

UIC seeks minerals conservation efforts

UIC presents its views on energy production from non-renewable minerals in the Arctic. See the bottom of page 3 for a related article.

Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation
P.O. Box 427
Barrow, Alaska 99723
Phone 852-3667, 852-4460
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The Honorable Mike McCormack
Committee on Science & Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. McCormack,

This corporation represents 2,040 Eskimo shareholders from the Native Village of Barrow. We were incorporated in 1973, pursuant to section 8 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

The purpose of this letter is to communicate opinions and facts about the developments taking place in energy production on the North Slope in hopes of making some progress in the conservation of valuable non-renewable mineral resources and renewable food resources. Also to provide comments on the social impacts to Eskimo people, and suggestions on how to protect their endangered way of life and their range. We believe the resources in question can be more profitably and properly conserved and utilized with improvements in the way technology is organizationally employed in the Arctic.

In particular, we will address the conservation of the Helium resource. We feel that emphasis on the conservation of Helium will, in the long term, greatly enhance the local lifestyle with presently untold benefits for the remaining American public.

Eskimos have been a party to the growth of Arctic energy for as long as memory. They have been engaged in virtually all phases of the exploration, construction development, maintenance operations, and delivery to market of fossil fuels energy from their homeland.

Eskimos are technicians of the Arctic environment. All synthetic materials that come into contact with the Arctic elements are understood for their strength and properties by these technicians. The Eskimo personality has a built-in calculus with which they easily grasp working elements and defects of even the most sophisticated machinery. This mathematical consciousness is a quality of their evolution and close association with vast frozen areas, cold power, and the dynamics of the ever present, ever changing sea-ice.

This narrative is intended primarily to support the United States' conservation program of the finite Helium resource, not to build a case favoring the Eskimo. Without their unique view of the industrial play in their backyard, your data is incomplete. As their claimants in the Arctic in its entirety, their observations should be weighed heavily.

With the dramatic increase in United States' efforts to lease offshore and on-shore areas of oil and gas potential, extreme external pressures are being brought to bear, adversely, on Native minority development. In the immediate past several years the social impact has been tremendous. New social structures have evolved as previously subsistence oriented hunters assimilate into the vicious circle of a very political mainstream of international commerce. New bad habits and outdated accounting practices have been forced upon the Native businessman from these



Ronald Hopson Brower.

at left, is Manager and Land Chief for UIC.

—Andy Klamser Photograph

external competitors in an aggressive manner. Overall, the changes Native businessmen have gone through will continue to have a negative impact. In a once-in-a-lifetime situation for Natives to succeed within the framework of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, there is no time to experience what our American counterpart has gone through in the 200 or so years of National development. The undereducated, underprivileged, must perform with little or no corporate error. The assimilation will survive the life expectancy of any Arctic energy producing field.

There is a clashing of economic systems at this point in time. Valuable human and food resources are being wasted because of supply and demand for finite mineral resource. Western man's economic system is cultural genocide to native culture, for sure, but there does not have to be an entire drain of resources which will cause irreparable harm to the American public overall. There should not be considering our diverse culture. There has to be equitable benefits.

Much of the productivity of the Arctic range and fishery has been badly deteriorated from contact with the United States' industrial quest for oil and gas from the North Slope. The grazing range of the caribou and domesticated reindeer has been greatly reduced by current development and future development further restricts commercial reindeer husbandry to small scale. Although this was at one time a major industry on the North Slope, and one which is altogether compatible with our people, it may not be possible for a few years to come. The physical activities of surface vehicles and aircraft associated with the Trans Alaska Pipeline and Prudhoe Bay combine to make a more formidable barrier to caribou than most people readily recognize. Caribou are considered a nuisance when they have become "lost and confused" at Pipeline camps, exploration and development camps, and production areas. However small the nuisance, the occurrence is frequent as far as caribou are concerned. They often spend long periods near the more remote areas in the NPRA projects, seeking "protection from predators." The contact with drilling operations' residual wastes during times like this do affect caribou.

The increased hydro-carbons released into the thin polar atmosphere

is slowly eroding the natural barrier against solar radiation. The full impact will be realized once the combined Alaskan and Canadian production is on line. If a policy permitting flaring of natural gases continues the atmosphere thinning process will continue accordingly. The weather changes will cause catastrophic impacts to all Arctic areas, and some sub-arctic areas. The deterioration of an already thin atmosphere will be permanent type damage. Many scientists are only now beginning to understand the Arctic's total relation as a weather indicator/impactor for the rest of the globe. There is a fragile and delicate balance to be respected here and presently, man's activity is still directed by the elements. No sense in making it worse. If this environmental consideration is overlooked, another concern for the energy user in high density population centers is that a full ten (10) percent of the natural gases are being flared, from the one most overcostly production center of the world.

In Northern Alaska the sparse inland fishery of the Eskimo has been destroyed for numerous families. When seismic dynamiting took place at and on Teshekpuk Lake and other smaller lakes the destruction of important subsistence fishing and trading systems occurred. Although this happened at least ten years ago, no compensation for the collapse of an economic base for about 300 people has ever been made. The lakes are still a long ways from reaching their original productivity. Unless conservation techniques and technological innovation prevail, these patterns of destruction can be expected to continue pursuant to the authority of the United States.

The utilization of cold storage and permafrost protection technologies should become a condition of Arctic energy development engineering to maximize cost efficiency. There is a considerable savings to be made by adjusting to standards of construction with less sent oil and gas extraction technology is inflation inherent when employed in the Arctic. Each and every one of the 1500 or so metal casings now sunk through permafrost is environmental destruct time bomb. These heat transfer mediums are weakening the geologic integrity of the Barrow Arch, from the Navy gas wells at South Barrow to Prud-

hoe Bay. It takes an average of ten years before the damage is evident, or to the extent it has become damaging. The application of thermo-tube and thermo-loop systems would contain the problems occurring when large amounts of land slump. The security of permafrost zones should become a much more important national concern, it has great potential for the storage of energy, in latent form, and is one of the few environments which could safely contain radioactive wastes in some helium-lead configuration. We are not advocating nuclear development though, in case the last sentence may cause you to wonder. The Arctic already is badly polluted by acid rain and fallout from atomic testing. The protection and enhancement of the tundra permafrost can be accomplished by adapting to refrigeration technologies.

The combination of the factors noted present an adulterated (however hopeful) future for Eskimos on the North Slope. But it is the American public that will suffer the most if no conservation of the Helium resource is ever made available for them to work with. There will not be any future technologies to benefit our coming generations, and that is a gloomy thought to think, that this country could not find it within their capacity to plan for adequate protection of their family.

We feel there exists an urgent social and technologic choice before the nation in taking a turn towards more conservatism with our use of escaping gases, for it ultimately reflects the value of self esteem and humanness of our new economic union. Profit illusions will get you broke.

The attached paper is a brief on the Helium resource in the North Slope gas, Helium in Permafrost hydrates, and a particular case in point, the Anomalous Helium concentrations at Barrow, Alaska.

UIC researchers would be more than happy to converse with decision makers keen on progressive legislation which would bring in Arctic appropriate technology and engineering standards to be implemented in federal regulation of energy development.

We appreciate an opportunity to provide input to the Committee members. Thank you all. Very truly yours Inupiat, Ronald Hopson Brower
Land Chief, Manager, Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation