

# ALASKA RESOURCE REVIEW



## CHARTING OUR COURSE AHEAD

46th Annual Alaska Resources Conference Highlights Commitment to Future



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Thank you to the best and brightest across the oil and gas, timber, mining, fishing and tourism industries who joined us for the 46th annual Alaska Resources Conference in Anchorage. From sponsors and exhibitors to panelists and attendees, you made this our biggest event yet!



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**LOOKING BACK AT THE PAST 50 YEARS: PAULA EASLEY**

Paula Easley, who served as executive director of the Organization for Management of Alaska's Resources (OMAR), later the Resource Development Council for Alaska from 1975-1987, shares her insights into what makes the RDC special.



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"Your commitment to RDC makes all of our efforts possible, and I look forward to the opportunities we will create together in the new year."

— *Connor Hajdukovich,*  
*Interim Executive Director, RDC*

# TRANSITION, GROWTH AND OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

## DEAR MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS:

I would like to begin by thanking Leila Kimbrell for her years of service as RDC's Executive Director, and for the mentorship and guidance she provided to her staff throughout her tenure. We wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

As we continue the search for RDC's next permanent Executive Director, Jennifer Kuhlmann, our Membership and Events Manager, and I remain fully available for all your RDC needs, and we are excited for what the year ahead holds.

This fall has been a busy one as we hosted our 46th Annual Alaska Resources Conference and celebrated RDC's 50th Anniversary. Thank you to the sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, and attendees who helped make this year's conference such a success. Please check out our sponsor thank-you page and a full conference update in this edition of the Resource Review. Working closely with our Conference Committee lead, Scott Jepsen, we assembled a fantastic agenda featuring speakers from across Alaska and the nation. In my first year fully planning this event, I was truly impressed by the talented speakers who volunteered their time to provide updates, analysis, and forward-looking perspectives on Alaska's resource industries.

This year's conference highlighted RDC's five statewide industries — oil and gas, mining, tourism, timber, and fisheries — with

both broad overview presentations and in-depth discussions on the issues shaping each sector. We also heard from many government officials, including Senators Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, Congressman Nick Begich, Governor Mike Dunleavy, North Slope Borough Mayor Josiah Patkotak, Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Leslie Beyer, and EPA Region 10 Administrator Emma Pokon. Attendees also received significant updates from major oil and gas projects currently in development by ConocoPhillips, Santos, Glenfarne and Hilcorp.

My biggest takeaway from this year's conference was the profound respect our membership has for the work of RDC's past leaders, and the strong sense of optimism for Alaska's resource industries over the next 50 years.

This fall also brought several significant national policy decisions advancing lawful and predictable federal decision-making for Alaska. These included announcements on rescinding the 2001 Roadless Rule and the 2024 NPR-A Rule, authorizations for the King Cove Road, approval of permits for the Ambler Access Project, revisions to the 2023 definition of "waters of the United States" (WOTUS), and a Record of Decision enabling leasing in the Coastal Plain of ANWR, among other announcements. A special thank-you goes to Alaska's Con-

gressional delegation for their leadership in driving these initiatives forward.

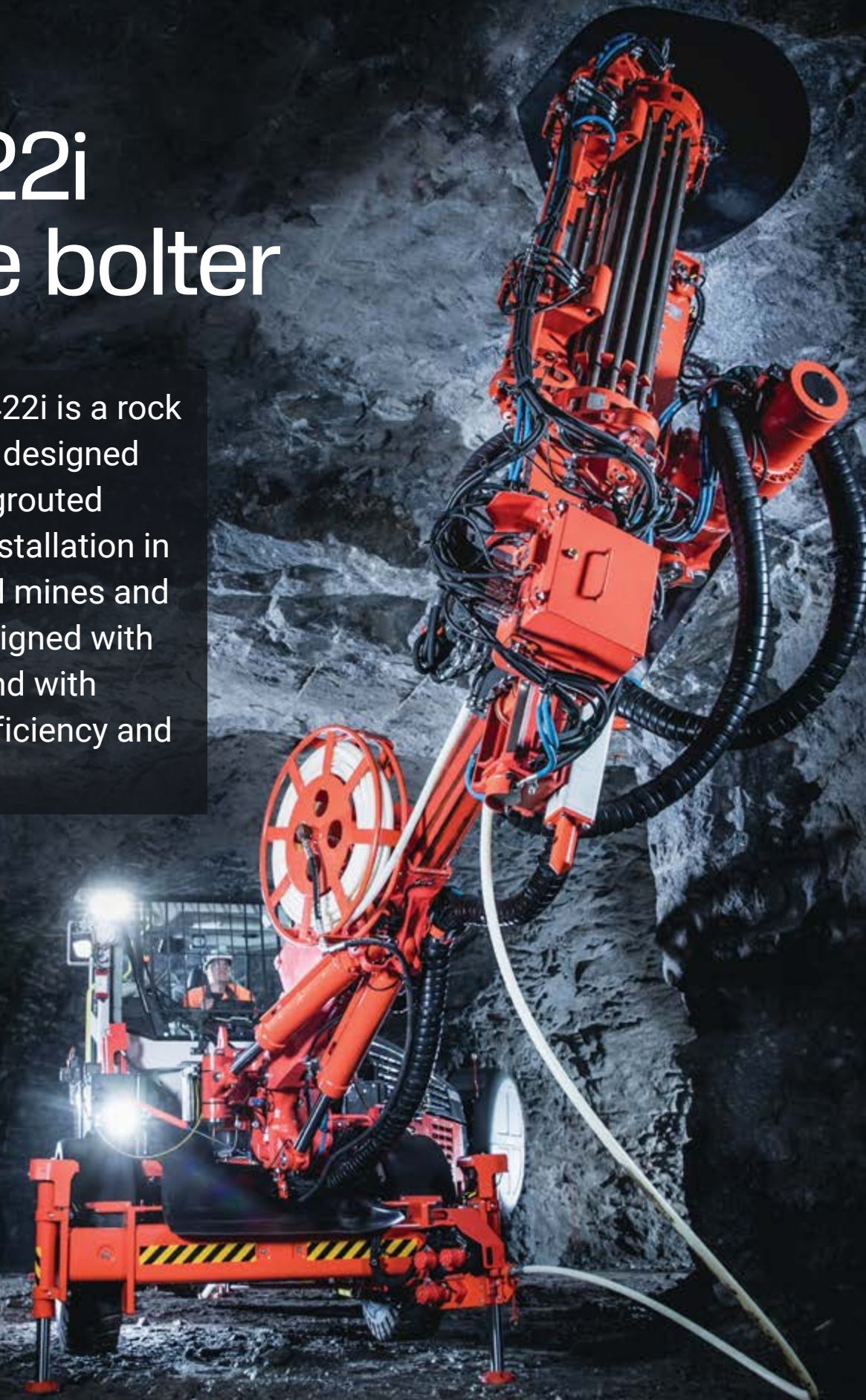
We also saw record-breaking attendance at RDC events this year, particularly at our breakfast forums. During our fall series, we had presentations on the Donlin Gold Project, why ANCSA matters, an update from Alaska's Regulatory Agency Commissioners, an update on the Academies of Anchorage, a presentation on TAPS' impact on Alaska's economy, and even welcomed a virtual conversation from the Secretary of the Interior with Governor Dunleavy. Stay tuned for announcements on our spring series speakers and consider purchasing a season pass so you don't miss any of these valuable presentations and networking opportunities.

As we prepare for the coming year, we recognize that there is important work ahead; advocating for responsible resource development, creating opportunities for our membership to connect and work with one another, and helping ensure Alaska builds a strong economic base for the next generation. Your commitment to RDC makes all of this possible, and I look forward to the opportunities we will create together in the new year.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**  
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"Together, let us build on the success of our recent conference and drive Alaska's resource sectors toward a future defined by opportunity, resilience and shared prosperity."

— Scott Habberstad, President, RDC

# ALASKA'S ECONOMIC PILLARS: UNITING FOR OPPORTUNITY

**IT IS WITH IMMENSE PRIDE AND OPTIMISM THAT I REFLECT ON THE RECENT RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (RDC) ANNUAL CONFERENCE, A GATHERING THAT BROUGHT TOGETHER BUSINESS LEADERS, POLICYMAKERS, AND STAKEHOLDERS FROM ACROSS ALASKA'S DIVERSE RESOURCE SECTORS.**

The event's resounding success underscored our shared commitment to advancing Alaska's prosperity and highlighted the power of collaboration. As we look to the future, the momentum generated at the conference serves as a catalyst for renewed focus on the opportunities before us, particularly within Alaska's five economic pillars: oil and gas, timber, mining, fishing and tourism. Together, we are charting a course that balances growth, stewardship and unity for the benefit of all Alaskans today, and tomorrow.

Oil has long been the backbone of Alaska's economy, providing substantial revenue, jobs, and energy security. The sector continues to innovate, with companies exploring innovative technologies and strategies to maximize efficiency and reduce environmental impact. Alaska's vast North Slope's gas reserves are moving closer to no longer being stranded. This administration's focus on responsible resource development and national energy independence has brought new life to the Alaska Gasline project. If successful, it will bring energy security for Railbelt and open the doors for new industries in Alaska.

Alaska's forests are a renewable treasure supporting both local communities and international markets. New opportunities

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are emerging in value-added wood products and biomass energy. Collaboration between industry and government is vital to ensuring long-term viability and healthy forests for generations to come. The administration's position on the Roadless Rule has opened the door for opportunities in rural communities who call the Chugach and Tongass National Forests home.

From gold to critical minerals, Alaska's mining sector is a cornerstone of our state's economic diversity. The conference highlighted advances in environmentally responsible extraction, reclamation, and community engagement. With global markets seeking secure sources for minerals essential to technology and clean energy, Alaska is well-positioned to play a pivotal role. Continued investment in exploration, infrastructure, and workforce development will unlock new potential while maintaining high standards of safety and accountability.

Alaska's fisheries are renowned worldwide for their quality. The sector not only provides livelihoods for thousands of Alaskans but also sustains rural communities and supports export markets. Adaptive management, science-based policies, and collaborative efforts among fishers, regulators, and scientists have

managed our fisheries through changing environmental and market conditions. As challenges such as climate variability and global demand persist, innovation, cooperation and collaboration will be key to safeguarding this vital resource.

Alaska's awe-inspiring landscapes and rich cultural heritage continue to attract visitors from around the globe. Tourism is a dynamic pillar, fueling local economies and promoting stewardship of the Great Land. The conference highlighted initiatives to expand sustainable travel experiences, diversify offerings, and enhance infrastructure. By investing in authentic, responsible tourism, Alaska can foster economic resilience while protecting the environments and communities that make Alaska special.

The current administration has articulated a sharp vision for responsible resource development — one that prioritizes economic opportunity, and equitable benefit sharing. Across all five pillars, policies are being shaped to encourage innovation, support local communities, and uphold the highest standards of safety. This approach recognizes that Alaska's resources must be managed to benefit Alaskan's today, and in perpetuity.

What truly sets RDC apart is our unwavering commitment to bringing together all sectors of resource development, oil and gas, timber, mining, fishing and tourism — under one roof. At our recent conference, the exchange of ideas and the pursuit of common ground were unmistakable. By fostering open communication, mutual respect, and a shared vision, RDC enables diverse



industries to collaborate on issues that matter most to Alaska. Whether advocating for balanced regulation, supporting workforce development, or driving innovation, RDC provides a forum where unity translates into tangible progress. Our members' willingness to listen, learn and lead together is the foundation of Alaska's ongoing success.

As we move forward, the need for continued collaboration and responsible development is more important than ever. Emerging markets, technological advances, and evolving global dynamics present both challenges and opportunities across all five pillars. By leveraging our collective expertise and maintaining a spirit of partnership, Alaska can remain at the forefront of sustainable resource management. RDC will continue to serve as a catalyst — facilitating dialogue, shaping policy and championing innovation that benefits all Alaskans.

Alaska's future is bright, but it will require the commitment of every stakeholder to realize our full potential. I invite all RDC members, partners and industry leaders to embrace the principles of unity, responsible stewardship, and forward-thinking collaboration. Together, let us build on the success of our recent conference and drive Alaska's resource sectors toward a future defined by opportunity, resilience and shared prosperity.

The Resource Development Council stands ready to lead, unite, and advocate for a thriving Alaska — today and for generations to come.





# UNLEASHING POTENTIAL OF ALASKA TAKING SHAPE

Department of Interior makes good on helping spur new development

BY TIM BRADNER

**SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR DOUG BURGUM HAS FOLLOWED UP ON PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S COMMITMENT TO UNLEASH ALASKA'S ENERGY RESOURCES.**

In late October, the Secretary announced actions aimed at boosting energy development and land and resource management in Alaska. Included were steps to reopen oil and gas leasing on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and completing right-of-way permits for the Ambler Road.

In addition, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management has taken the first steps in resuming oil and gas leasing in the 23-million-acre National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, asking companies to identify areas they are interested in in the large unleased areas of the NPR-A. The BLM will presumably follow up with a schedule for new leasing.

Alaska holds some of the most promising untapped energy resources in the United States and will play a critical role in strengthening national energy security, Burgum said.

In another action, the Burgum ordered the Interior Department to move forward with a controversial land exchange that would allow construction of an access road connecting King Cove, on the Alaska Peninsula, with an airport at Cold Bay to allow medical evacuations. This is a significant action because conservation groups have fought the King Cove road for years because of the precedent it would set in building a road through federally designated wilderness.

In the Coastal Plain of ANWR, the Interior Department has issued a new record of decision reopening all 1.56 million acres of the Coastal Plain to oil and gas leasing — reversing the previous administration's 2024 plan that restricted development to a minimum amount of acreage. This will set the stage for new leasing in ANWR, offering more acreage and new terms.

The Interior Department is also restoring leases to the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), a state agency that secured leases in a 2021 ANWR lease sale which were then canceled by President Joe Biden's Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. That decision was overturned by an Alaska federal court in a lawsuit filed by AIDEA. AIDEA will now be able to begin exploration of its leases.

In the NPR-A, the BLM's "call for nominations" are for tracts to be offered in a lease sale ordered for this winter in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the tax and spending reform act passed by Congress. This will be the first lease sale since 2019 in the NPR-A. Large areas in the northeast part of the reserve previously leased led to the discovery and development of the small GMT-1 and GMT-2



Photo by Judy Patrick

The ongoing Willow project in the NPR-A is due to start production in 2029.

projects, both producing.

The larger Willow discovery, also in this area, is now in construction and due to start production in 2029.

North Slope Inupiat leaders, including those in Kaktovik village, voiced support for the ANWR and NPR-A actions.

"Developing ANWR's Coastal Plain is vital for our future," said Mayor Nathan Gordon Jr. of Kaktovik, a North Slope community within the refuge. "Taxation of development infrastructure in our region funds essential services across the North Slope, including water and sewer systems to clinics, roads and first responders."

On the Ambler Road, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service have reissued the necessary right-of-way permits for the establishment of the road. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit has also been reissued. These actions reverse another decision by former Secretary Haaland in cancelling the permits after she recommended a "no action" alternative in an Environmental Impact Statement prepared earlier for the road. The road project is also led by the state's Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority.

In an additional action, the department conveyed nearly 23,600 acres near the Ambler Mining District to the State of Alaska, completing state land selections in the area and advancing state control over regional land use and resource development.

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# OPTIMISM ABOUND FOR AMBLER MINING DISTRICT

AIDEA to take lead on construction, funding of 211-mile access road

BY TIM BRADNER

**THERE'S NEW OPTIMISM THAT THE LONG-PLANNED AMBLER ACCESS ROAD WILL BE CLEARED FOR CONSTRUCTION AFTER PRESIDENT TRUMP'S DECISION REVERSING THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S CANCELLATION OF FEDERAL AUTHORIZATIONS FOR THE PROJECT.**

Construction won't begin until financing can be arranged, however, and this will still take time. Also, two influential Alaska Native regional corporations, Doyon, Ltd. in Interior Alaska, and NANA Regional Corp. in Northwest Alaska, have cited issues with the road that must be resolved, though both corporations strongly favor economic development.

Concerns by NANA, Doyon and villages in the region mostly involve protection of subsistence hunting and fishing, and ways of resolving those are now being discussed as they were for construction of the Red Dog Mine and access road north of Kotzebue.

Trump's decision is good news for Alaska, state business leaders say. The Ambler Mining District, an area of state lands east of Kotzebue, contains copper, silver, gold, lead, cobalt and other strategic metals. It also is one of the largest undeveloped copper-zinc mineral belts in the world.

Discoveries of high-grade copper and other minerals have been made in the Ambler Mining District over several decades of exploration, most of them by Kennecott Minerals, a major mining company with a long history in Alaska. Development of the discoveries has been stymied by lack of access to the region. Various road alternatives and even a railroad have been thought of to allow access. The current plan for a road connection with the Dalton Highway is the most recent, but it has been steeped in con-



Photo Courtesy Ambler Metals

Exploration has continued for years in the Ambler Mining District.

trovery.

The present plan is for the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), the state's development finance agency, to fund and construct the 211-mile industrial road. AIDEA would model the project on its development of the Red Dog Mine port road in the late 1980s.

With Red Dog, AIDEA issued revenue bonds which were backed by shipping commitments by Cominco, Inc. (now Teck) the mining company at Red Dog. The same model would be used for the Ambler project, AIDEA said. However, mining experts say more copper must be found for mines to be built in the Ambler region and to allow companies to sign binding contracts to ship ore. Without those, AIDEA cannot issue revenue bonds.

The prospects for more ore look promising, however. Ambler Metals, a joint-ven-

ture of Australian-owned South 32, a major mining company, and Canadian-owned Trilogy Metals, a small "junior" exploration firm, has done substantial exploration and found high-grade copper and other metals.

The most work by Ambler Metals and previously Kennecott has been done at Arctic, a high-grade copper accumulation. Ambler Metals is also exploring Bornite, another copper discovery made earlier by Kennecott. Other copper deposits have been found elsewhere in the region by Ambler Metals and other companies. More work on all of these needs to be done.

However, Ambler Metals halted a substantial exploration program two years ago in the face of Biden's opposition to the road. The company's decision to resume exploration next summer will be an important signal. Other work needed to be done will include an updated forecast of the cost

of road construction, which is likely to be higher than the roughly half-billion cost estimate done several years ago.

Ambler Metals will also have to revise its cost estimates of a mine and for trucking ore to the state's Dalton Highway, and to Fairbanks. Ore would then be shipped by rail to a Southcentral Alaska port and, finally, ocean transport to customers.

Despite those hurdles, the important political and permitting problems that have blocked progress may be resolved.

"We are quite optimistic on our initial review, as this action (by the President) stands to create new jobs for Alaskans and secure access to strategic minerals," AIDEA said in a statement.

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA), voiced similar support.

"We want to thank President Trump for overturning the harmful 2024 decision on the Ambler Road Project and prioritizing access to Alaska's critical minerals," said Deantha Skibinski, AMA's Executive Director. "The Biden Administration's nearly unprecedented 'no action' (decision) on the Ambler Road project and flat refusal to grant access (across federal lands) that was promised in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was unconscionable. With stable policies in place, Alaska now stands ready to supply the nation with the minerals critical to our national security and our economy."

Here are key points from the President's decision:

"I approve the appeal (of Biden's denial) made by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority on June 6 under section 1106(a) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and I approve AIDEA's 2016 revised consolidated application for a transportation system known as the Ambler Road Project," the decision said.

The route of AIDEA's proposed road does not cross wilderness-designated lands. It mostly crosses state-owned and federal land managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and for a short distance the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve but it does not traverse designated Wilderness.

AIDEA's application for permits for the road are now more than 10 years old. The agency submitted its consolidated application for the road in late 2025 for a 250-foot-wide right-of-way. The application was

for an industrial-access road but included facilities like turnouts, airstrips, a fiber-optic line and several material sites as well as access roads to material sites and water sources.

The state authority asked to use these areas during construction and for 50 years throughout operations. Once exploration and mine operations are completed, reclamation measures would return the road area to its natural state.

The proposed road would begin near Milepost 161 of the Dalton Highway, extend west across less than 20 miles of BLM-lands, then cross other lands — mostly state-owned, along with lands owned by Doyon and NANA, and a portion of Gates

of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

BLM took the lead in processing the application and prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that considered AIDEA's proposal along with two alternative routes and a "no-action alternative."

In July 2020, under the previous Trump presidency, the BLM and the U.S. Army Corps issued a Joint Record of Decision that approved AIDEA's application.

But in June 2024, under President Biden, the BLM issued a new Record of Decision, in which it decided to select the "No Action Alternative." Based on this, the previously issued federal rights-of-way and U.S. Army Corps permits were terminated. President Trump's new decision reverses that.

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# HILCORP PURSUING NEW INLET GAS DEVELOPMENT

Innovative effort aimed at cushioning projected regional supply deficit

BY TIM BRADNER

**HILCORP ALASKA, THE MAJOR PRODUCER IN COOK INLET, IS DEVELOPING AN INNOVATIVE SYSTEM TO DRILL NEW NATURAL GAS WELLS AT THE TYONEK PLATFORM IN THE NORTH COOK INLET FIELD.**

The platform is now at maximum capacity in the number of wells it can operate but a plan by Hilcorp to install new well casing attached to the platform's legs will allow more wells to operate, producing new gas.

The Tyonek platform now accounts for about a third of Cook Inlet gas production. Hilcorp is investing in new drilling and natural gas development to cushion the effects of declines of production expected in aging "legacy" producing fields like North Cook Inlet.

There is also work underway to expand drilling and development of smaller gas prospects, mainly onshore, in South-central Alaska which includes new work being done at the Beluga River field on the Inlet's west side, where Hilcorp is the field operator and joint-owner with Chugach Electric Association, the regional electric utility.

Modifications at the Tyonek platform are a major undertaking this year, however. Hilcorp presented details of the company's plans at the Alaska Oil & Gas Association (AOGA) conference held in late summer.

The Tyonek platform was built in 1968 and operates in challenging conditions in Cook Inlet in about 100 feet of water with a 30 foot to 40 foot tidal range and tidal currents of 10 knots. The platform produces 35 million to 40 million cubic feet of gas daily, or approximately 14 billion to



Photo Courtesy Hilcorp Alaska

15 billion cubic feet yearly. The platform has 24 producing wells that were drilled and now operate through the platform's large supporting legs.

The North Cook Inlet field is one the Inlet's legacy fields, and although it is more than 50 years old, there is more gas that could be developed. The problem is that there is not enough space in the existing platform legs to drill more wells. Hilcorp has studied the issue and

is considering options like structurally expanding the platform to add more legs, building new platform or installing sub-sea well tie-backs, or wells drilled with sub-sea flow lines to the platform.

Those are costly alternatives and pose environmental issues because of permitting challenges with any new work in the water, which is habitat of threatened

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Beluga whales. The company’s creative solution is to install new conductor pipe, through which wells can be drilled and operated, on the sides of the platform legs. Each conductor pipe can accommodate two wells, so installing one conductor pipe allows for two new producing wells, or with two conductor pipes four new wells.

An additional challenge, however, is to protect the new external conductor

pipe from the crushing force of winter ice that moves with tidal currents. To solve this, Hilcorp has built what it calls an “icebreaker,” a steel structure that is 50-foot tall and 10-foot wide built with 1-inch steel plate. It would be installed to protect the new conductor pipe from the ice forces.

The structure was built in Anchorage last summer, moved to the Tyonek platform, and has now been installed. The next step is installation of the conductor pipe. Drilling is planned to begin in

spring 2026, Hilcorp said at the AOGA conference.

In other new projects, the state Division of Oil and Gas gave Hilcorp approval in September to build infrastructure and drill wells at the company’s Happy Valley gas field on the Kenai Peninsula. Work has commenced and is slated to end in April 2026, the company told the state division.

What will be built is a new 300-foot-by-400-foot gravel pad, the “Happy Valley Middle Pad,” as well as a new 3-mile gravel access road and two gas wells drilled from the new pad.

An additional well will be drilled to supply freshwater. There will also be related facilities such as gas flowlines, electrical instrumentation, separators and other equipment to support production.

