

**Strong majority of Inupiat voters oppose Arctic offshore drilling**

BARROW, ALASKA – Nearly 60 percent of Inupiat voters support continued opposition to oil and gas development in the Arctic’s Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, according to recently tabulated results from an October 4 voter referendum among the Inupiat tribal members of Alaska’s eight Arctic coastal communities.

Following is a statement from George Edwardson, President, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope:

“A recent voter referendum shows that the people of Alaska’s Arctic coast resoundingly oppose drilling in America’s Arctic Ocean. In six of the eight communities that make up the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS), a majority of voters agreed to continue to ‘support the ICAS Council’s opposition to offshore oil and gas development in the Arctic waters.’

This definitive showing contradicts what pro-drilling proponents have said about support for drilling among the people who stand to lose the most. Even in communities such as Wainwright, Kaktovik and Barrow – where Royal Dutch Shell and others have been aggressively making hollow promises about the benefits of turning over our precious Arctic waters to drilling – voters spoke out in support of continued opposition to offshore Arctic oil and gas development.

The truth of the matter is that we will not be fooled. The Inupiat people of the Alaskan Arctic, who have survived and thrived off the bounty of the Arctic Ocean for thousands of years, understand that oil companies would be the only ones to benefit from drilling in our Arctic waters.

With the support of a strong majority of our people, ICAS will continue to fight for our Arctic Ocean – one of America’s natural treasures, home to some of our nation’s most beloved wildlife species including polar bears, ice seals, beluga whales, bowhead whales and much more. Without the Arctic Ocean, we will no longer survive as a people – more than half our diet comes from subsistence resources such as the bowhead whale, while our entire cultural identity is derived from the Arctic. We can only hope that the Obama administration will hear us and stand up for our rights as Americans and Inupiats by keeping Shell Oil and other oil companies out of our home.”

The Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope is an Alaska Native tribe that represents and is selected by the Inupiat people of the Arctic Slope region. The mission of ICAS is to exercise its sovereign rights and powers for the benefit of tribal members, to conserve and retain tribal lands and resources including subsistence and environmental issues, to establish and carry-out justice systems including social services pursuant to Inupiat Tribal law and custom, and to increase the variety and quality of services provided to current tribal members and for our future generations. Economic development to generate sustainable funding sources for ICAS as a regional tribal government will be pursued to enhance the existing human resource services.

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