





Chapter Six Subsistence





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CHAPTER 6: SUBSISTENCE

“Today, we live in a cash economy, where we need jobs and economic opportunities to subsist and survive. The key is to strike a balance between preservation and development.”

Sayers Tuzroyluk
VOICE President

Wild resources – animals, fish, and plants – are harvested, processed, shared, and consumed in an economy and way of life known as ‘subsistence.’ Subsistence activities are common across the entire State of Alaska. Residents of populated urban areas harvest approximately 13.4 million pounds of wild food under subsistence, personal use, and sport regulations.¹³⁵ However, it is the rural subsistence users that are the most active, harvesting an estimated 36.9 million pounds of wild foods annually.¹³⁶

Collectively, the subsistence activities of hunting, fishing, and gathering constitute a way of being and relating to the world and are an essential component of Alaska Native identities and cultures. Many Native Alaskans depend on subsistence activities for both nutritional and spiritual nourishment and have been central to a tribe’s customs and traditions for centuries.¹³⁷ For the Iñupiat of the North Slope, engaging in subsistence activities is paramount to maintaining ancestral traditions.

DEFINITION OF SUBSISTENCE

There are a number of definitions of subsistence and many different understandings of its meaning. What is clear is that the term means different things to people based on their cultural upbringing.

The North Slope Borough Municipal Code defines subsistence as:

“An activity performed in support of the basic beliefs and nutritional needs of the residents of the Borough and includes hunting, whaling, fishing, trapping, camping, food gathering, and other traditional and cultural activities (NSBMC 19.20.020).”

The Alaska legislature passed the state’s first subsistence statute in 1978, establishing subsistence as the priority use of Alaska’s fish and wildlife. The law highlights the unique role that subsistence harvesting takes in Alaska. The definition outlined in AS 16.05.940(33) is:

“...the noncommercial, customary and traditional uses of wild, renewable resources by a resident domiciled in a rural area of the state for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation, for the making and

¹³⁵ State of Alaska. Department of Fish and Game. n.d. *Subsistence in Alaska*. www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=subsistence.main.

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ State of Alaska. Department of Fish and Game. n.d. *Subsistence in Alaska. Overview: Definition, Responsibilities and Management*. www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=subsistence.definition.





selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption, and for the customary trade, barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; in this paragraph, "family" means persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and a person living in the household on a permanent basis."

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, a federal law passed in 1980, does not define subsistence, but rather subsistence uses. In Section 803, subsistence uses are:

"the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; and for the customary trade, barter or sharing for personal or family consumption."

While the term subsistence implies the use of natural resources for physical needs, it may not always convey the spiritual and cultural importance of those harvest activities. For Alaska Natives of the North Slope, subsistence is a connection to the land and the way the Iñupiat passed down traditional knowledge through generations. It is not only a way of life, but also the joy of living from the gifts that the Creator provides.

VILLAGE AREAS OF INFLUENCE

The residents of the North Slope Borough travel throughout the region for subsistence pursuits.

The use areas for the North Slope's coastal villages extend miles out into the ocean. Inland waters, such as rivers and lakes, are also used as fishing and bird hunting areas. The combined Areas of Influence for NSB villages is depicted in Map 5. This map illustrates the range that many hunters will go during subsistence activities. Many will venture farther than these boundaries illustrate; annual conditions are never identical.

Yet, simply identifying traditional harvest areas underrepresents areas that must be considered for their importance to Iñupiaq hunters: camps, cabins, access routes, butchering sites, and staging areas. Also important for subsistence activities is migratory species routes and patterns. Disruptions to migratory patterns of whales, caribou, fish, and waterfowl can divert animals from traditional harvest areas and subsistence users. Native allotments (discussed in Chapter 15) inherently involve subsistence-related activities.

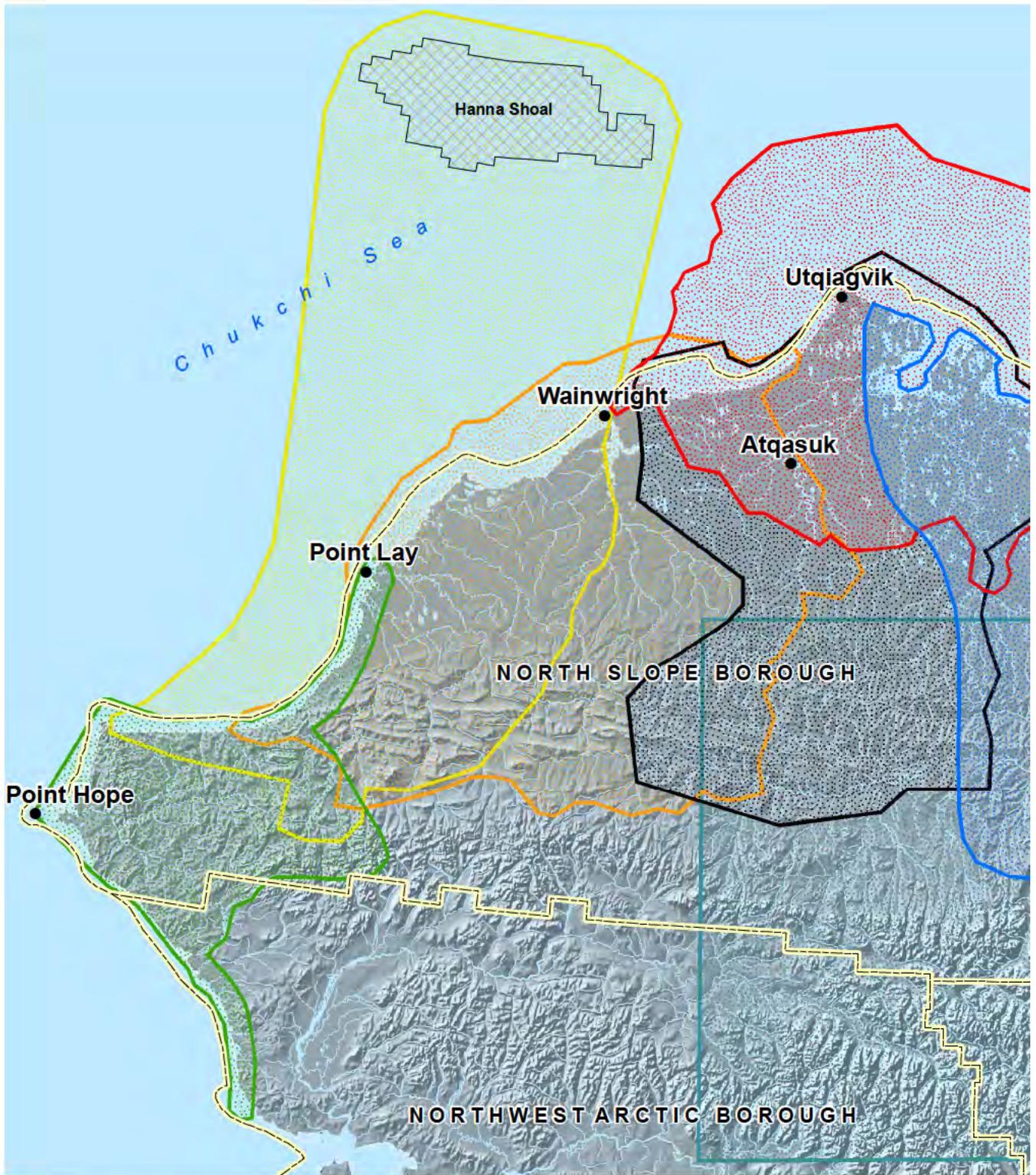
The subsistence hunting areas for land mammals are the most extensive of all subsistence use areas. The area covers nearly the entire North Slope Borough, extending from the Brooks Range to the coastal plains and from the Canadian border to the Chukchi Sea coast. Modes of inland travel include a variety of all-terrain vehicles and snow machines. Almost the entire coastline of the borough is used for marine mammal hunting, extending at least twenty-five miles offshore. A combination of traditional skin boats and motorized boats are used for riverine and marine subsistence activities. Snow machines are also commonly used during the winter months for hunting marine mammals from the sea ice.