On a nearby site, Hilcorp also received approval to install a pipeline to produce gas from its new Whiskey Gulch gas project near Anchor Point, also on the Kenai Peninsula. A 4,000-foot, 6-inch diameter pipe will connect the Whiskey Gulch production pad to a nearby Enstar Natural Gas Co. pipeline.

A third new gas development by Hilcorp will be at the small Pretty Creek gas field on the Inlet’s west side. At Pretty Creek Hilcorp will build its new “Diamond” production pad that will support five new production wells, the company said in information supplied to the Division of Oil and Gas. The location is about 9 miles northeast of the Beluga airport.

All three of these involve drilling into known gas deposits, which are relatively small, but Hilcorp also plans to drill two new exploration wells to test newly acquired state leases near Kenai on the Inlet’s east side. Success could help bring the small nearby Sterling gas field back into production, the company said.

Hilcorp also plans gas exploration in the small North Fork field area east of Anchor Point. Hilcorp purchased assets in the area from two small companies, Vision Resources and Anchor Point Energy.

The North Fork gas deposit has seen limited drilling and production and has produced gas through a pipeline built to connect with Enstar’s pipeline near Anchor Point. Hilcorp says North Fork has additional potential.

Hilcorp is also continuing to drill in

its larger existing “legacy” gas fields in Cook Inlet to add incremental reserves. Hilcorp said it drilled 21 new wells in 2024 following 18 new wells in 2023. The company plans a steady program of 15 to 20 wells per year going forward, the company has told state legislators.

Overall, Hilcorp has invested about \$1 billion in Cook Inlet after purchasing the Inlet’s aging gas fields from Chevron Corp. and Marathon Oil Co. in 2012 and 2013. Since then, Hilcorp has drilled 174 wells and produced 700 billion cubic feet of gas. Despite the new activity, there are still concerns for an annual gas supply deficit slated to begin in 2027. Regional utilities are preparing to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) to cover the deficit and meet consumers’ needs for electricity and heating for buildings.

Hilcorp affiliate Harvest Alaska is involved in that, too, with a plan to purchase the mothballed former ConocoPhillips LNG export plant at Nikiski and convert it to an LNG import terminal. Chugach Electric Association, the state’s largest electric utility, is working with Harvest with a plan to purchase imported LNG to meet Chugach’s gas supply needs for power generation.

Having to import energy to an energy-rich state rankles most Alaskans, but electric utilities like Chugach are required by government regulators to be able to meet regional consumers’ needs. The regional gas supply deficit is fairly modest in 2027 and 2028, according to studies by the Division of Oil and Gas.

New incremental drilling by Hilcorp and other companies could meet the short-term need, but by 2029 and 2030, the supply deficit will be much larger, according to estimates.

Whether new drilling will be enough to substantially reduce imported LNG is unknown, however. New Cook Inlet gas wells tend to decline rapidly in production after first being drilled with decline rates of 30% per year not uncommon.

Many Alaskans hope that a North Slope natural gas pipeline project will move forward, bringing the large “stranded” gas reserves known on the North Slope. But the big project faces financing challenges and is another unknown.

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# HILCORP TARGETS MAJOR PRUDHOE DEVELOPMENT

Company continues its strong push to invest in mature producing fields

BY TIM BRADNER

**HILCORP ALASKA HOPES TO REPLICATE ITS SUCCESS AT MILNE POINT FIELD IN THE LARGE-LY UNDEVELOPED WEST END OF THE PRUDHOE BAY FIELD. HILCORP IS THE OPERATOR AND PART OWNER OF PRUDHOE BAY WITH PARTNERS CONOCOPHILLIPS AND EXXONMOBIL.**

Hilcorp is doing what it does best on the North Slope, investing aggressively and applying new technologies in mature oil and gas fields to boost production, in this case 48-year-old Prudhoe Bay.

So far, Milne Point, located adjacent to and north of the large Prudhoe Bay field, is the company's greatest success on the Slope — but more is coming. Production at Milne Point, which is owned entirely by Hilcorp, has tripled since the field was purchased from BP in 2014 with Hilcorp becoming operator.

Milne Point was then producing about 17,000 barrels per day but production has steadily increased after Hilcorp took full control of the field in 2020, Daniel Donovan, Hilcorp's Western North Slope Asset Team Leader, said at the Alaska Oil & Gas Association (AOGA) annual conference in Anchorage in September.

During the past five years, \$2.5 billion has been invested in drilling and construction of new facilities — including the Moose and Raven Pads — along with an injection of a polymer flood, the first on the North Slope, Donovan said. Earlier this year, Milne Point reached more than 50,000 barrels per day in production and Hilcorp says it's optimistic it can reach 60,000 barrels per day in the next few years.

At the large Prudhoe Bay field, Hilcorp has stabilized production after taking over as co-owner and operator from BP in 2020.



Photo by Judy Patrick

Hilcorp continues to invest heavily in new Alaska energy development.

Under BP's operatorship, production at Prudhoe had been declining gradually, as aging oil fields do, but Hilcorp has mostly reversed the decline after making major investments.

Prudhoe Bay was the first large field developed on the North Slope in the 1970s and was the major crude oil supplier and economic anchor of the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), which went into operation in 1977. The field is still the largest in North America.

Hilcorp's new plan for Prudhoe is a major project in the west end of Prudhoe that could boost output from the field or at least continue to minimize production decline, Donovan said. This project, being called "Taiga" by Hilcorp, includes the development of two new pads to develop the viscous oil deposits, Donovan said.

The project is a "greenfield development" on previously untapped tracts of Prudhoe subsurface. Phase one — project-

ed to deliver peak production of 25,000 barrels per day — centers on construction of the new "Omega Pad" drill site and 51 development wells, with first oil expected in 2028, Donovan said. A second phase would add "I-Pad," at a nearby site, potentially bringing on an additional 15,000 barrels per day in the early 2030s.

A substantial part of the reservoir to be tapped in the Prudhoe west end project, is viscous oil similar to that in the Schrader Bluff viscous oil at Milne Point. Viscous oil is cooler than conventional crude oil mainly because it is typically found at shallower depths than the large conventional oil reservoirs on the North Slope, which are deeper and at warmer temperatures so that the oil flows more easily.

Hilcorp now has experience with viscous oil because of its work in developing Milne Point. The Schrader Bluff oil Milne Point is also found at Prudhoe Bay's west end. It is also similar to the West Sak vis-

cous oil found in ConocoPhillips' Kuparuk River field, except that West Sak is even shallower and cooler and has presented its own technology challenges for ConocoPhillips and, earlier, ARCO Alaska.

Donovan said the polymer injection at Milne Point was developed with the help of scientists at the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Institute of Northern Engineering. The project now involves injection of 58,000 barrels per day of the polymer, which is done in a pattern alternating with water.

Hilcorp is also now producing a limited amount of oil from the Ugnu formation that underlines large parts of Milne Point. Ugnu is true heavy oil that is denser and colder, because it is even shallower than the viscous oil in the Schrader Bluff deposit.

The deposit is a very large oil resource with some estimates exceeding 20 billion barrels of oil in place or locked in the reservoir rock. Producing it, and getting the oil to flow, is the main challenge. Where producing companies typically see 40% or more recovery of oil from conventional North Slope fields, the estimates for heavy

oil accumulations like Ugnu are much lower, at 10% or even less.

UAF's Institute of Northern Engineering has been involved in this, too, with a new process to produce the heavy oil with a solvent injected alternating with water and a polymer. This has had promising results in laboratory studies at the university.

Hilcorp is also actively working to boost two smaller North Slope fields the company acquired from the Italian state-owned company Eni S.p.A. last year, Nikaitchchuq and Oooguruk. These are offshore fields in shallow Beaufort Sea waters just north of the Alaska coast. Nikaitchchuq produces viscous as well as conventional oil and Hilcorp hopes its polymer production technology successfully used at Milne Point may be equally successful there.

"We have hopes that this can produce Milne Point type results," Donovan said.

Meanwhile, major maintenance is at the top of the list for any field operator, and this summer Hilcorp did a major "turnaround" project at Prudhoe Bay. The project involved taking Gathering Center-2, or GC-2, on Prudhoe Bay's west end, offline for about a month, which temporarily reduced

Prudhoe Bay production by 60,000 barrels per day. It has since been restored.

