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[EXTERNAL] DOI-BLM-AK-0000-2018-0002-EIS (Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing EIS)

1 message

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Where to begin?

In researching the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, I have discovered the raw beauty as well as the diverse science of this area. One must be inspired by the native people who continue to thrive in this region of the United States thanks, in part, to the sustained migration of the porcupine caribou which travel back and forth between the Coastal Plain in Alaska and Canada. Ten previous administrations have protected this area since 1960 when Fred Andrew Seaton, Secretary of the Interior, under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, designated our largest wildlife refuge leaving 43 million acres in Alaska for potential oil and gas development. It was further protected by Congress with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA-1980) as the Coastal Plain has multiple differences from the surrounding area including land use, specific migration routes and sustenance areas, and the likelihood of only staggered pockets of oil reservoirs.

As seen in the resource, "Here's What Oil Drilling Looks Like in the Arctic Refuge, 30 Years Later" (Fountain, NYT), it is clear that even the best practices to minimize the impact of exploratory drilling changed the surface area for the long term including melting the permafrost. An offshore oil spill would be just as detrimental to both shore and ocean resources.

Any map of the porcupine caribou migration area, which is spread over the eastern side of the refuge and crosses into neighboring Canada, will show the hurdles faced in sustaining this area of vital sustenance. Even if the caribou food sources could be untouched and the calving areas avoided, will the oil/gas companies be willing to put pipelines up on stilts so the caribou and natives can roam under them? Perhaps you should look to the western areas of the Coastal Plain keeping in mind the goals of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968.

Due to the lack of groundwater needed to create ice roads, please consider the further impact of creating gravel roads and also the airstrips not included in the surface area limits that will be needed if pockets of reserves are found. It seems likely that more utilities, housing and waste disposal will also be needed even if concentrated where the native people already reside but you'll have to ask them about those impacts. Will the oil/gas companies agree to the added expense of maintaining leak detectors and automatic shutoffs?

If the goal is to provide sustainable energy for the United States, given the potential of the Nanushuk field, it doesn't seem a forced lease sale at this time is needed. Unfortunately, since that doesn't appear to be the goal, you may have to consider off shore drilling as the only means to not impact the arctic tundra.

I am not convinced that even with today's drilling technology, that the infrastructure that would be needed to support drilling nor the President's desire to sell our resources to other countries, justifies destroying this land and way of life at this time.

After all these years of protecting this fragile, arctic region, it seems Congress has merely been waiting for a President who cares nothing for the inner beauty of our land.

Best of luck protecting all of our natural resources.

CAH

Resources:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2000. Potential impacts of proposed oil and gas development on the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain: Historical overview and issues of concern. Web page of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks, Alaska. 18 October 2000.

http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/ANWR/anwr_fws.htm

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Fountain, Henry. Here's What Oil Drilling Looks Like in the Arctic Refuge, 30 Years Later. The New York Times: NY. 15 December 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/climate/arctic-drilling-anwr.html>

DeMarban, Alex. Energy: This new Alaska oil field could be big – or really big. Anchorage Daily News: NY. 17 January 2018.

<https://www.adn.com/business-economy/energy/2018/01/17/oil-search-bought-nanushuk-discovery-for-very-little-despite-huge-potential/>

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"All it takes is faith, trust, and a little bit of pixie dust."