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House Passes HR 5167: A Good Bill for American Taxpayers and Our Village

Wainwright, AK - On November 13, 2014, the House of Representatives passed HR 5167, a critical bill for the future of the Village of Wainwright. HR 5167 authorizes the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to dispose of an old DEW Line site near Wainwright, Alaska, which it is currently prohibited from doing under federal law.

Disposing of the DEW Line site will cost the American taxpayer and the federal government nothing and will ultimately save BLM on management costs. Under HR 5167, Olgoonik will pay all of BLM's costs associated with the sale. The BLM testified in support of HR 5167 during a House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Hearing in September 2014. It is cumbersome for the BLM to effectively manage this 1,518 acre parcel of property because it is isolated from their other land holdings and surrounded by Olgoonik lands.

Hugh Patkotak, Sr., CEO of Olgoonik and Iñupiaq shareholder said, "We own the surface estate of the acres surrounding the DEW Line station making absorption of this site into Olgoonik's existing land management plan seamless." Olgoonik has a comprehensive land use management plan and land use policies in place for managing its 175,000 acres.

Olgoonik, the Wainwright Traditional Council, and the City of Wainwright passed a joint resolution on November 1, 2013 supporting Olgoonik's acquisition of the DEW Line site and the Tribe and Village Corporation reaffirmed their support of the acquisition during Tribal Consultation with the BLM on June 23, 2014.

"We expect oil and gas exploration on and off shore will require support infrastructure close to Wainwright. Our village corporation, tribe and city governments are working together to steer industrial development away from the community and diminish any new "footprint" necessary for infrastructure build out by utilizing an existing brownfield site," said Patkotak.

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“Olgoonik, the tribe and City governments have been pursuing this acquisition for several months. We are thankful for Congressman Young’s leadership and support and look forward to working with Senator Murkowski to move this issue forward in the Senate,” stated Patkotak. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) introduced a companion bill in the Senate, S. 2684, which must pass the Senate before the bill becomes law.

The DEW Line site, located 3.5 miles from Wainwright, includes buildings, a runway, and gravel pads, which were constructed during the Cold War. The U.S. Air Force maintained a radar site on the property but the radar site is no longer operational and the Air Force is working jointly with Olgoonik to clean up the old site. The DEW Line site and the village of Wainwright are within the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska (NPR-A). The NPR-A Act of 1976 includes a provision that does not permit the BLM to dispose of the DEW Line; HR 5167 removes this limitation.

Olgoonik Corporation has been advised by Pt Public Policy, LLC through this effort.

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Olgoonik Corporation is an Alaska Native Village Corporation formed under the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Headquartered in Wainwright, located on the coast of the Chuckchi Sea in Arctic Alaska, Olgoonik serves more than 1,300 Iñupiat shareholders. The Iñupiat people have inhabited the region for thousands of years. Wainwright residents generally maintain a traditional Iñupiat lifestyle, focused on seasonal subsistence hunting, fishing and whaling activities.