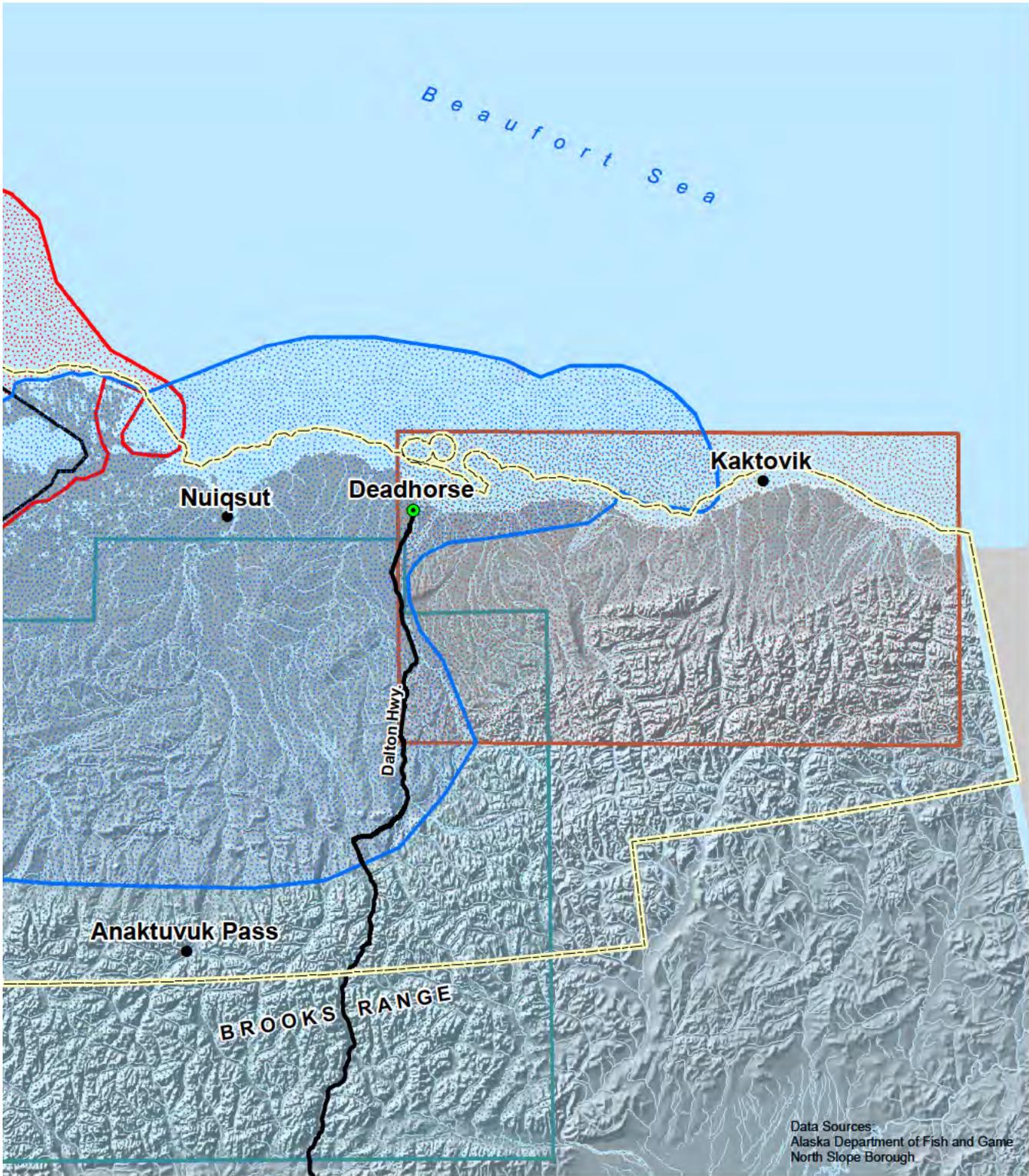
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**North Slope Borough
Village Areas of Influence – Map 5**





