant for a number of
4 reasons. And really, all around the state we're seeing
5 that, certainly in the interior part of the state as well,
6 a rapid change in permafrost condition.

7 So, you know, I guess it's in that bucket again
8 of things we should just continue to collaborate on and
9 communicate on. Pulling in the science community I think
10 can help too. But I think it's that blending of
11 indigenous knowledge, being on the ground, being a
12 subsistence user, seeing what's happening in realtime in
13 ways that sciences aren't going to see or be aware of I
14 think is figuring out how to put all the information
15 together so we can get a sense of the big picture of
16 what's changing.

17 It's certainly going to have an impact on all
18 kinds of uses, including industrial uses, I think. So
19 it's in everyone's interest to get a better understanding
20 of what's happening and what the repercussions of that
21 are.

22 JEREMY KASAK: One more question. I am board of
23 trustee with Ilisagvik. Would we be able to have you guys
24 collaborate with the science -- science class over there?
25 Because they do all these tests and whatnot. This summer

1 they got a few samples from the gravel pit. And they do
2 have a few samples from the river. But I'm wondering if
3 we could try to have them get involved with some of this
4 with their own class trainings and teaching. That would
5 probably be a good way to go. And, you know, they're
6 local.

7 STEVEN COHN: Yeah. Before we leave tonight,
8 can we make sure we get -- I'd like to have your contact
9 information and see if we can follow up on that. I would
10 love to see us pursue that further.

11 We recently, the Department of Interior -- so
12 BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, Park Service, Bureau of
13 Indian Affairs, and U.S. Geological Survey -- we signed an
14 agreement through the University of Alaska with the ANSEP
15 program, Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program,
16 where we now have what we call a direct hire authority.
17 So we can bring on interns in a sense who are ANSEP
18 students and then hire them directly into any of the
19 federal agencies.

20 We also have ways that we can share employees
21 back and forth, including with the university. So lots of
22 opportunity, I think, to have stronger relationships. And
23 I do agree with you that it's critical that we do that,
24 because the environment is changing rapidly, and the more
25 that we can build that shared understanding of how it's

1 changing and the implications of that is just going to
2 benefit everyone, I think. So I'd love to follow up with
3 you on that idea of working with the university.

4 ROBERT [indecipherable last name]: I have a
5 question on SO2 that's come from mining exploration that's
6 getting on the earth. What kind of chemicals it has
7 underneath that is hurting all the water, all the fish,
8 all the wildlife, waterfowl, caribou that close to the
9 ocean. I know the MacKenzie River has a lot of that
10 [indiscernible] but that's from mining. So how can BLM
11 enforce the oil field to cooperate with the Natives of the
12 law of people's lives for their food chains? How can you
13 put it into words?

14 STEVEN COHN: Let me see if I understand the
15 question. I mean, specific to mercury and the impacts
16 of -- impacts from development or impacts from climate
17 change? Because I guess there's lots of different -- let
18 me -- I'm trying to understand the question, if you don't
19 mind repeating it.

20 SEAN SOLIE: Would you like to reiterate just to
21 help him understand what it is you're asking? Is it
22 development you feel is an issue?

23 ROBERT: SO2 that comes from mother earth is
24 really miserable. It's there. SO2 is -- it's from
25 mining. [Indiscernible] through forestry. We don't have

1 forestry up here. We have tundra, permafrost. It's got
2 [indiscernible] down there. So it is harming all of our
3 river. It's harming our ocean. SO₂ is -- can't see it,
4 can't smell it, but it's there.

5 STEVEN COHN: So, yeah, I'm not --

6 SEAN SOLIE: CO₂, right? I believe you're
7 saying CO₂?

8 ROBERT: SO₂.

9 SEAN SOLIE: SO₂. Oh, sulphur. Okay.

10 STEVEN COHN: I'm not a chemist so I'm not sure.
11 I don't know if anyone --

12 ROBERT: So all of these things all depend on
13 you guys. We depend on mother earth. Lot of things that
14 you guys got to learn when you do science work. So in
15 other words, you have no answers. In other words, you
16 have no answers for this. BLM has no answers. Oil field
17 don't have no answers.

18 STEVEN COHN: And this a --

19 ROBERT: We are the ones that are living up
20 here. You don't live here. You guys live in the south.
21 Maybe you guys aren't very much impacted down there. We
22 are. The people of the Arctic is very much impacted on
23 either way we look at it.

24 STEVEN COHN: And you're talking specifically
25 about sulphur dioxide, SO₂?

1 ROBERT: You know -- you should know about it.
2 Don't tell me you don't know.

3 STEVEN COHN: Well, I don't know about the
4 specifics in terms of impacts, but I can certainly look
5 into it and get back to you.

6 ROBERT: It's a general question, but with no
7 answers. And you have no answers.

8 STEVEN COHN: I can certainly look into it.

9 PETER KOSBRUK: I think the question he was
10 meaning to ask, what type of mitigation measures do you
11 have in place for these potential devastating impacts we
12 would have to endure if we endured them? Do you have a
13 mitigation plan in place? That kind of coincides with
14 what Eunice was asking about. What do you have planned in
15 the event of a disaster from your permits from the
16 operators in your area? You can understand what I'm
17 getting at here?

18 STEVEN COHN: Yeah. No, it's a good question.
19 I just wasn't sure if the S02 was in reference to sort of
20 natural processes or related to development.

21 But, sir, if you're saying that the S02 as it
22 relates to development? Is that the question? Then
23 certainly I would like us to be able to respond to that
24 and to have my -- I want my team of experts to be able to
25 help outline all the things that we -- all the processes

1 we have in place and to be able to explain that clearly.

2 I'm not in a position tonight to be able to talk
3 about that. I didn't come prepared to talk about that and
4 I don't have my team here that really are the experts on
5 that. But we certainly have people on staff who that's
6 their job, is to think through those kind of things. And
7 I'd like them to be able to help provide that answer for
8 you all that have that question.

9 PETER KOSBRUK: May I add to that comment,
10 please? So yeah, we're going to need a very clear answer
11 to that. I watched AFN convention a few years back and
12 there was this gentleman from along the Interior near the
13 coast, and salmon was a big part of their nutrition. That
14 river was completely wiped out and/or regulated to an
15 extent that they couldn't go out there and subsist.

16 So the federal government mitigated them in the
17 form of a food box with canned salmon and other preserved
18 goods. Goods that were recognized by the federal
19 government. We don't want to be those people who receive
20 a fish box as a form of mitigation for destroying our
21 lives. We want to know what kind of plan you have in
22 place for -- and as a permitting agency, you should be
23 receiving some of this information from your people that
24 you talk to. We need a very clear answer as to what steps
25 BLM can take or if it's even a discussion that's had at

1 BLM's table --

2 STEVEN COHN: Yeah. I mean, I think it's clear
3 that we just need to get in that practice of having
4 regular dialogue around these things. And I don't know if
5 the best forum is working directly with NVN or working
6 through the tribe. I guess that's an open question.

7 PETER KOSBRUK: Just getting the ball rolling
8 with any entity here in the community would be perfect.
9 You know, just getting a statement in your head rotting
10 away don't make no sense.

11 STEVEN COHN: And we have Jamie here. So we'll
12 have follow-up discussion about this question. We will
13 want to get Jamie's ideas about how we can do this.

14 RICHARD TUKLE: Richard Tukle.

15 Like he stated, you and your experts, I think
16 you should make a better approach and come back when
17 you're ready, you know, with the right people, especially
18 if you don't have answers to these people, you know. And
19 just be more prepared next time, you know.

20 And it's going to happen, you know. You're
21 going to expect all this stuff from these people, you
22 know, because they see it, they live it, and we live it,
23 you know. I'm still fishing over here eight miles away,
24 and thankfully my fishing is still good, you know. So
25 it's only a matter of time until something bad happens,

1 you know. And it's like Peter stated, you know, we're not
2 going to settle for a can of tuna, you know. And we don't
3 want to be those people, you know.

4 Just make a better approach. Come with the
5 right people and explain it a little better, you know, and
6 more understandable for these people that don't understand
7 what's going on. Thank you.

8 SEAN SOLIE: Thank you. Do we have any other
9 comments from the group? I can say, in my time, for a
10 group this size, this is more comments than we've received
11 in the past. So this is great. Thank you for providing
12 your thoughts and concerns. We really appreciate it.

13 If there are no other comments, though, yeah, I
14 think we'll open up the room. We're going to stick around
15 for a while. We've got some cleaning up to do. We're
16 open for questions. We still have comment cards, so if
17 you'd like to submit a comment that comes to mind during
18 discussion, we've got those at the table. Happy to get
19 those jotted down and include them in the record.

20 And we still have a handful of snacks, so please
21 take those. And again, thank you so much for coming
22 tonight. We appreciate it. It was nice to meet some of
23 you, and, yeah, look forward to the next engagement.

24 (Proceedings concluded at 7:11 p.m.)

25

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE, Verbatim Shorthand
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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
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DEIRDRE J.F. RADCLIFFE

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