



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Scoping Comments

1 message

Lisa Holzapfel <lholzapfel@icloud.com>
To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Tue, Jun 12, 2018 at 10:58 AM

To whom it may Concern at the Bureau of Land Management,

Your proposal to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling and related oil and gas exploration and development is unconscionable. I understand how Lisa Murkowski placed the proposal into the tax bill without public review or comment. Her proposal will totally destroy the only last remaining piece of natural habitat on the Alaskan Arctic Coastal Plain. And no, not all of her Alaskan constituents support this. Thousands do not, myself included.

This proposal destroys the ecotourism businesses and outdoor recreation wilderness experiences for all Alaskans, US residents, international tourists and outdoor adventurers. It will destroy one of the country's most cherished landscapes. There is no other place left like this in the entire country. This pristine, relatively untouched Arctic environment is a national treasure. To destroy it, as we have the rest of the North Slope, destroys the heart of who we are as Alaskans and Americans. Our US parks, forests and refuge systems make our country unique in the entire world. The development of this piece of Alaska destroys our national heritage. And a piece of each one of us.

This land is also sacred to the Gwich'in people. It provides critical essential subsistence resources to their people. The BLM needs to coordinate with the native Alaskans who subsist on this land and protect their interests. The Coastal Plain and the entire Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is also sacred to those of us who cherish Wilderness. It is part of our souls too. This proposal destroys us as a nation.

As an avid birder, I cannot begin to understand why anyone could support destroying internationally significant migratory bird habitat. The Coastal Plain is extremely important and globally significant habitat not only for birds, but for caribou, wolves, denning polar bears, wolverine and other significant Arctic and Alaskan species. There is nowhere else on the planet that a person can walk or paddle amongst wildlife untouched by development. This experience is unique and of significant value to people who have lost the ability to connect with our globe and its resources. Wilderness, untouched by man is critical to our survival.

I have watched the Brooks Range and the North Slope get whittled away over time. Even in areas that are supposed to be pristine, there are exploratory drilling sites, vehicular damage from large vehicles traveling on thawed tundra, noise from exploration and light pollution in winter from pipeline activity. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is all that remains in a pure state. Please protect it. Do not allow oil and gas development of any level.

The current maze of pipelines, roads and infrastructure traversing the north slope has ruined the natural resources. If this development is approved, we will see oil drilling infrastructure sprawling over vast stretches of the last remaining untouched piece of the Coastal Plain which will adversely impact wildlife, subsistence, wilderness travel and ecotourism businesses.

Alaska and the US needs to be divesting itself away from oil and gas development rather than continuing to undertake major human-caused negative climate changing actions. Oil production will produce greenhouse gases and black carbon which will only the harm inflicted upon the Arctic and its people. We know the Arctic is warming at twice the rate of other parts of the planet. We need to leave the oil and gas in the ground and work towards meeting the Paris Accord standards. Not accelerate climate change in the Arctic through this proposal.

If we treasure our National Wildlife Refuge system, which I strongly support, and BLM should too, then you understand that this proposal is totally in conflict with the legislation that created the Arctic National Wildlife System. Our national standards set this Refuge aside for specific purposes. All of which this proposal is in total conflict with. Oil and gas development will severely degrade natural and subsistence resources, and access to those resources, including wildlife, birds, clean water and clean air.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015, after extensive scientific analysis, recommended Wilderness protection for the coastal plain to Congress. This proposal is totally counter to the Wilderness provisions. The US and Canada also have a 1987 treaty to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd. This proposal breaks the US's treaty obligations. The BLM needs to coordinate with the Canadian government and its indigenous nations on the treaty requirements.

The Environmental Impact Statement process must not be rushed for such a significant national resource. Destroying the purposes of a National Wildlife Refuge is unprecedented. It should never be allowed to happen under any circumstances. EIS processes need to be procedural and scientific. Not political. Especially through a political move that did not include public input. The best scientific data and traditional and local knowledge must be used in the process. And there is still missing baseline data that needs to be acquired, analyzed and used before any decisions can be made. Don't short cut a good system just to feed a political desire.

I am requesting a 60-day extension on the comment period due to the total lack of required public process because a Senator created this proposal by adding a rider to a tax bill. Given that this proposal is totally in violation of existing Arctic National Wildlife Refuge purposes and will have significant negative impact on the Gwich'in, residents of Alaska, the United States and the world, it is a small request.

Sincerely,
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