Data Sources:
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
North Slope Borough

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Borough Boundaries | Kaktovik | Point Lay | NSB Communities |
| Anaktuvuk Pass | Nuiqsut (Preliminary) | Utqiagvik | Industrial Center |
| Atqasuk | Point Hope | Wainwright | |





The Alaska Department of Fish and Games regulates hunting and fishing throughout the state to sustainably manage the state’s resources. There are four Game Management Units within the NSB area of influence for subsistence use purposes, which are shown in Map 6. Bag limits are defined by the state and published annually.¹³⁸



Waterfowl are jointly managed by the state and federal governments and a caucus representing eligible Alaska Native tribes. A state hunting license and both state and federal waterfowl stamps are required to subsistence hunt waterfowl.¹³⁹



Subsistence hunting for marine mammals is managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (seals, sea lions, whales) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (sea otters, polar bears, walrus).¹⁴⁰

SUBSISTENCE HARVEST

Subsistence activities are a year-round event on the North Slope, and are oriented both to the land and to the sea. Birds, fish, marine mammals, land mammals, and plants are all sources of subsistence food and supplies. Coastal communities are logically more dependent upon marine mammals and coastal resources, while inland communities are more dependent upon caribou and other terrestrial resources. Bowhead whales, beluga whales, several species of seals, and caribou still provide the bulk of subsistence needs for local communities. Other subsistence resources include: waterfowl, ptarmigan, anadromous and freshwater fish, furbearers, large mammals, and vegetation.



Annual use patterns are dependent upon natural cycles, availability of resources, travel conditions, and other environmental factors. Some species may be present year-round, but are only harvested when permitted by a regulatory entity. Other species are opportunistically harvested or as environmental conditions (such as sea ice) allow furbearers are not often harvested during the summer months as the pelts are lighter and the animals are raising their young.

¹³⁸ Specific regulations can be found on the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Hunting Maps by Game Management Unit website at: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntingmaps.bygmu&gmu=26.

¹³⁹ State of Alaska. Department of Fish and Game. n.d. *Subsistence Hunting in Alaska*. www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=subsistence.hunting.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid





In addition to the waterfowl, terrestrial animals, and marine mammals, North Slope residents also pick a variety of berries, typically during the months of July through August. Due to climate change, some communities have been able to harvest berries as late as mid-October. Across the North Slope, residents enjoy the bounty of salmonberries (cloud berries), low bush cranberries, alpine blue berries, crow berries (blackberries), and bearberries.

While caribou, fish, and waterfowl are part of the subsistence diet, the bowhead whale is the foundation of the Iñupiat. The coastal villages of Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainwright, and Utqiagvik typically begin annual spring whale hunts in early May. The fall whaling communities are Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Utqiagvik, and Wainwright. Due to the bowhead whales' traditional fall migratory route, Utqiagvik and Wainwright are the only whaling communities that are afforded both spring and fall whaling. Spring sea ice conditions only allow for Kaktovik and Nuiqsut to participate in fall whaling. The Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission reported there were 87 NSB registered whaling crews during the 2017 season. These whaling crews harvested a total of 46 whales for the year.

While the whale is shared with the inland communities of Atkasuk and Anaktuvuk Pass, these residents primarily depend on caribou. All of the North Slope communities hunt caribou.

The bountiful subsistence harvest is shared widely with people across the North Slope and other nearby regions. A practice that has sustained the Iñupiat since time immemorial.

SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

Subsistence users across the NSB rely upon a variety of terrestrial, marine mammals, fish, and waterfowl for some or all of their diet. According to a 2015 North Slope Borough Social and Economic Profile and Census, nearly all of NSB households' diets included at least some subsistence foods (97.3 percent), down slightly from 2010 when 97.9 percent of residents reported having at least some subsistence foods in their diet. However, those households whose diets consisted of half or more of subsistence foods have decreased, from 65.7 percent in 2010 to 63.7 percent in 2015.^{141, 142}

¹⁴¹ North Slope Borough. 2015. *North Slope Borough 2015 Economic Profile and Census Report Volume XI*. Prepared by Circumpolar Research Associates Shepro, C., Maas, C. and D. Gallaway and edited by Jason Bergerson for the North Slope Borough. www.north-slope.org/your-government/nsb-2015-economic-profile-census-report.

¹⁴² North Slope Borough. 2010. *North Slope Borough 2010 Economic Profile and Census Report*. Prepared by Circumpolar Research Associates Shepro, C., Maas, C. and D. Gallaway with J. McAnich for the North Slope Borough. www.north-slope.org/your-government/census-2010North-Slope-Borough.



