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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ASTAC awarded funding for Remote Broadband Project on the North Slope**

#### **\$5.3 million grant from USDA will help connect Kaktovik to high-speed fiber optic network**

Anchorage, Alaska – Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, Inc. (ASTAC) has been awarded \$5.3M in grant funding for a transformational broadband project in rural Alaska. The grant is part of USDA’s RUS Rural E-Connectivity (Reconnect) program which will be matched by \$2M in ASTAC investment to expand its network to provide customers in Kaktovik with access to affordable high-speed broadband.

“Broadband is a cornerstone to prosperity in Alaska’s rural communities because it is essential to economic development, as well as access to health care, educational opportunities and connections to people and services,” USDA Alaska State Director for Rural Development Jerry Ward said. “Under the leadership of President Trump and Agriculture Secretary Perdue, USDA is committed to being a strong partner in deploying this critical infrastructure in Alaska and across all of America’s rural communities, because we know when rural America thrives, all of America thrives.”

“We are thrilled the USDA has partnered with ASTAC to transform broadband services in Kaktovik,” said ASTAC General Manager/CEO Jens Laipenieks. “At the direction of our Board of Directors, our goal is to connect all of the nine ASTAC markets to high-quality terrestrially-served broadband. Upon completion, Kaktovik will follow Utqiagvik, Point Hope, Wainwright, Nuiqsut, and Deadhorse as fully fiber-connected communities. This grant will be instrumental in achieving that goal and further closes the digital opportunity gap between remote and urban Alaska.”

ASTAC will construct and operate a broadband system that makes service of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) available to residential and business customers within the proposed service area. The microwave network that will connect Kaktovik to the fiber optic links in Deadhorse would not be a reality without infrastructure support from Exxon Mobil Alaska Production Inc.



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It took more than a village to make this award a reality. ASTAC would like to thank the entire community of Kaktovik, Village of Kaktovik, Kaktovik Mayor Amanda Kaleak, Former Mayor Nora Jane Burns, City Administrator Evelyn Reitan, all agencies who wrote letters of support, ICAS, UIC, NSB, ASRC, Exxon Mobil Alaska Production Inc., and finally the USDA Rural Development Agency and RUS. Everyone's contributions including knowledge of the area, cultural insight, and environmental guidance, made the two years of planning a success.

ASTAC anticipates a build in the winter of 2021-22, with a projected in-service date in mid-2022.

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ASTAC provides Broadband Ethernet and Internet, LTE wireless as well as local and long-distance services across the North Slope. Additionally, ASTAC offers a Nomadic WAN and Internet service using the North Slope's only private LTE network covering the oil fields. For more information, visit [www.astac.net](http://www.astac.net).