

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES**  
**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER**

**Sarah Palin, Governor**

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January 29, 2014

Re: Arctic Ocean Access  
Track #08-7184

Mr. Joe LaRocca  
9260 West Main Rd.  
North East (Erie County), PA 16428

Dear Mr. LaRocca:

Thank you for your email dated July 10, 2008 regarding public road access to the Arctic Ocean at Prudhoe Bay. Although it would seem that access to the Arctic Ocean should fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation, that is not the case in this situation. The state highway system ends at Lake Colleen Drive in Deadhorse. The area between Deadhorse and the Arctic Ocean is subject to the terms and conditions of several leases between the Department of Natural Resources and the oil companies. The terms of these leases include provisions that limit tourist access to these lands except by a public tour bus authorized by the lessee. Access through these lands by private non-commercial vehicles is prohibited, unless otherwise authorized by the lessee. This is in recognition of the overriding public policy requiring strict control of access to the Prudhoe Bay oilfield and related facilities. As these restrictive conditions are based on the negotiated terms between the State of Alaska and the lessees, we don't agree that the resulting access limitations can be characterized as illegal as you suggested in your email.

The issue of unrestricted public access to the Arctic Ocean is a recurring subject. While it is not currently available, we expect that some day in the future, the conditions might change such that it will be.

Sincerely,

Leo von Scheben, P.E., L.S., M.B.A  
Commissioner