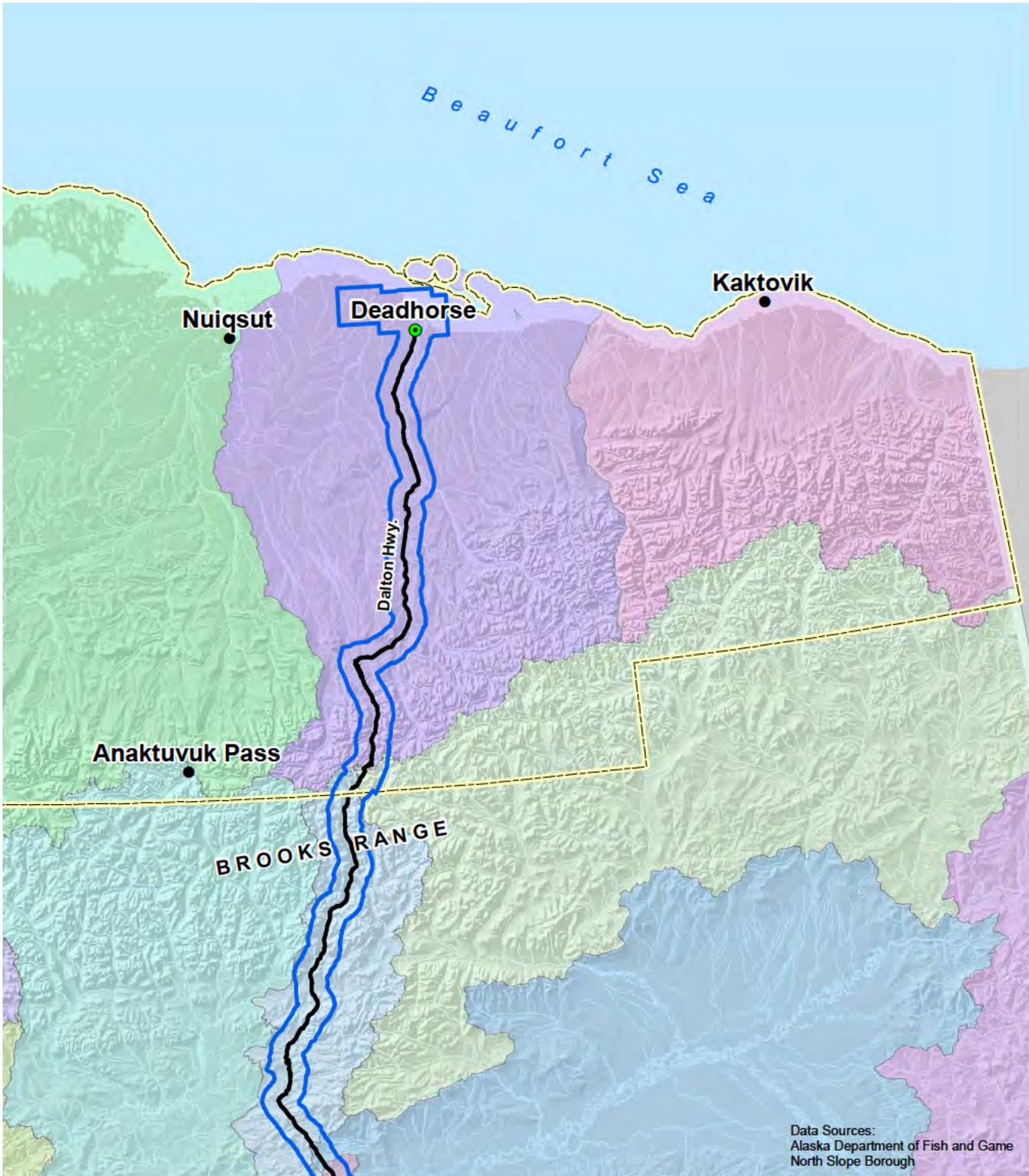


**North Slope Borough
Game Management Units – Map 6**



Note:
Additional federal regulation may apply east of the Colville River





Data Sources:
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
North Slope Borough

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------------|
| Dalton Highway Corridor | 24B | 25B | 26C | NSB Communities |
| Borough Boundaries | 24C | 25D | | Industrial Center |
| 20F | 24D | 26A | | |
| 23 | 25A | 26B | | |
| 24A | | | | |





The traditional Iñupiat values guide the Iñupiat in their everyday lives. It is through these values, the North Slope Iñupiat share the subsistence bounty with elders, families in need, families that are unable to hunt for themselves, friends and relatives. Bartering is also practiced. Residents from coastal villages may barter aġvik (bowhead whale) for inland caribou, berries,

masu (Eskimo potato) or greens, if their area is scarce of those resources.

Sharing also goes beyond the borders of the North Slope Borough. North Slope residents not only share within their communities, but with communities within the NANA region and Anchorage. Table 13 details where households share subsistence foods.

Table 13: 2015 Household Subsistence Sharing¹⁴³

Were subsistence foods were shared...		Anaktuvuk Pass	Atqasuk	Kaktovik	Point Hope	Nuiqsut	Point Lay	Utqiagvik	Wainwright
Within own community	Yes	100.0%	87.8%	97.9%	95.0%	97.7%	100.0%	94.3%	97.2%
	No	0%	12.2%	2.1%	5.0%	2.3%	0%	5.7%	2.8%
Other NSB Community	Yes	49.3%	62.5%	50.0%	66.0%	63.2%	67.9%	54.8%	51.0%
	No	50.7%	37.5%	50.0%	34.0%	36.8%	32.1%	45.2%	49.0%
Any NANA Community	Yes	5.8%	5.0%	10.4%	83.8%	20.7%	34.5%	28.2%	19.2%
	No	94.2%	95.0%	89.6%	16.2%	79.3%	65.5%	71.8%	80.8%
Anchorage	Yes	21.7%	29.3%	41.7%	80.2%	47.7%	36.4%	48.4%	36.5%
	No	78.3%	70.7%	58.3%	19.8%	52.3%	63.6%	51.6%	63.5%

¹⁴³ North Slope Borough. 2015. *North Slope Borough 2015 Economic Profile and Census Report Volume XI*. Prepared by Circumpolar Research Associates Shepro, C., Maas, C. and D. Gallaway and edited by Jason Bergerson for the North Slope Borough. www.north-slope.org/your-government/nsb-2015-economic-profile-census-report.





Iñupiaq values are ever present in today's North Slope communities, as indicated in the 2015 NSB Economic Profile & Census Report. Ninety-one percent of Iñupiat household head respondents felt that sharing and support from other community members has remained the same or has increased in the previous 12 months. One quarter to one third of respondents felt support increased.¹⁴⁴ This level of sharing indicates that Iñupiaq values are ever present in today's North Slope communities.

Subsistence activities are not oriented toward sale or profits but rather, are focused on meeting the nutritional and clothing needs of families and communities. Some parts of the harvest are used for a variety clothing, skin boats, hunting implements, and traditional arts and crafts. Coastal communities rely upon marine mammals to make skin boats, in addition to caribou tendons to sew skin boats. Ivory from walrus is used to make a variety of intricate crafts, such as earrings, necklaces, and cribbage boards. Inland Nunamiut craft traditional caribou skin masks. These are just a few examples of the subsistence hunt providing more than the harvest nutritional value.

