

State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources



Public Information Center
550 W. 7th Ave., Ste 1260
Anchorage, AK 99501

Phone: 907.269.8400
Fax: 907.269.8901
TTY: 907.269.8411

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Report shows oil and gas reservoir potential in Nanushuk Formation

(Fairbanks, AK) – The Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGs) has published a report on drill core from a Wainwright exploration well that illustrates the oil and gas reservoir potential of the Nanushuk Formation in the western North Slope.

The coal-bearing rocks in the Wainwright well do not host conventional oil or gas, but are part of the Nanushuk Formation and similar to Nanushuk Formation rocks 150–200 miles to the east, where economically significant conventional oil accumulations have been found.

“The Wainwright core provides an excellent view of coal-bearing rocks, and potential oil and gas reservoirs in the Nanushuk Formation to the west of producing fields on the North Slope, and suggests additional exploration potential in these rocks in the central North Slope,” said State Geologist and DGGs Director Steve Masterman.

Findings summarized in the report are confirmed by a recent major oil discovery by Repsol and Armstrong in the Colville River delta, which includes a significant volume of oil in Nanushuk Formation rocks.

“Documenting high-quality reservoir rocks in the same unit as a major oil discovery 150–200 miles away across an underexplored area illustrates the significance of this unit as an exploration target,” said Masterman.

The U.S. Geological Survey drilled the Wainwright #1 well in 2007 to determine if coalbed methane gas could help meet the energy needs of Wainwright. Geologists from DGGs and the Division of Oil and Gas began investigating the drill core after gaining access to the materials.

The report is available for download at <http://dx.doi.org/10.14509/29652>.

CONTACT: David LePain, 907-451-5085, david.lepain@alaska.gov, or Marwan Wartes, 907-451-5056, marwan.wartes@alaska.gov

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