

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

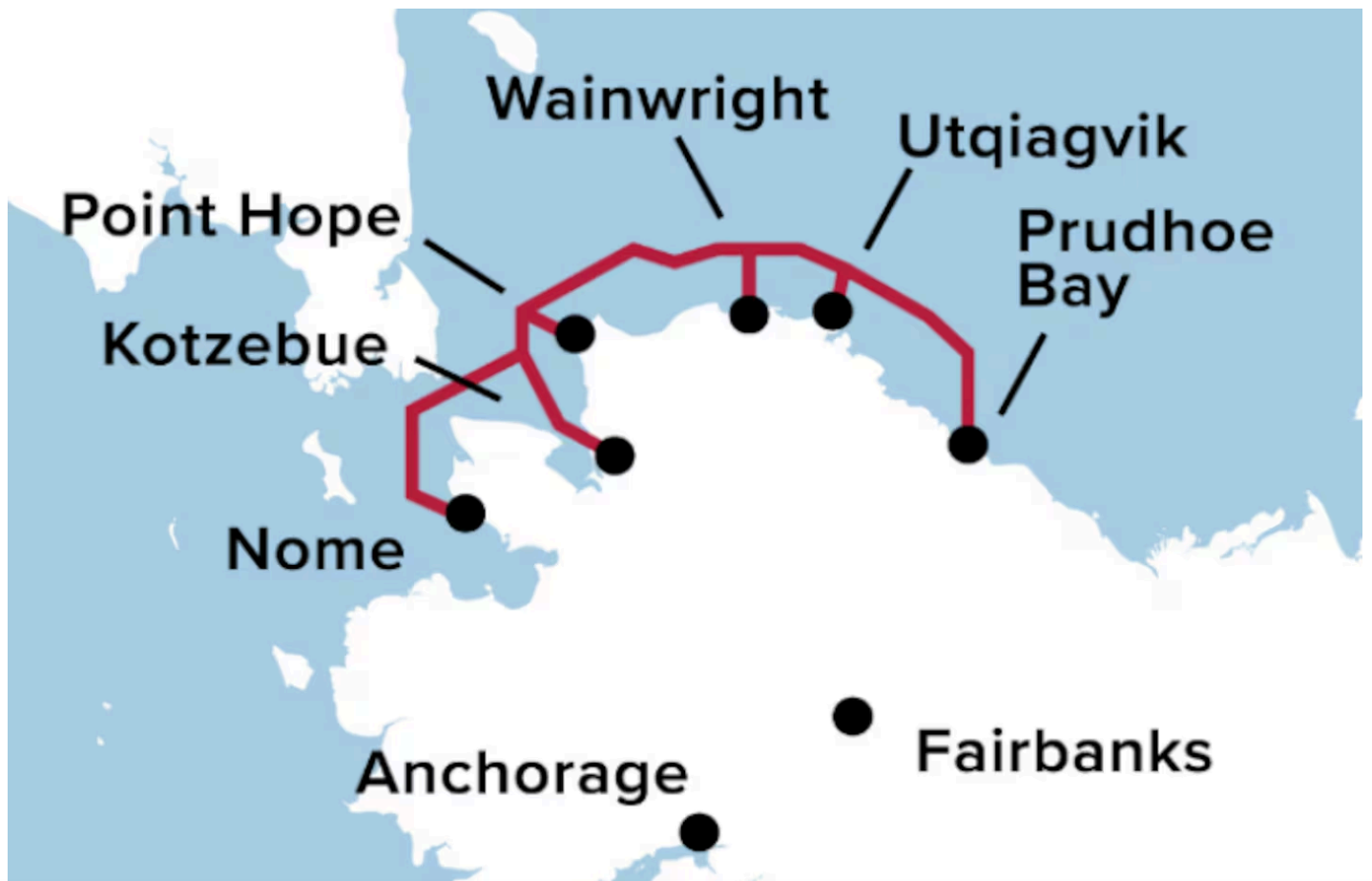
The Arctic Sounder[®]

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Quintillion pinpoints site of break near Oliktok Point

By Carey Restino

Published: January 30, 2025



from Quintillion's website)

Sea ice scour has been identified as the most probable cause of last week's break in the fiber optic cable that provides high-speed internet and cell service to much of the Arctic. Communication company Quintillion said in a release Monday that technical experts have identified sea ice activity in the fault area, which they have determined is 32 to 37 miles north of Oliktok Point.

While efforts continue to pinpoint the spot of the connectivity break, which caused many Arctic customers to lose internet and cell service provided by companies such as ASTAC, ACS, AT&T and GCI, the focus has shifted to workaround ways to re-establish high-speed internet. While many cell and internet companies have pivoted to microwave and satellite networks, service has slowed for many as a result of the break. Others are again turning to Starlink satellite internet service, as they did during the last fiber optic cable break in 2023.

Quintillion said it is working with stakeholders to fast-track funding and permits to expedite service restoration.

“The goal is to have FEMA funds released within the next few weeks and to begin a winter build of an interconnected terrestrial route from Utqiagvik to Deadhorse, which would effectively bypass the area of fault on the subsea network,” Quintillion President Michael McHale said in a release. “This project, with proper support and acceleration by federal agencies, could be completed this spring. However, there is moderate probability of success, based on challenges beyond Quintillion’s control, including the permitting process being slowed by federal government rules/regulations.”

Quintillion has previously said that it could be late summer before repairs can be made to the subsea cable due to ice and weather conditions. It has proposed and is moving forward with an expansion of its services to create a land and sea fiber optic circuit that encircles much of Alaska, allowing service to be routed in either direction.