The fishing, whaling, and hunting areas of the NSB cover over a 94,000 square mile area. Hunters must cover considerable ground to harvest marine mammals and terrestrial animals. As such, use of snow machines, boats, and ATVs are efficient tools and, therefore, money for these vehicles, their maintenance and repair, and fuel, along with rifles and ammunition, is a requirement for subsistence living. Often, a hunter must work in wage

employment during the weekday and hunt and fish in the summer evenings or on the weekends, emphasizing the need for a speedy land or water craft to make efficient use of this limited time for hunting and harvesting.

Subsistence activities require substantial finances to purchase costly transport (snow machines, ATVs, boats, sleds, parts, and fuel), tools (ammunition, firearms, nets, floats, and harpoons), and food preparation and storage materials (knives, smokers, freezers, pots, and pans). Dividend income and local employment provide the means to purchase tools, equipment, and supplies that make traditional subsistence harvest activities more time-efficient. Families use employment income to purchase 4 to 6-wheeled Argo all-terrain vehicles, snow machines, boats, fuel, rifles, ammunition, nets, sheds, fish wheels, traps, knives, rope, baskets, tubs, freezers, and other tools of the trade.

SUBSISTENCE VULNERABILITIES

Subsistence resources and users within the borough's area of influence are vulnerable to human activities, such as oil and gas exploration and development and an increased number of hunters, as well as long term changes, such as climate change affecting sea ice conditions as well as land vegetation (the effects of climate change are presented in Chapter 5). Disturbance to subsistence resources can alter migration patterns and cause hunters to travel greater distances which increases their expenses and exposure to hazards. Some of the activities with

¹⁴⁴ North Slope Borough. 2015. *North Slope Borough 2015 Economic Profile and Census Report Volume XI*. Prepared by Circumpolar Research Associates Shepro, C., Maas, C. and D. Gallaway and edited by Jason Bergerson for the North Slope Borough. www.north-slope.org/your-government/nsb-2015-economic-profile-census-report.





the potential to affect subsistence activities are summarized below.

The availability of subsistence resources in the borough’s area of influence and residents’ access to those resources may change due to the impacts of sport hunting, commercial recreation, scientific studies, and road construction as well as to the effects of climate change, such as permafrost melt and increases in severe storm events and tundra fires. Sport hunters that take the vanguard of the caribou herds, low flying aircraft harassing wildlife, and the draining of lakes for ice roads can alter wildlife ecosystems

route of their travels. Melting permafrost may lower the surface level of fresh water lakes. Drier summers may also reduce lake water levels and alter fish habitat. Additionally, loss of wage income related to decreased oil development and revenues on the North Slope, over time, may reduce the ability for residents to afford modern hunting equipment.

The Iñupiat have had, and continue to have, a tremendous capacity to persevere and adapt to change. Throughout outside influences on the North Slope, from wage labor and resource scarcity during the eras of commercial whaling,

“*The relationship between the Native Iñupiat and the resources of the land and sea is so important that an entire culture is reflected in it. Passed from generation to generation through repetition of observance and legend, subsistence living has sustained our people for thousands of years and we, in turn, have sustained the resource.*

My vision for the future of the Arctic is healthy, thriving subsistence resources existing alongside a robust and diverse regional economy. A future where our young people actively participate in our traditional Iñupiaq way of life and in the management of all our resources for generations to come”

Eva Kinneeveauk, North Slope Resident

and migratory patterns, causing hunters to travel greater distances or potentially miss hunting opportunities entirely. Late freeze-up can limit snow machine access to the tundra for caribou hunts; and accelerated thawing of the permafrost can release methane gases that can alter food sources for mammals, fish and fowl, which may result food scarcity. In the future, warmer summers may breed a greater number of mosquitoes or other pests which harass caribou populations, altering the timing and

fur trading, reindeer herding, military installations, and oil and gas development, the Iñupiat have retained their hunting, fishing, gathering and sharing skills, and social networks. In the face of new circumstances and vulnerabilities, existing and future village Elders will continue to share with the youth their knowledge of traditional tools and equipment, the variability of ecosystems and weather, wildlife harvesting skills, and environmental stewardship to facilitate the region’s adaptation to climate and economic change for generations to come.

Many NSB residents have expressed frustration with non-resident hunters disrupting the traditional migratory routes of the caribou. Areas critical to the welfare of the subsistence species, such as concentration areas, calving





areas, feeding areas, and molting and brooding areas are particularly vulnerable to disturbance.

Alaska resident and non-resident sport hunters, many of them bow hunters, access caribou hunting areas from the Dalton Highway. In 2010, about 1,500 sport hunters harvested approximately 900 Central Arctic Herd caribou. In 2016, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services reported the Central Arctic Herd declined from 70,000 in 2010 to 22,000.¹⁴⁵

Sport hunters are considered non-Iñupiat or non-resident hunters who arrive alone or in groups, with or without a commercial guide. Commercial outfitters or guides require a North Slope Borough Commercial Recreation land use permit issued by the NSB Planning and Community Services Department. Non-guided hunters do not need a NSB Commercial Recreation land use permit, however they do need a hunting license as well as permission to hunt on land they do not own, as do Commercial Recreation guides. During the comprehensive planning outreach, residents have expressed concern that the NSB does not notify residents of permits issued for game hunting until after permits are issued. Low-flying aircraft from sport hunters can harass wildlife, particularly caribou. Often, commercial outfitters will target the vanguard of a herd, causing the rest of the animals to scatter. Changing migration patterns cause residents to travel greater distances, at greater expense and risk, to find and harvest their caribou. Animals are harder to find and when travelling greater distances. Hunters risk the meat spoiling before they can reach the village. In addition, sport hunters sometimes

leave carcasses and meat on the tundra and take only the antlers. This practice is offensive to the subsistence users who rely on the caribou harvest.

