



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2018-0002-EIS1 message

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

To whom this may concern,

I have visited the Alaskan Arctic three times, once to the Gates of the Arctic National Park, and twice to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Each of these trips were self-supported backpacks of three weeks in length with a single friend. These trips, and especially the two to the Refuge, have played a seminal role in my life and my sense of place in the world.

The current administration and Republican Congress have cynically placed the Coastal Plain of the Refuge into the new tax law mandating oil drilling in one of our nation's most treasured natural landscapes. The Arctic Refuge has been in the sights of the fossil fuel industry and the Alaskan congressional delegation since its inclusion in the Alaskan Lands Act in 1980. For conservationists its protection has been of prime importance since at least the 1950s when luminaries such as Olaus and Mardie Murie, George Schaller, and others travelled there to survey its biological richness.

While this 60-year conservation history clearly matters, it's just a blink of time for the Gwich'in people, who have lived in the area for millennia. Their traditional lands sweep across the Arctic Refuge, and they call its coastal plain "the sacred place where life begins." It is the calving grounds for the 190,000-strong Porcupine caribou herd, which has fed generations of Gwich'in people. The caribou are embedded in the culture, as essential to the people as salmon are to Pacific Northwest tribes, or bison are to the Sioux. The Gwich'in have long argued that drilling in the Refuge violates their civil rights. (HCN 5/23/2018).

The United States is in the midst of an oil glut; with the price of oil at near record lows, there is little appetite on the part of industry to expand into such contentious and forbidding terrain. Furthermore, the economics of the proposal make no sense. To generate \$1 billion from the Senate budget bill would require leasing at rates 40 times greater than lease averages since 2000, and would have to include the entire 1.5 million acres of the Coastal Plain. Sixty-six percent of the North Slope is already open to leasing or already leased. In the National Petroleum Preserve to the west of Prudhoe Bay, an important wildlife sanctuary in its own right, 72 percent of the recoverable oil is accessible and outside key conservation areas. Finally, the claims in the scoping request that impacts will be limited on Federal lands to no more than 2,000 surface acres has been refuted time and time again, and is an insult to those of us who have been fighting these actions for decades.

The proposed sales threaten fish, wildlife, clean water, small businesses, trans-boundary conservation, and Alaska Native cultural and subsistence rights, while adding greenhouse gas pollution at a time when U.S. oil production is soaring and the global climate is destabilizing. Drilling in the Arctic Refuge defies economic reason and goes against any measure of public interest. I strongly urge the BLM to submit a "No Action Alternative" in their Leasing EIS.

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