



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Comments on Scoping issues for the proposed Leasing EIS, Coastal Plain Oil & Gas Leasing Program

1 message

smsetterberg@yahoo.com <smsetterberg@yahoo.com>

Tue, Jun 19, 2018 at 9:24 AM

To: "blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov" <blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov>

From: Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge,
Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, and
Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

Attached and below our the collective comments of three Friends of refuges for the greater Portland, OR/Vancouver, WA metro area.

BLM, Alaska State Office
Attention—Nicole Hayes, Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing EIS
[222 West 7th Avenue](#), Stop #13
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599

Re: Notice of Intent, April 20, 2018

We represent three National Wildlife Refuge Friends groups supporting five urban refuges in the Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington metro area. Our urban refuges are subject to human impact every day. We witness the pressures of human activity on the wildlife in big and small ways. We continue to be deeply concerned over the willingness to breach the beauty and sanctity of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge by allowing oil and gas exploration to expand into this pristine wilderness. If you fly over the north slope of Alaska, especially around Prudhoe Bay, you can see the fragmentation and intrusion that the oil industry has wrecked on the environment there. They have destroyed breeding grounds and migratory paths leading to important habitat which wildlife needs to thrive.

Given:

- Air temperatures on the Arctic Refuge have already increased by several degrees and are projected to warm 6° F by 2040, shrinking habitat and food sources.
- Burning the Refuge's oil and gas reserves would not only add fuel to the fire but exacerbate risks to polar bears and other species already struggling with melting sea ice.
- With two adjacent Canadian National Parks, the Arctic Refuge ecosystem affords unparalleled opportunities for those seeking the solace of undisturbed areas a sorely needed benefit for our growing and dense human populations.
- U.S. crude oil reserves already doubled between 2008 and 2014 with the use of new technologies and off shore exploration.
- Conservation allowed U.S. oil imports to decline from 12.5 million barrels per day in 2005 to 5 million in 2014. Increased fuel economy standards will save the U.S. more oil than we import from the Persian Gulf and Venezuela combined.

- This is a human rights issue. The Arctic Refuge is the homeland for the Gwich'in people who have depended on the caribou for their subsistence for thousands of years. The coastal plain is the calving grounds for hundreds of thousands of Porcupine Caribou and the Gwich'in refer to it as "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins." Drilling in the Arctic Refuge will impact the caribou and therefore the Gwich'in people.

Keeping America's greatest wilderness pristine will protect the fish, wildlife and migratory birds that depend on it. No other protected area in the entire circumpolar north has such abundant and diverse wildlife with 700 kinds of plants, 200 species of birds, 47 mammal species and 42 fish species.

The USFWS says the Arctic Refuge is the only national conservation area where polar bears regularly den and the most consistently used polar bear land denning area in Alaska. The refuge is critical habitat for these animals, particularly as concerns mount over species loss due to the reduction of sea ice due to climate change.

- As the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) reaffirmed, it's a place of "national interest," Arctic Refuge may be *in* Alaska but it doesn't *belong* to Alaska. As U.S. residents, each of us has as much to say about the future of the Arctic Refuge as any Alaskan.

Experts agree that oil and gas development in this area would permanently and irreversibly disrupt the ecological integrity of the refuge. Drilling equipment and accompanied infrastructure would devastate the fragile Arctic landscape and harm refuge wildlife. Any leaks and spills, large or small, would exacerbate these damages and forever impair this American wilderness. We strongly believe that there are areas, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that should be off limits to development. We urge the Bureau of Land Management to carefully consider these points while drafting the Environmental Impact Statement and to use the expertise of the Fish and Wildlife Service to fully define and explore the impacts of the proposed activity. We believe that if properly vetted, this activity will necessarily be curtailed.

Heather Devine, President

Don Nelson, President

Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

Friends of Taulatin River NWR

Susan Setterberg, President

Friends of Ridgefield NWR



Arctic Refuge comment on Notice of Intent June 2018.docx
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Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

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