Another vulnerability to subsistence hunting is increased marine traffic in the Arctic. This may threaten the marine mammal resources that the Iñupiat rely upon for their subsistence nutritional needs. The increased traffic could alter traditional migration of the bowhead whale, the foundation of the Iñupiat culture and mainstay of subsistence resources. Increased marine traffic could also affect the harvesting of walrus and seals.

Warming arctic conditions have caused changes in sea ice that is affecting marine subsistence hunting. It has also caused traditional underground ice cellars to fail. Ice cellars are cut directly into the permafrost to store food. When the permafrost melts, the subsistence foods, such as whale, caribou, and seal stored in ice cellars can rot. This compounds two other problems with these traditional food sources: the animals have grown more scarce, and collecting them has become more difficult and dangerous because of melting sea ice and flooded lands. This has led to food security issues.¹⁴⁶ Without a place to reliably store traditional foods, in some cases subsistence hunters must rely on store-bought freezers or the expensive food sold on grocery store shelves.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. 2016. *Arctic: National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska. Caribou.* www.fws.gov/refuge/arctic/caribou.html.

¹⁴⁶ U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit. 2017. *Iñupiat Work to Preserve Food and Traditions on Alaska's North Slope.* <https://toolkit.climate.gov/case-studies/i%C3%B1upiat-work-preserve-food-and-traditions-alaskas-north-slope>.





SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT

The NSB Department of Wildlife Management facilitates sustainable harvests and monitors populations of fish and wildlife species through research, leadership, and advocacy from local to international levels. While the Wildlife Management Department lacks regulatory authority to directly manage subsistence resources, its scientific research and cumulative observational efforts have influenced key state, federal, and international decisions on the management of subsistence resources to favor North Slope residents. The Department's efforts have been a key element in being able to verify the traditional knowledge of the Iñupiat, providing a sound basis for resource management. The Department diversifies funding opportunities through submission of grant proposals focusing on subsistence species and issues of the highest interest to North Slope residents.

The department is responsible for helping to assure participation by NSB residents in the management of wildlife resources, by keeping these resources at healthy population levels, and to assure that residents can continue their subsistence harvest of wildlife resources. Their studies help provide the factual documentation of the subsistence needs of borough residents. With industrial activity expanding into new areas, arctic warming trends already affecting the marine and land environments, and some special interest groups trying to further regulate subsistence hunting, it is very important their work continue.¹⁴⁷

Wildlife Management staff also participate in several subsistence co-management organizations. Some include the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee, Alaska Game Board, Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, Eskimo Walrus Commission, Ice Seal Committee, International Whaling Commission, and the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission.

International Whaling Commission

IWC was established under the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The commission's purpose is to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry. An integral part of the Convention is its legally binding schedule that sets specific measures that the IWC has collectively decided are necessary in order to regulate whaling and conserve whale stocks. These measures include catch limits (which may be zero as it the case for commercial whaling) by species and area; designating specified areas as whale sanctuaries; protection of calves and females accompanied by calves; and restrictions on hunting methods.¹⁴⁸

Representatives of the North Slope Borough regularly attend the biennial meetings.

U.S. Marine Mammal Commission

The Marine Mammal Commission is an independent government agency charged by the Marine Mammal Protection Act to further the conservation of marine mammals and their environment. The commission works to ensure that marine mammal populations are restored and maintained as functioning elements of healthy marine ecosystems in the world's oceans. The commission is comprised of three

¹⁴⁷ North Slope Borough. 2018. *Department of Wildlife Management FY 2018-2019 Budget*. www.north-slope.org/assets/images/uploads/Wildlife_Section_K_FY_18-19.pdf.

¹⁴⁸ International Whaling Commission. 2018. *History and Purpose*. <https://iwc.int/history-and-purpose>.





members that are nominated by the president of the United States and confirmed by the senate. The commission is assisted by a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors. There is currently one member on the Committee of Scientific Advisors that lives on the North Slope.¹⁴⁹

Alaska Board of Game

The Board of Game consists of seven members serving three-year terms. Members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature. The Board of Game's main role is to conserve and develop Alaska's wildlife resources, including establishing open and closed seasons, areas for taking game, setting bag limits, and regulating methods and means as well as setting policy and direction for the management of the state's wildlife resources. The board is charged with making allocative decisions, and the Department of Fish and Game is responsible for management based on those decisions.¹⁵⁰ Currently, there are no North Slope residents on the Board of Game.

Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission

AEWC is a critical regional entity, with influence on local, regional, national, and international policies that affect bowhead whales. The Commission functions as a non-profit corporation, with the goal of protecting bowhead whales, their habitat, and Native subsistence uses of bowhead whales.

AEWC is comprised of eleven members, each representing one whaling village. Six of the villages are located on the North Slope: Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainwright, Utqiagvik, Nuiqsut,

and Kaktovik. Other member villages include: Savoonga, Kivalina, Wales, Little Diomede, and Gambell. Each community has a whaling captains' association that coordinates whaling activities in the village and informally with AEWC.¹⁵¹

The AEWC is a strong supporter of bowhead whale research. The commission was initially formed in 1977 to represent ten Eskimo whaling communities before the United States government and the IWC placed a ban on subsistence harvest of the bowhead whale. Since 1981, AEWC has managed the bowhead whale subsistence hunt locally through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce. AEWC works closely with NOAA throughout the year and reports subsistence harvest results. AEWC also works with the oil industry to develop the Good Neighbor Policy and Conflict Avoidance Agreements for oil and gas exploration and development activities in waters offshore the North Slope Borough

Alaska Beluga Whale Committee

The Alaska Beluga Whale Committee (ABWC) was formed in 1988 and is comprised of hunters, managers, and scientists. Its goals include maintaining a healthy beluga whale resource for subsistence use and public enjoyment for future generations; encouraging safe and efficient harvesting of beluga whales; ensuring accurate harvest information and biological samples from each region; educating and promoting understanding about issues surrounding belugas and subsistence harvesting; and overseeing the

¹⁴⁹ Marine Mammal Commission. 2018. *About the Commission*. www.mmc.gov/about-the-commission.