The Prudhoe turnaround was a major project, that involved about 125,000 man-hours of labor and 500 people who performed 385 "work items," Donovan said. The resulting work will improve gas quality going to the gas plants and upgrade gas dehydration systems to allow more oil to be produced from production pads on Prudhoe's west side.

"Hilcorp is proud to reach completion of its largest ever turnaround at Prudhoe Bay, which was supported by our team of employees and hundreds of contractors and operators working around the clock this summer. This five-week planned turnaround was completed safely and ahead of schedule, and underscores Hilcorp's deep commitment to the field," Hilcorp Corporate Manager of Government and Public Affairs Matt Shuckerow said.

Hilcorp owns 27.1% of Prudhoe Bay, the portion previously held by BP. ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil are working interest owners in the field, with 36.5% owned by ConocoPhillips Alaska and 36.4% held by ExxonMobil Alaska.

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# EXPLORATION CONTINUES ACROSS NORTH SLOPE

Pantheon Resources,  
Hilcorp continue push  
for increased drilling

BY TIM BRADNER

**UK-BASED PANTHEON RESOURCES PLC IS CONTINUING TESTING OF OIL AND GAS RESOURCES DISCOVERED IN THE CENTRAL NORTH SLOPE SOUTH OF THE PRUDHOE BAY FIELD.**

In early October, the company announced successful completion of the hydraulic fracture stimulation on its Dubhe-1 well.

The Nabors 105AC rig was used on the Dubhe-1 lateral, which was successfully drilled to a total measured depth of 15,800 feet, logged and cased back to the surface. The lateral well now provides about 5,200 feet of the wellbore entirely within the SMD-B target reservoir. The stimulation consisted of 25 individual "plug and perforate" stages of approximately 200 feet each.

The program proceeded in line with expectations, Pantheon said: "This represents an excellent result given Pantheon's limited prior experience treating this specific reservoir and using a full set of new contractors, including some that had not previously worked in Alaska."

The company is now preparing plugs set in the wellbore to separate the fracture stimulation stages, which are being drilled out with coiled-tubing equipment. The well is being connected to a temporary well testing system for the flow-testing operations.

"We are extremely pleased with the success of the operations so far," said Erich Krumnocker, Chief Development Officer at Pantheon. "The stimulation was performed as planned, increasing our confidence in achieving the objectives of the forthcoming flow testing."

In another development, Hilcorp Alaska is working on further drilling at Point Thomson, the large gas and condensate field east on the eastern North Slope, about 60



Photo Courtesy Pantheon

miles east of Prudhoe Bay. A new gas and condensate production well at a new drill site is planned for 2026 that is expected to add production and bring Point Thomson production to near 10,000 barrels per day of condensate, a natural gas liquid.

It is the first new well drilled at Point Thomson since 2016 and is an expensive project budgeted at \$180 million, Hilcorp said at the Alaska Oil & Gas Association conference. Logistics are a major part of what makes it expensive, the company said.

Doyon Drilling's Rig 15, previously on Spy Island in the Nikaitchuq field was recently moved by barge in a major sealift to Point Thomson. Preparations are underway for drilling to commence this winter and will also require an expenditure of \$40 million for an ice road to be built to the location from Deadhorse, which is at Prudhoe Bay.

Point Thomson is now producing about 4,000 barrels per day of condensate and has been short of its 10,000 barrels per day production goal because of technical challenges in producing and injecting produced gas back into the high-pressure reservoir at Point Thomson.

The new well is planned to bring production to the target of 10,000. First oil from

the new well is anticipated for the second half of 2026. The Point Thomson asset also includes a 22-mile pipeline that connects the field with the 25-mile Badami pipeline at the small Badami oil field at essentially the halfway point between Point Thomson and the Trans Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) Pump Station One at Prudhoe Bay.

Hilcorp's acquisition of BP's Alaska assets included its share of Point Thomson. Exxon-Mobil was previously the Point Thomson field operator but has passed that responsibility to Hilcorp, which is known for its ability to improve the value of producing assets through efficiency and investment.

Point Thomson has an estimated 8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas as well as several hundred million barrels of the liquid condensates now being produced.

The gas reserves at Point Thomson are a major part of the confirmed 35 trillion cubic feet of reserves on the North Slope that could support the proposed large Alaska LNG Project, which includes an 800-mile, 42-inch gas pipeline built from the North Slope to Southcentral Alaska. The remaining confirmed gas reserves on the Slope needed to support the LNG project and pipeline are in the Prudhoe Bay field.



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# NORTH SLOPE LNG ROLLS DOWN DALTON HIGHWAY

Deliveries of gas flow into Fairbanks for the first time in history

BY TIM BRADNER

TRUCKS CARRYING LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG) ARE NOW ROLLING DOWN THE 414-MILE DALTON HIGHWAY, THE STATE HIGHWAY CONNECTING THE NORTH SLOPE WITH INTERIOR ALASKA.

Harvest Midstream, a Hilcorp Energy affiliate, and the Interior Gas Utility (IGU) began deliveries of LNG, from the North Slope to Fairbanks in October, marking the first commercial sale of North Slope gas to communities beyond the Arctic region.

"For the first time in history, North Slope gas isn't just staying on the Slope, it's reaching beyond to power Alaska's future," said Harvest CEO Jason Rebrook. "This project unlocks clean, reliable energy for Interior families and businesses, and shows what's possible when we work together to build Alaska's energy security."

Harvest's North Slope LNG facility near Deadhorse will produce up to 150,000 gallons per day, triple the capacity of IGU's current plant. The facility is also designed for future expansion if market demand grows beyond current capacity. Deliveries are projected to surpass 8 million cubic feet of gas per day as IGU expands its infrastructure and converts customers over to natural gas service.

Converting homes and businesses from fuel oil or wood over to natural gas service will have a significant improvement to air quality in the Fairbanks and North Pole areas, Harvest and the IGU said in a joint statement. Harvest's LNG facility is capable of reducing fuel oil and wood smoke emissions by up to 2,000 tons per year, a large component of which



The Interior Gas Utility plans to expand infrastructure to accommodate new natural gas service.

is particulate matter harmful to human health.

"Bringing North Slope natural gas into Fairbanks is a historic step for Interior Alaska but also for our state as a whole," said Elena Sudduth, General Manager of IGU. "This project gives our community access to a new, virtually unlimited source of gas, strengthening our resilience and ensuring our customers have access to reliable service as Alaska's energy landscape continues to evolve."

The Harvest plant will be able to produce 150,000 gallons of LNG per day or approximately 4.5 billion cubic feet of

natural gas per year, and IGU will need approximately 1.5 billion cubic feet this fiscal year. The utility has a minimum volume commitment with Harvest that goes up slightly every year until it reaches a level slightly over 3 billion cubic feet per year.

There is significant additional capacity that IGU can market to others.

"We have first call on all the LNG. Hilcorp could sell to others, but they would have to be interruptible contracts because of IGU's first call. IGU is, however, able

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

to market the extra LNG to anyone on firm basis," Sudduth said.

Currently, IGU's Titan plant near Port MacKenzie, in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, produces up to 50,000 gallons per day, one third of the planned capacity of the Harvest plant on the North Slope.

"The Titan plant's actual liquefaction capacity varies depending on the ambient temperature. The colder it is, the more efficient the LNG plant is. In mid-October the plant was producing about 42,000 gallons of LNG," Sudduth said.

The transition from the Mat-Su to the North Slope will be rather abrupt when it

happens, she said. Once the Harvest facility is done with its commissioning and steady operations begin, the IGU-Hilcorp contract in the Cook Inlet will terminate.

"IGU will have, for a period of up to 12 months, access to (Cook Inlet) gas supply for Titan on an emergency basis, but not for baseload production," Sudduth said.

In the Fairbanks and North Pole areas, IGU currently serves a little less than 3,500 customers.

"This is up quite a bit from the 1,200 customers pre-2019 when we commissioned the 5.25-million-gallon LNG storage tank that allowed us to take on new customers," Sudduth said. "With the combination of new supply, storage and

vaporization, and ability to extend mainlines as needed, we are ready to take on new customers."

