



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Leaders Launch Alaska Headwaters, New Organization Dedicated to Building a Stronger, More Resilient Future for Alaska

(Anchorage, AK)– Today, three local leaders with deep ties to the Alaskan economy and way of life formally launched [Alaska Headwaters](https://alaskaheadwaters.com), a new, independent, Alaska-led organization working to build a stronger, more resilient future for Alaska. The board of directors includes Jody Potts-Joseph, Han Gwich'in, who lives on Han traditional homelands in Eagle Village and serves as President of the Hungwitchin Village Corporation and is also a business owner, filmmaker, and musher; Dan Blanard, lifelong mariner and Owner & CEO of UnCruise Adventures based out of Juneau, and Rick Halford, who served Alaska in the state legislature for more than two decades, serving multiple terms as the Republican Senate President and Majority Leader and is currently based outside of Anchorage. The organization will advocate for common-sense policies to ensure Alaska's resources and economy work for Alaskans first.

"For the Han Gwich'in, our relationship with our lands and waters is not a recreational preference or a policy debate—it is our identity, our food security, and our sovereignty," said **Jody Potts-Joseph, Han Gwich'in from Eagle Village and Board Chair for Alaska Headwaters**. "When salmon runs fail, or traditional ways of life are threatened, our communities carry the burden first. Alaska Headwaters recognizes that protecting our ecosystems and securing our economic future must go hand in hand with protecting the subsistence way of life many Alaskans lead and investing in the local leaders who live here. We are taking charge of shaping an Alaska where our children can thrive without having to sacrifice the traditional lifeways that have sustained us for thousands of years."

"As a lifelong mariner and someone who has built a business on showing people the wonder of Alaska, I know firsthand that our wild waters and pristine public lands are not a barrier to economic growth—they are our most valuable asset," said **Dan Blanchard, Owner & CEO of UnCruise Adventures**. "If we want a sustainable economy that lasts for generations, we have to invest in our fisheries, support local tourism, and diversify beyond a single industry. Protecting Alaska's environment and public lands is simply good business for Alaskans."

"Fiscal responsibility isn't just about how we spend tax dollars—it's about how we manage our state's trust resources and protect the public interest," said **former Alaska**

Senate President Rick Halford. “Our constitution directs us to manage resources for the maximum benefit of the people. That means demanding accountability for how all state funds like AIDEA are used, lowering energy costs for our rural communities, and ensuring our wild salmon streams and subsistence traditions remain intact. Alaska Headwaters is stepping up to ensure Alaska’s economic and environmental future is guided by common sense, transparency, and local leadership.”

The organization forms at a critical moment to address the state's interconnected environmental and economic challenges—from protecting vital subsistence hunting and fishing rights that ground food security and culture, to advocating for accountability around public funds like AIDEA. By viewing healthy fisheries, protected public lands, and renewable energy as the bedrock of a diversified economy, Alaska Headwaters aims to lower skyrocketing energy costs for rural and Indigenous families, support public media for connected communities, and invest in the next generation of local leaders.

Alaska Headwaters will support Alaskans and Alaska-based partner organizations already doing good work, and raise public and legislative awareness on issues that matter to the state’s future.

To learn more about Alaska Headwaters, visit AlaskaHeadwaters.com. Founded in 2026, Alaska Headwaters is an independent, Alaska-led organization working to build a stronger, more resilient future for Alaska—one where the state's resources and economy work for Alaskans first.

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Alaska Headwaters Board of Directors

Jody Potts-Joseph

Jody Potts-Joseph is Han Gwich'in and lives on Han traditional homelands in Eagle Village, Alaska, where she raises a dog mushing team and lives a subsistence lifestyle on the Upper Yukon River. She has spent her life advocating for the Gwich'in way of life, building a career focused on the well-being of Alaska Native communities—including leading Public Safety for the Tanana Chiefs Conference and co-founder of Data for Indigenous Justice. She currently serves on the Eagle Tribal Council, the Doyon Limited board of directors, and as President of Hungwitchin Village Corporation. Potts-Joseph is also a filmmaker, currently producing the documentary *Beautiful Resistance*, and brings a trusted, Indigenous-led voice to conservation and subsistence rights advocacy.

Dan Blanchard

Captain Dan Blanchard is the founder, owner, and CEO of UnCruise Adventures, the leading small-ship adventure cruise line in Alaska. A lifelong mariner who earned his Ship Master's License at 18, he built his career guiding vessels throughout Alaska before growing UnCruise into a company recognized for connecting travelers with Alaska's wilderness while supporting local economies and stewardship. He works closely with other U.S. flag companies who have made Alaska's waters their home. He is a strong advocate for responsible tourism and its economic future. Dan is based in Juneau, Alaska.

Rick Halford

Rick Halford represented Alaska in the state legislature for more than two decades, serving multiple terms as the Republican Senate President and Majority Leader, and chairing the Senate Resources Committee. A commercial pilot and hunting guide with over fifty years of flying and guiding in Alaska, he built a reputation for deep credibility on resource, energy, and public lands policy. Since leaving office, Halford has remained an influential voice on Alaska conservation issues and serves on the boards of several Alaska-focused organizations. Rick is currently based outside of Anchorage, Alaska.