¹⁵⁰ State of Alaska. Department of Fish and Game. n.d. *Welcome to the Alaska Board of Game*. www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.main.

¹⁵¹ Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. *History*. www.asrc.com/About/Pages/Corporate.aspx.





enforcement of regional management plans, hunting guidelines, and habitat protection laws.¹⁵²

The membership of the ABWC is made up of representatives from approximately 30 communities that harvest belugas in the North Slope, Chukchi Sea, Kotzebue Sound, Norton Sound, Yukon Delta, Kuskokwim, and Bristol Bay. The North Slope Borough, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-NMFS) are also members.¹⁵³

Eskimo Walrus Commission

The Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) was formed in 1978 and represents 19 Alaskan coastal walrus hunting communities, including Utqiagvik, Point Lay, and Point Hope. Initially formed as a consortium of Native hunters, the EWC is now a recognized statewide entity working on resource co-management of walrus. In 1997, a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the EWC was developed to ensure the participation of subsistence hunters in conserving and managing walrus stocks.

The EWC provides information to member communities on the current research, politics, regulations, and issues affecting the Pacific walrus population and subsistence communities.¹⁵⁴

Ice Seal Committee

The Ice Seal Committee (ISC) was formed in December of 2004 and consisted of five

Umiaq Skin Boat

Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. www.aewc-alaska.com



delegates, one from each of the five regions where ice seals occur in Alaska. The committee seeks to both preserve and enhance the marine resources of ice seals, including its habitat as well as the Alaska Native culture, traditions, and activities associated with subsistence uses of ice seals. To accomplish this, the ISC is involved with education and research related to ice seals.¹⁵⁵

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WG) includes subsistence users, other Alaskan hunters, reindeer herders, hunting guides, transporters, and conservationists. There are three members from the North Slope, representing Anaktuvuk Pass and Nuiqsut; Point Lay and Point Hope; and Atqasuk, Utqiagvik, and Wainwright. The Alaska Department of Game and Fish, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife support and advise the working group when needed or requested by the group. The group

¹⁵² Alaska Beluga Whale Committee. 2018. *Alaska Beluga Whale Committee*. www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/co-management-organizations/alaska-beluga-whale-committee.

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Eskimo Walrus Commission. 2018. *What We Do*. <http://eskimowalruscommission.org/what-we-do/>.

¹⁵⁵ Ice Seal Committee. 2018. www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/co-management-organizations/ice-seal-committee.





identifies concerns, requests information, and advocates for actions that will conserve and benefit the herd.¹⁵⁶

United Caribou Association of the Nunamiut

The United Caribou Association of the Nunamiut (UCAN) was established in 2014 for the Anaktuvuk Pass community to protect the village's primary source of subsistence foods as a united front. The community hopes that the Association will serve a similar function for Anaktuvuk Pass and other communities that

depend on caribou for subsistence in the same way that the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission represents coastal arctic communities that rely on the bowhead whale. UCAN is controlled by the tri-lateral committee, made up of representatives from the City of Anaktuvuk Pass, the Naqsrarmiut Tribal Council, and the Nunamiut Corporation. They hope to protect subsistence activities and resources through local coordination and with the federal and state governments.

COMMUNITY INPUT, FINDINGS, NEEDS, AND CHALLENGES

Subsistence and cultural activities play a large role in the lives of North Slope residents. Most residents depend on subsistence activities for both nutritional and spiritual nourishment. These activities and traditions are also essential to maintaining ancestral traditions. While technological advances, climate change, and oil and gas exploration on the North Slope bring benefits to residents, they also affect residents' ability to engage in subsistence activities and other cultural pursuits.

Subsistence and cultural issues and concerns identified by workshop participants are provided in Chapter 2 and listed below:

- Climate change effects on subsistence and food security
- Iñupiaq language is endangered
- Loss of language and knowledge
- Road connection would have negative impacts on lifestyle, culture, hunting, control, additional load on infrastructure, housing
- Contradiction between technology and culture
- Food insecurity
- Climate change and food security: melting ice cellars, ice pattern changes, changing culture

¹⁵⁶ Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group. *About*. <https://westernarcticcaribou.net/>.





Findings

Rural Alaska subsistence users harvest an estimated 36.9 million pounds of wild foods annually.

Many Native Alaskans depend on subsistence activities for both nutritional and spiritual nourishment.

North Slope residents often travel great distances during subsistence harvest activities, covering over a 94,000 square mile area.

Village Areas of Influence overlap; residents utilize common areas for subsistence activities.

Nearly all of NSB households' diets included at least some subsistence foods.

Subsistence activities require substantial finances to purchase costly transport, tools, and food preparation and storage materials.

Subsistence resources and users are vulnerable to human activities, such as oil and gas exploration and development and climate change.

The NSB Department of Wildlife Management contributes scientific research that have influenced key state, federal, and international decisions on the management of subsistence resources to favor North Slope residents.

There are a number of boards and committees focusing on protecting wildlife populations and subsistence activities.

Needs & Challenges

Disruptions to migratory patterns of whales, caribou, fish, and waterfowl can divert animals from traditional harvest areas and subsistence users.

Disturbance to subsistence resources can alter migration patterns and cause hunters to travel greater distances which increases their expenses and exposure to hazards.

Non-resident hunters can disrupt the traditional migratory routes of caribou.

Increased marine traffic may threaten the marine mammal resources.

NSB does not notify residents of permits issued for game hunting until after permits are issued.





PRIMARY SUBSISTENCE GOALS

Goal One: Cooperate with land owners and land managers to update land use regulations consistent with village priorities.

Objective 1. Land use regulations and procedures should reflect current goals and priorities.