This could include Fort Wainright, the major U.S. Army installation at Fairbanks. The Army post is now heated with steam heat generated by coal, but an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on future power supply done by the Army envisions a switch to natural gas. The Army has yet to issue a final Record of Decision on the EIS, however, so the matter is on hold for now.

The Interior Gas Utility is publicly owned and part of the Fairbanks North Star Borough. It operates more than 150 miles of mainline gas distribution in Fairbanks and 85 miles in North Pole. IGU's service is supported by 5.5 million gallons of LNG storage at three storage sites in Fairbanks and North Pole, east of the Interior city.

The public utility was formed following the purchase of privately-owned Fairbanks Natural Gas, which had also developed the small LNG plant in the Mat-Su and began trucking liquefied gas from the Mat-Su to Fairbanks on the Parks Highway. Gas distribution lines were first built to serve a downtown core area of the Interior city. Service was limited to the availability of LNG supply and storage, and financing.

The state Legislature stepped in to help finance construction of larger LNG storage tanks though state capital appropriations and the state development finance agency, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), helped finance IGU's expansion and additional storage after the public utility was formed.

The idea of an LNG plant on the North Slope with liquefied gas trucked to Fairbanks is not new. Ray Latchem, CEO of Tulsa, Okla.-based Spectrum LNG, had formed a small local gas distribution system to serve contractors and support companies at Deadhorse, at Prudhoe Bay, and also proposed an LNG plant to serve Fairbanks.

At the time, the project was not economically feasible as a private venture with the limited customer base of the Fairbanks gas service area. It was only after the Legislature and AIDEA extended assistance, and Harvest Midstream agreed to build the LNG plant as

a separate, private venture, that the overall project took shape.

The LNG plant was not without its technical complexity. Natural gas for the Harvest plant is produced from the Prudhoe Bay field and has a high 12% carbon dioxide content. Almost all of the CO2 must be removed for the gas to be converted to LNG, however, and this presented challenges for Harvest. The difficulties were overcome, however.

Now that the plant is operating, there are new opportunities. Although IGU has first call on the LNG from Harvest, there will eventually be liquefied gas available for other customers on the North Slope and in Interior Alaska.

LNG trucked from Prudhoe Bay could solve the energy challenges of a major copper mine proposed in the Ambler Mining District, for example. AIDEA is proposing to build a 211-mile industrial road from the Dalton Highway west to the area where mining companies are exploring copper discoveries.

If the road is built, and a mine in the Ambler District is feasible, LNG from

"Bringing North Slope natural gas into Fairbanks is a historic step for Interior Alaska but also for our state as a whole. This project gives our community access to a new, virtually unlimited source of gas, strengthening our resilience and ensuring our customers have access to reliable service as Alaska's energy landscape continues to evolve."

— Elena Sudduth, General Manager, IGU

Prudhoe Bay could be trucked to the road juncture, which is about half-way to Fairbanks on the Dalton, and then west to Ambler. The total trucking distance from Prudhoe to Ambler would be about the same as the distance from Prudhoe to Fairbanks.

This illustrates the potential for LNG

newly available to provide energy for new economic development, such as mines, in Interior Alaska.

On a closer timeframe, contractors on the North Slope would be able to substitute liquefied gas for diesel in providing fuel for new oil and gas projects.

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# NEW STATE GEOLOGIST SETS SIGHTS ON FUTURE

Dr. Erin Campbell brings wealth of experience to DGGS

BY TIM BRADNER

**ALASKA HAS A NEW STATE GEOLOGIST IN DR. ERIN CAMPBELL.**

Former State Natural Resources Commissioner John Boyle announced Campbell's appointment as the State Geologist and Director of the Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS).

The division was previously led by Dr. Melanie Werdon, who retired earlier this year. Dr. Campbell was most previously the state geologist in Wyoming.

She brings a strong background in geologic field work, more than a decade teaching at the college level and a long-time commitment to public service, Boyle said.

"Dr. Campbell is superbly qualified for this technical role and brings an established record of state-level leadership," he said. "I'm delighted to have such an impressive scientist serving as state geologist, leading the division and guiding natural resource policy in Alaska."

With a background in petroleum studies and structural geology, Dr. Campbell holds a bachelor's of science with a major in geology and a minor in mathematics from Occidental College. She attended the University of Wyoming to obtain her Ph.D. in geology, specializing in structural geology with a secondary emphasis in geophysics. She then worked as a geologist for Chevron for four years in Louisiana and California before returning to Wyoming.

During 15 years at the University of Wyoming, she taught undergraduate and graduate courses and directed the Geology Field Camp. Her study included research in structural geology, geomechanics, and CO2 sequestration, and she established the Cretaceous Tight Oil Consortium in the Powder

River Basin.

Later in her career, Dr. Campbell focused on public service. She spent a year as the manager of the Energy & Mineral Resources Division at the Wyoming State Geological Survey before being appointed as Wyoming State Geologist and Director of the survey in 2017, where she served until moving to Alaska this summer.

She has worked extensively at the national level with the Association of American State Geologists.

Dr. Campbell will lead 70 employees within the Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys who generate, analyze and interpret data on geologic resources and natural conditions, as well as map and inventory mineral and energy resources on state land for use by government, private industry, scientists, educators and the public. DGGS also manages programs for hydrology & surficial geology, natural hazards and geophysics, plus runs the Geologic Materials Center in Anchorage.

At the top of her to-do list at DGGS, is response to Typhoon Halong which hit western Alaska this fall.

"The DGGS Alaska Flood Inundation Tool kit is used by the National Weather Service and communities to identify potential flooding in coastal areas," Campbell said. "Right now, we are coordinating with state and federal partners to gather information to help us improve that tool. We are working to get data such as high-water marks, drone and satellite imagery, and detailed elevation data with Lidar (Light Detection and Ranging) to assess damage and erosion."

For the first six months on the job Dr. Campbell will focus on learning about the agency and the state.

"I've been here two months now, and I'm close to completing one-on-one meetings with our staff. It's been a real pleasure



to meet these talented and dedicated people, and to get a better understanding of the breadth of work we do at DGGS," she said. "I'm also making it a point to talk with people in Alaska's industry, communities, universities and government to see how the DGGS can be of greatest service."

As for longer-term plans: "Once I've got more information about DGGS and the needs of the state, I'll be more specific. But one of my five-year goals is to determine how to make us more resilient when federal funding is delayed or uncertain. We do crucial work for the state that saves lives and brings in state revenue, and we've got to ensure that we can deliver under any circumstances."

Minerals and oil and gas are areas where DGGS is very active.

"The DGGS minerals and surficial geology groups have a long list of projects, from making geologic maps and analyzing samples across the Yukon-Tanana Uplands, to flying airborne geophysical surveys over potential mineralized zones around the state. The survey is working to attract industry interest in state resources," Campbell said.

Work on critical minerals is one priority. The DGGS is working in a partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks on a project to develop ways of identifying and extracting critical minerals and rare earths. Phase one is completed and funding for phase two has been awarded but not yet allocated. Phase two will include looking at critical minerals associated with coal.

On oil and gas, DGGS staff are continuing to work on the North Slope to identify new plays, Campbell said.

"In the Cook Inlet, we are characterizing the entire basin in terms of reservoir quality and geologic structures, such as faults," she said.

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Photos by Amber Johnson and Judy Patrick



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- Emerging leaders experiencing Alaska's resource industries firsthand.



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# ALASKA TOURISM BRAND CONTINUES RESILIENCE

Cruise ship visitors,  
winter travel options  
touted by ATIA

BY TIM BRADNER

TOUR INDUSTRY LEADERS ARE STILL ASSESSING RESULTS OF THE 2025 SEASON WITH A FOCUS ON THE FUTURE. VISITOR NUMBERS WERE DOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS BUT THERE WERE ENCOURAGING SIGNS IN PARTS OF THE INDUSTRY. THE ALASKA TRAVEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (ATIA) PRESENTED ITS DATA IN THE ASSOCIATION'S RECENT ANNUAL CONVENTION IN ANCHORAGE.

ATIA said passengers on cruise ships voyaging to Alaska appear level to last year at about 1.7 million visitors, said Jillian Simpson, CEO of ATIA. That's encouraging because cruise travelers provide a foundation for the visitor industry. A flat season indicates stability in an important sector of the visitor industry.

However, airline passengers were down 3.4% for the season, indicating a likely decline in independent travelers, Simpson said. This is important because independent travelers tend to spend more in Alaska than cruise passengers because they make their own arrangements for hotels, car rentals and in-state tours, many of these owned and operated by Alaskans.

Cruise passengers, in contrast, stay mostly on their ships except for shore excursions while the vessels visit coastal communities. Many cruise passengers do go on to travel in the state after arriving by ship. However, many of these excursions are booked through affiliates of the cruise companies although side trips and often done with locally-owned firms, Simpson said.

The downturn this year among independent travelers is generally attributed to economic uncertainties over President Trump's policies on the economy, worries over increasing inflation and a possible



Shutterstock Photo

recession. All of those dampen consumer spending and decisions on vacations, according to the ATIA. This is particularly felt among independent travelers who tend to make decisions near the time they travel and are thus more influenced by short-term worries over the economic situation.

Another indicator of independent travel came in ATIA's data for winter 2025 visitors, which were down 5.5% from winter 2024, Simpson said. The winter 2025 number came mostly in the first and second quarter of the year and at the time there was rising concern over Trump's policies on the economy. Prior to this year, winter tourism was showing strong growth, Simpson said.

Cruise visitors usually book reservations on ships well in advance and generally are less influenced by short-term economic trends, at least in passenger numbers. However, cruise passengers, are not immune from worries about the economy. While their cruises may have been booked and paid for well in advance, cruise passengers likely tighten their spending while in Alaska. Data on this for 2025 is not yet available,

according to ATIA.

However, there is information on regional visitor spending which may be indicative.

"Through the end of September, visitor spending is down 1% overall in the Mat-Su Borough. Visitors accounted for 19% of all spending in the Mat-Su Borough, down from 20% at this point last year," said Casey Ressler, CEO of the Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau.

There are counter-trends, though.

"The interesting thing is that short-term rental bookings (typically by visitors) are actually up 12% through the end of September. I think this indicates that people are still traveling, but their concerns about the economy are making them spend less. We've seen similar data and stories from other destinations in Alaska as well," Ressler said.

Overall, the Alaska "brand" for visitors shows continued strength. Even in uncertain times, domestic vacation travel remains strong and Alaska remains attractive for Americans because of its scenery, wildlife and diverse cultural history.

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# REFLECTING ON THE EARLY YEARS OF OMAR/RDC

Longtime executive director looks back at how far we've come

BY PAULA EASLEY

WITHOUT THE FORESIGHT OF ALASKA LAND DEVELOPER BOB PENNEY AND BROADCASTER BOB FLEMING, THERE WOULD BE NO OMAR/RDC.

In March 1975, the two Bobs, serving as co-chairs, hired veteran political consultant Bev Isenson to develop and coordinate a national campaign for a Trans-Alaska gas pipeline and its associated LNG component. Bev hired me primarily to fundraise, along

with a small staff, and we got to work. Our mission: Simple — convince a few states, some federal agencies, the president and Congress that an all-Alaska route was in the nation's best interest.

The timing couldn't have been better. TAPS construction was winding down, Alaska unemployment hovered around 10% and the Arab oil embargo had driven up energy costs nationwide. Americans were tired of being dependent on foreign oil. Thanks to widespread publicity about the Prudhoe Bay oil discovery and pipeline construction, people all across the country saw Alaska as an energy powerhouse — they relished the opportunity to lobby their own members of Congress to help decide

the route of such an important project. We had the gas and they wanted it. Grassroots support for an all-Alaska line was immediate and overwhelming.

Granted there was the small obstacle of a well-funded competing campaign to turn much of Alaska into “America’s national park.”

To build the movement we needed members, money and a mailing list. To get them, our cadre of in-state volunteers sold \$10 memberships at every possible fair, festival and community event. Forty-nine founding members made generous contributions and leveraged their networks.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



Carl Portman, Paula Easley and Jason Brune enjoy a moment together at the RDC Conference in Anchorage.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

We sold commemorative plaques containing oil from the first barrel to reach Valdez for \$250 each. We hired a DC lobbyist who called daily at 3:30 a.m. (thanks to the five-hour time difference) before he left for Capitol Hill. With long-distance telephone rates sky-high, we relied heavily on the U.S. mail, perfecting the art of envelope stuffing with an army of dedicated volunteers. Local businesses donated many meals to keep the crews working.

It was an exhilarating, all-hands-on-deck effort, and all those involved in the Alaska and Washington, D.C. coordination had every reason to be proud. Then-President Jimmy Carter decided the gas line should be routed through Canada, not Alaska.

Almost overnight, the OMAR board and staff found themselves mired in the D(2) lands withdrawals and the potential loss of countless multiple-use lands and resources. For anyone wanting to live, work and build families in the Last Frontier, that was beyond alarming.

Sympathetic private, state and federal land-use experts helped our members identify critical resource-related areas and potential access routes, typically meeting late at night for some to protect their jobs.

As the preservationist demands grew ever larger and more specific, our dedicated multiple-use organizations banded together (RDC with the same board and staff as its predecessor) to prevent what we called the “Lockup Limbo.”

The gas pipeline experience trained a generation of Alaskans in grassroots advocacy, skills they have used on mining, logging, opening ANWR, the Ambler and King Cove Road, marine sanctuaries, buffer zones, wetlands classifications and countless other challenges across the decades.

Your editor asked me if I had any advice for the Resource Development Council going forward. Only this: RDC’s work is once again under siege from every direction. The organization clearly needs more help. More paid staff, carefully-targeted volunteer teams and real commitment from statewide industry and labor. If companies have attorneys, lobbyists, communications experts or



Paula Easley has been instrumental in helping shape Alaska’s resource industries.

other professionals they can loan or second to RDC when the fights intensify, they need to recognize what’s at stake ... and just do it.

There has never been a more urgent time than right now.

**PAULA EASLEY SERVED AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OMAR/RDC FROM 1975-1987**



Paula and Tom Lovas share a moment together at the RDC Conference in November.

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# SEAFOOD INDUSTRY SEES SIGNS OF RECOVERY

Fisheries insiders point to bright spots within past year's outlook

BY TIM BRADNER

IT HAS BEEN A MIXED BAG FOR ALASKA SEAFOOD PRODUCERS DURING THE PAST YEAR.

The industry is gradually recovering from market-based issues but costs are still high, a hangover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Bristol Bay processors and harvesters generally did well this year and an encouraging sign was that fish were bigger than last year by about a half a pound overall, according to industry sources.

That's good because salmon are sold by weight, not by fish, so larger fish put more money in harvesters' and processors' pockets. Bristol Bay sockeye harvests have been high in recent years but the fish were smaller, industry insiders said.

Salmon prices in Bristol Bay were acceptable, harvesters said, but the full story will come later this year when processors announce postseason adjustments to payments. That happens when fish are actually sold, and there is a difference between the sale price in the market and what was paid to harvesters early in the season, based on estimates of the final sales price. An official "posting," or notice, was Silver Bay's announcement earlier this season that it would buy sockeye in Bristol Bay at \$1.30 per pound including a quality-handling bonus.

The sockeye (red) run in Cook Inlet was good, as was the coho (silver) run. That was welcome news for sportfishing in Southcentral. However, pink salmon in Southeast Alaska were down. Pink salmon are an important fishery for that region. For the region, this was partially offset by chum salmon catch, also important to the region, that was considered acceptable.

Meanwhile, processors and some harvesters depend on other fisheries to smooth out the ups and downs in salmon, the ma-



Photo Courtesy ASMI

jor summer fishery. Halibut is part of the industry's diversification strategy, but this year the Pacific and Alaska halibut biomass is still down.

This poses challenges because fisheries managers set catch limits based on the estimated biomass. Higher prices offset some of the sting of lower harvests, but this leads to consumer resistance.

Other species in the state's diverse fisheries portfolio such as sablefish, also known as black cod, appeared to do well. This is a fish previously exported almost exclusively to Japan but is now becoming popular in domestic markets. A lot of this is credited to new products developed and promoted by Alaska processors.

