NORTHWEST ARCTIC BOROUGH

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INCORPORATED JUNE 2, 1986

7,791
Northwest Arctic Borough population (2018)

39,000 square miles of land (size of Indiana) and water

#2 Alaska's second largest borough

61%
Estimated higher cost of living in Kotzebue compared to Anchorage, Alaska

11
Northwest Arctic Borough communities

2,928
average # of jobs (2018)

36%
Annual average government sector employment

84%
Alaska Native/ American Indian population

97%
Alaska Native population who is Iñupiaq

5
National parks/monuments and preserves

59,000
National parks/monuments and preserves annual recreational visits

#1 Largest zinc and lead producer in the U.S. (Red Dog Mine)

26% Annual average mining sector employment

750 people employed in mining sector

0 deep-water port facilities

211 miles: length of proposed Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Road

STRATEGIC ARCTIC LOCATION

Much of the Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB) is located north of the Arctic Circle, along the Chukchi Sea coast. Kotzebue, on the coast of Kotzebue Sound, serves as the regional population, transportation, and commercial hub. NAB is strategically positioned as the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Homeland Security seek an expanded presence in the Arctic.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Impacts of a warmer climate include coastal erosion, permafrost melt, and sea ice retreat, are negatively affecting NAB's infrastructure and maintenance costs. In extreme cases, such as the community of Kivalina, climate change has necessitated moving virtually all community assets to a new location. Adverse impacts to the region's economy from the effects of climate change on subsistence resources are also a major concern. Receding sea ice also presents new business opportunities as marine traffic increases and access to offshore resource development improves.

LANDOWNERSHIP

The federal government owns significant land in the NAB, including the National Parks Service (with five national parks, preserves, and monuments), Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, NANA owns more than 2 million acres, most of it located around the region's 11 villages. Kikiktagruk Iñupiat Corporation (Kotzebue) owns 161,000 acres of surface acreage. State lands are primarily located in the upper Kobuk, Kivalina, and Seward Peninsula areas and contain high mineral potential. NAB owns 285,000 acres.

TRANSPORTATION

Air passenger and cargo services are available daily from Anchorage and outlying communities. Barge services deliver fuel and cargo along the major river systems from Kotzebue. NAB's communities are unconnected by a unified road system, leading to continued efforts to reduce transportation costs.

The DeLong Mountain Transportation System, owned by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), supports Red Dog Mine. The system includes an industrial haul road from the mine to the port, a shallow water dock, and an offshore conveyor system.

A 211-mile private road to be owned by AIDEA is proposed, linking the Ambler Mining District to the Dalton Highway.

Lack of deep-water port facilities means deep-draft vessels carrying goods and fuel must lighter their loads into Kotzebue from 12-15 miles offshore. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a harbor feasibility study for the Cape Blossom deep-water port project and recommended a 10-mile road connecting Cape Blossom to Kotzebue along with significant uplands development.

COMMUNICATIONS

Kotzebue is connected to Alaska and global commerce centers through Quintilllion fiber-optic cable connectivity and GCI's broadband TERRA network.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Kotzebue is home to the Alaska Technical Center (ATC) and the University of Alaska Chukchi Campus. ATC, an adult training center, provides vocational training such as certified nurse's aide, construction trades technology, and process technology. It also offers short certification courses including commercial driver's licenses and water plant operators. Chukchi Campus provides distance education courses offered through the University of Alaska.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

TOURISM

The borough's terrain varies dramatically with mountains, giant sand dunes, tundra, and boreal forests. Major waterways include the Kobuk, Noatak, Kivalina, Selawik, and Ambler rivers. Along with beautiful vistas and rich cultural assets, sport fishing and hunting opportunities are abundant.

The U.S. National Park Service manages the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Kobuk Valley National Park, and the Noatak National Preserve.

Kotzebue has several of the infrastructure assets needed to support a visitor industry, including daily jet service from Anchorage and modern hotel accommodations. Local features include the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center, a museum and visitor center operated by the US National Park Service and the Suilianich Art Center, where local Alaska Native artists work and regional art can be purchased. Several events throughout the year, including dog sled and snowmachine races, attract regional residents and visitors.

MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

The borough has only one operating mine, Red Dog Mine, an open-pit zinc, lead, and silver mine located approximately 90 miles northeast of Kotzebue on land owned by NANA Regional Corporation and operated by Teck Alaska. In operation since 1982, it is both the largest zinc and lead concentrate producer in the U.S.

Teck American, Inc. has been evaluating development opportunities on adjacent underground prospects, Aktigiruq and Anarraaq, located on state land 7 miles northwest of Red Dog.

Current exploration in this region is underway in other promising mineralized areas, including copper, zinc, lead, gold, silver, and cobalt in the Ambler Mining District.

ENERGY

The Northwest Arctic Regional Energy Plan outlines proactive measures to develop alternative energy resources to decrease reliance on costly diesel fuel. Proposed projects include wind generation studies in several communities, hydroelectric and biomass projects, and increased bulk diesel fuel pool purchasing, as well as upgrades to high energy users like water and sewer systems, and efforts to reduce residential fuel consumption.

COMMERCIAL FISHING

A small salmon commercial fishery currently exists in the region and has potential for expansion, including development of a small-scale processing facility in Kotzebue.

Federal waters in the region are currently closed to commercial fishing. This closure could be lifted at a future date. Additionally, the community development quota (CDQ) program, currently limited to areas of Western Alaska south of Kotzebue, is seen as successful and a major contributor of community development funds in member communities. Kotzebue could play a key role in any newly-formed Arctic CDQ entity, if established.

NAB'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF NORTHWEST ARCTIC (EDC) includes commissioners representing the NAB, NANA Regional Corporation, Teck Alaska, utilities, financial or professional business, higher education, and tribal organizations. EDC reviews all aspects of economic development and taxation that come before the NAB assembly and planning commission; identifies and promotes services to encourage economic development to local communities and businesses; and coordinates implementation of economic development activities between all levels of governments, businesses, and residents.

NORTHWEST ARCTIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (NWALT) is a partnership among Maniilaq Association, NANA Regional Corporation, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the Northwest Arctic Borough School District to maximize resources and reduce duplication of efforts to address issues affecting the people of Northwest Alaska while honoring and perpetuating the Iñupiat cultural heritage.

Maniilaq Association is a nonprofit corporation providing health, social, and tribal services to the residents of NAB and Point Hope.

NANA Regional Corporation, Inc. is a regional Alaska Native Corporation created pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. NANA's mission is to provide economic opportunities for its more than 13,000 Iñupiaq shareholders and to protect and enhance NANA lands.

Northwest Arctic Borough is a home rule borough. NAB's mission is to improve the quality of life for all residents. Product and service delivery is accomplished through three main departments of Planning, Public Services, and Economic Development. The NAB planning department must approve all development requests.

Northwest Arctic Borough School District (NWABSD) provides Kindergarten to Grade 12 education to children living in the Northwest Arctic Borough, by supporting both Iñupiat and Western standards of success in classrooms.

Northwest Arctic Energy Steering Committee makes sure all stakeholders participated in the development and implementation of the NAB's Regional Energy Plan.

Village Improvement Commission is the advisory body of community residents to provide oversight of the Village Improvement Fund (VIF). The VIF is targeted at critical infrastructure, services, and programs for all communities in the NAB.

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