- 1.1.1. Revise the borough's zoning and subdivision ordinances for consistency with the goals of this plan and borough priorities.
- 1.1.2. Ensure revised zoning and land use regulations provide positive impacts and do not allow incompatible uses.
- 1.1.3. Encourage infill development with parcels already served by roads and water and sewer connections, potentially through incentives.
- 1.1.4. Incorporate traditional knowledge into local regulations as appropriate.
- 1.1.5. Protect subsistence corridors and hunting and fishing areas through the development of a subsistence zoning district.
- 1.1.6. Ensure inclusion of villages in the notification and decision-making process before permits are issued.
- 1.1.7. Establish future transportation and utility corridors where appropriate with collaboration with federal and state agencies and landowners.
- 1.1.8. Develop design and building standards that reflect the arctic climate and culture.
- 1.1.9. Ensure rezoning, subdivisions, and permitting processes are streamlined, predictable, and understandable.

Objective 2: Promote cooperation between Native, federal, and state, local and private entities.

- 1.2.1. Recognize and respect that North Slope communities have different land use planning and development needs.
- 1.2.2. Create a strategy with the respective state and local decision-makers to complete the land selection process for the borough, Native corporations, and municipalities to more effectively and cooperatively plan for land management and current and future needs.





- 1.2.3. Develop cooperative agreements between landowners, cities, NSB, and state and federal regulatory agencies to coordinate land development funding and logistics.
- 1.2.4. Coordinate closely with state and federal regulators to ensure that village residents' concerns are considered and addressed in oil and gas development proposals.
- 1.2.5. Increase partnerships between the NSB, Tribal and city governments, and Native corporations.
- 1.2.6. Remain actively engaged in state and federal land use planning and development within the borough through participation on committees, maintaining a strong relationship with agencies representatives, and consistently providing comments on potential actions.

Objective 3: Ensure comprehensive plans remain relevant.

- 1.3.1. Include a staggered review of comprehensive plans as part of the NSB Planning Commission's annual calendar as needed and required by ordinance.
- 1.3.2. Adequately fund and prioritize comprehensive plan reviews and updates.
- 1.3.3. Review and update the NSB Comprehensive Plan and village comprehensive plans vision statements, background research, and goals every five years.
- 1.3.4. Update the comprehensive plans thoroughly at least every ten years.
- 1.3.5. Establish a committee, potentially comprised of Planning Commissioners, residents, NSB Mayor's office and NSB Planning & Community Services Department staff, and others to steward the comprehensive plans and monitor and facilitate implementation progress.
- 1.3.6. Conduct regular reviews of implementation efforts by the NSB Planning & Community Services Department.
- 1.3.7. Incorporate the comprehensive plans into the annual capital improvement planning process.





Goal Five: Protect the Iñupiaq language and subsistence culture.

Objective 1: Focus efforts to more fully integrate Iñupiaq language and culture into the education and land use planning process.

- 5.1.1. Improve Native language fluency through partial or full immersion programs from pre-kindergarten through high school.
- 5.1.2. Seek funding and opportunities to assist fluent Iñupiaq speakers to become certified teachers.
- 5.1.3. Encourage the North Slope Borough School District and educators to further incorporate traditional and cultural values throughout the school curricula.
- 5.1.4. Integrate Elders into school activities through shared lunches, invitations to speak with classes, and involvement in student projects.
- 5.1.5. Teach traditional values to new generations by highlighting local success stories and how traditional and cultural values assisted in their success.
- 5.1.6. Educate state, federal and local government entities, and the oil and gas industry about the importance of traditional and contemporary local knowledge to borough residents.
- 5.1.7. Require that master plans, rezonings, and applicable permits incorporate aspects of traditional and contemporary local knowledge into a project's planning and design.
- 5.1.8. Review environmental assessments (EA) and environment impact analyses (EIS) to ensure they include information on the importance of subsistence, traditional and contemporary local knowledge, and the Iñupiaq culture on the North Slope and provide comments to the lead federal agency to request additional information be included, if applicable.
- 5.1.9. Remain cognizant that road connections will bring societal changes and prepare for those changes in advance to the extent possible.





Objective 2: Protect and enhance access for traditional subsistence activities to ensure food security and cultural values.

- 5.2.1. Recognize the importance of traditional camps and cabins, and associated subsistence activities when managing public lands and planning for leasing, exploration, and development of petroleum and mineral resources.
- 5.2.2. Work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and state and federal land managers to reduce effects on subsistence activities from outside sport and commercial hunting and fishing activities.
- 5.2.3. Develop low-flying aircraft regulations where applicable and coordinate with state and federal agencies to minimize flight disturbances to subsistence activities.
- 5.2.4. Manage growth along the Dalton Highway Corridor that ensures adequate public safety, wildlife management, and subsistence resource protection.
- 5.2.5. Encourage more research and coordination on studying and mitigating any potential effects of future road corridors on caribou migration.
- 5.2.6. Encourage oil companies to allow subsistence users access to oil field roads and to limit public access.
- 5.2.7. Encourage industry and the State of Alaska to work with local residents when designing new roads to determine if it would be desirable to include pullouts to accommodate subsistence users.
- 5.2.8. Educate non-borough residents that travel to the North Slope about subsistence resources and how to minimize their impact to these resources.
- 5.2.9. Develop formal agreements between landowners and land managers to provide subsistence access across private, state, and federal lands.
- 5.2.10. Plan, design, construct, and maintain infrastructure and facilities in a manner that preserves the local environment and subsistence lifestyle.
- 5.2.11. Develop ice cellar guidelines to assist residents in improving the storage environment in existing cellars and creating new cellars in the most beneficial locations and design.





Goal Ten: Protect our environment.

Objective 1: Seek a healthy arctic environment through leadership in land use and wildlife management.

- 10.1.1. Coordinate with resource agencies to identify and map watersheds, wetlands, and traditional trails in the North Slope Borough that are important for subsistence.
- 10.1.2. Evaluate existing zoning and land use regulations for effectiveness in protecting sensitive areas, including establishing a zoning district(s) specifically for subsistence and/or special habitats.
- 10.1.3. Develop a wetlands mitigation bank that compensates for expected adverse impacts to the environment.