For example, Alaskan Leader Seafoods' Miso Marinated Black Cod being sold through Costco has become highly popular and by itself has resulted in a 2,000% increase in black cod domestic U.S. sales.

Trident Seafoods is also active in new product development such as with a new pet food product line. Trident has been making changes to its business structure in Alaska, reducing the number of its primary Alaska processing facilities after selling off plants. Trident's new Unalaska plant is on hold but

the company continues to operate at Akutan, a big processing facility in the Aleutians.

In the big offshore ground fisheries, pollock harvests in the Bering Sea are at expected levels but "bycatch" problems with herring have caused some slowdown, reducing efficiency and raising costs. When fishing vessels experience high levels of bycatch, or the accidental catching of fish other than the target species — in this case pollock — the pace of fishing must be slowed to reduce the bycatch.

A bright spot for the Alaska pollock industry is that Russian pollock is now completely out of the U.S. domestic market. This is a result of former President Biden's tightening of import bans on Russian seafood due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For a period, Russian producers were able to evade U.S. restrictions by exporting raw product to China for processing so they could be "re-exported" to the United States. China, instead of Russia, could then be listed as the country origin.

Initiatives from the Alaska congressional delegation and particularly U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan resulted in President Biden closing this loophole for Russia in evading the U.S. restrictions.



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# TIMBER INDUSTRY GETS RENEWED INTEREST

Trump, Dunleavy seek to spur industry with new forest policies

BY TIM BRADNER

ALASKA ONCE HAD A VIBRANT FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY IN SOUTHEAST ALASKA, BUT OVER TIME CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT IN THE TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST, LAWSUITS BY CONSERVATION GROUPS, AND CHANGES IN EXPORT MARKETS HAVE RESULTED IN A SHARP REDUCTION IN THE INDUSTRY.

President Donald Trump hopes to change that with new federal forest policies. In addition, Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy has plans to support the industry with wood sales from state-owned lands.

In the years just after Alaska statehood and through the 1970s, large pulp mills in Sitka and Ketchikan — and the harvesting and support activity that went with them — were major contributors to the regional economy.

Tourism, fisheries, government and health care are now important to Southeast communities, but they do not replace the high-paying jobs once provided by the forest products industry.

There is still some limited timber harvesting, small sawmills and one medium-sized mill, Viking Lumber, still working in the Southeast but there are continued uncertainties over wood supply. Viking employs about 45 people year-around in Klawock, on Prince of Wales Island, which has a population of 1,000.

Viking is a major supplier of high-quality Sitka spruce for makers of high-end musical instruments including Steinway Pianos. The company says it has enough wood supply to get through this winter but needs more for next year.

The State of Alaska has stepped in to aid the remaining mills with wood from state lands. There are two state forests in the region that conduct timber sales, the long-established Haines State Forest, and the new-



er Southeast State Forest established in 2010. There is also forest land owned by the University of Alaska and the Alaska Mental Health Land Trust, which are state lands managed separately, that can supply wood.

While this has helped, it can't replace wood supply that has been curtailed from the Tongass, the nation's largest national forest. President Trump has now directed the U.S. Forest Service to increase timber sales from the Tongass and other national forests by 25% with new five-year plans, but these will take time to go into effect.

Trump has also ordered an end to the "roadless rule," a regulation that prohibits the forest service from building new roads in the Tongass to support harvesting. Ending the roadless rule could help the remaining industry by providing more access for harvesting but there are other challenges that remain for the Tongass, mainly economic, which add complications.

For example, Sealaska Corp., the Juneau-based Alaska Native regional corporation, has shifted away from timber har-

vesting on its private lands in Southeast, which has reduced business for support companies in the region that also serve harvesting for remaining federal sales and the State of Alaska offerings. With fewer support companies, costs for all remaining operators are increased.

"Changing management perspective by the U.S. Forest Service has decreased significant (high-value) old-growth harvest on federal land in Southeast Alaska over the past decade," the state Division of Forestry cited in an analysis.

This has reduced access to the high-value old growth, which is much in demand. The federal management will change with new policy by President Trump, but this will take time.

"Meanwhile, efforts to substitute old-growth harvest with significant young-growth harvest on the Tongass have been slow to be realized," according to the state analysis.

There are complications in markets, too, including some created by geopolitical



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shifts. China has been a major customer for timber from Southeast, but tensions with the U.S. and tariff policies have changed this.

"Legacy markets (for Alaska) in Japan and Korea are still present but have generally waned," the Division of Forestry wrote. "China had assumed the major role in consuming the lower-quality old growth spruce and hemlock as well as the young growth timber that is now achieving commercial size in an increasing number of merchantable timber stands."

"China has indefinitely suspended log imports from the U.S. which has precipitated significant economic stress for most timber purchasers. Uncertainty with respect to tariff impacts and inflation has tempered market demand and impacted purchaser resilience."

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"As we begin a new year, one thing stands out: RDC is strong because our members show up. You show up for the tough conversations, you show up for collaboration, and for one another."

— Jennifer Kuhlmann,  
Membership & Events Manager, RDC

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS IN 2026

**AFTER A WHIRLWIND ANNIVERSARY YEAR CELEBRATING RDC'S 50 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP, ADVOCACY, AND PROGRESS, WE'RE EXCITED TO CARRY THAT MOMENTUM INTO 2026.**

We've seen that momentum reflected everywhere — from our well-attended Breakfast Forums, steady membership growth, and a very successful Alaska Resources Conference that showcased the strength of Alaska's resource community.

As we begin a new year, one thing stands out: RDC is strong because our members show up. You show up for the tough conversations, you show up for collaboration, and for one another. If you're not a member yet — we'd love to welcome you into our growing RDC community.

Your membership supports:

- Year-round advocacy for responsible resource development
- Timely forums and updates on issues that affect your business, your families and the great state of Alaska
- A trusted, neutral space where diverse perspectives can come together
- Educational opportunities for emerging leaders, students, and partners
- A network of Alaskans committed to ensuring a strong and stable economy

Join us, renew your membership, or encourage your organization to join. You're not just supporting an event or a newsletter — you're helping shape Alaska's future.

### CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBER BENEFITS

- You and your employees (or you, as an Individual Member) will receive:
- A commitment from RDC to ad-

vocate for the responsible development of Alaska's natural resources.

- Regular email notifications of important issues facing our industries.
- Invitations to RDC's public forums highlighting those issues. These forums include our Thursday breakfast series, Annual Membership Luncheon, and other special luncheons, as well as our Annual Alaska Resources Conference, which was attended by over 1000 working professionals in 2025!

■ Excellent opportunities to learn more about ongoing development projects in the state and valuable networking opportunities at all our events throughout the year.

■ Member discounts on our Breakfast Forum series, luncheon registrations, and conference exhibitor booths and registration.

■ As a Corporate Member, we will list your organization on the RDC website with a link directed to your organization's website. As an Individual Member, we will list your name on our Individual Members page.

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

We are often asked about the differences between our levels of membership. You may decide which level you think is most appropriate for you as an individual or an organization. Many companies consider their size and budget, and their expected participation in RDC. We encourage companies to join as corporate members as there are additional benefits that apply to the corporate membership levels. We know each organization is different, so

please contact me directly to discuss your options!

Please join me in welcoming our newest members, listed on the next page.

As always, you can see our full list of members on our website!

### INDIVIDUAL

- Basic: \$75
- Silver: \$150
- Gold: \$300
- Platinum: \$500 and up

### CORPORATE

- Basic: \$500
- Silver: \$750
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### CURRENT MEMBERS

Already a member but need to update your profile? Please email me at [jennifer@akrdc.org](mailto:jennifer@akrdc.org) for any address and corporate contact updates. We want to make sure you continue to receive our correspondence and event updates throughout the year!

I hope to see you at our next RDC event. Don't be a stranger! If you have membership questions or ideas, give me a call or send a note my way.

Cheers to a new year (and the next 50!) of strong partnerships and building Alaska's future — together.

JENNIFER KUHLMANN  
MEMBERSHIP & EVENTS MANAGER  
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*Jennifer Kuhlmann*

THE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL FOR ALASKA's purpose is to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through

the responsible development of our natural resources.  
For a complete listing of our members, please visit our website at [akrdc.org](http://akrdc.org)

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