



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

101 12th Ave Room 236

Fairbanks, AK 99701



28 May 2024

Chief Edward Rexford
Native Village of Kaktovik
P.O. Box 8,
Kaktovik, AK 99747

Re: PORCUPINE CARIBOU HERD CALVING GROUND SACRED SITE

Dear Chief Rexford:

This is to inform you that on 25 September 2023, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) received a letter from the sovereign governments of the Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government, Arctic Village Council, and Venetie Village Council (heretofore "Tribes"), informing the agency that the Tribes have identified the core Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH) calving grounds as a sacred site under Executive Order (EO) 13007 and called it the "Porcupine Herd Calving Ground Sacred Site". We understand that this area is the traditional homelands of the Iñupiat and has been used for generations and that you also consider it as sacred. We want you to know that due consideration is being given to the significance that the Iñupiat and Gwich'in Tribes place on this area.

The Gwich'in Tribes informed the FWS that the Porcupine Caribou Herd Calving Grounds Sacred Site is one part of the Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit (Sacred Place Where Life Begins). The Tribes identified the Porcupine Herd Calving Grounds Sacred Site (approximately 1,595,259 acres) using the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) map of seasonal distribution of cows and calves of the Porcupine Caribou Herd during the calving period between May 26 and June 10 for 37 years (Map 3-28, 2019 Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS) where $\geq 40\%$ of cows and calves are present during the two-week window for calving.

EO 13007 defines sacred site as "any specific, discrete, narrowly delineated location on federal land that is identified by an Indian tribe, or Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion, as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion; provided that the tribe or appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion has informed the agency of the existence of such a site." According to EO 13007, federal agencies managing federal lands "shall, to the extent practicable, permitted by law, and not clearly inconsistent with essential agency functions, 1) accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners and 2) avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites."

Based on the information provided by the Tribes, the FWS recognizes the identified site as sacred to the Gwich'in. However, the USFWS has not yet determined whether the identified site is a "specific, discrete, narrowly delineated location" for the purposes of the EO.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further. You can reach me via phone or email at merben_cebrian@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Merben R. Cebrian
Refuge Manager

cc: Charles Lampey, President, Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation