

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Rep. Reggie Joule
Alaska State Capitol,
Room 410
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 465-4833
Fax: (907) 465-4586



Sen. Bert Stedman
Alaska State Capitol,
Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 465-3873
Fax: (907) 465-3922

Representative Reggie Joule Senator Bert Stedman Press Release

Alaska Northern Waters Task Force Submits Recommendations

Task Force proposes key changes to Arctic policy, infrastructure, and resource development

Friday, January 20, 2012, Juneau, Alaska - The Alaska Northern Waters Task Force (ANWTF) released its preliminary report recommending improvements to state and federal Arctic policy today. The Legislature established the task force in 2010 to address increased interest in the Arctic and elevate government and stakeholder participation in Arctic issues.

"The task force worked hard to identify what Alaska needs to meet the opportunities and challenges in the rapidly changing Arctic," said Representative Reggie Joule (R-Kotzebue), the task force's chairman. "As worldwide demand for natural resources brings increased attention to the Arctic, Alaska needs to capitalize on the potential economic benefits while providing for sustainable communities and the environment."

The task force held 10 hearings throughout the state, including visits to Barrow, Nome, Bethel, Wales, Unalaska, Kotzebue, Wainwright, and Anchorage. Their work includes 21 recommendations to advance state leadership in Arctic policies related to marine transportation, national security, and resource development.

"It's crucial for Alaska to recognize the strategic importance of its northern waters," said Senator Bert Stedman (R-Sitka), who served as vice chairman of the task force. "Changes in the Arctic will provide for new shipping routes and access to some of the richest oil and gas deposits in the Arctic. Alaska needs a better roadmap to achieve success in the Arctic and the task force's work is a good step forward."

The task force identified three top priorities: providing opportunities for Alaskans to participate in Arctic policy and development decisions, creating an Alaska Arctic Commission, and urging the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Other recommendations fell into six categories: Arctic governance, oil and gas development, marine transportation, fisheries, infrastructure, and research.

ANWTF members are Senator Lyman Hoffman (D-Bethel), Senator Donald Olson (D-Golovin), and Senator Bert Stedman, Representative Bob Herron (D-Bethel), Representative Bryce Edgemon (D-Dillingham) and Representative Joule, Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Larry Hartig, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game Commissioner Cora Campbell, Nome Mayor Denise Michels, NANA Vice President Chuck Greene, Arctic Slope Regional Corporation Vice President Richard Glenn, former North Slope Borough Mayor Edward Itta, Unalaska City Manager Chris Hladick, and Alaska Marine Conservation Council Chair Dave Kubiak. U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Christopher Colvin and Rear Admiral Thomas Ostebo served as federal liaisons.

The full report will be presented to legislative leadership, and the public, January 30. To read the preliminary report, click [here](#).

For more information, please contact Christine Hess in Representative Joule's Office at (907)-465-4833 or Weston Eiler in Senator Stedman's office at (907)-465-3873.

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