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[EXTERNAL] Comment regarding Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS

1 message

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To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Mon, Jun 11, 2018 at 12:07 PM

I am staunchly opposed to Public Law 115-97 and writing on behalf of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which resident Gwich'in peoples call *the sacred place where life begins*. I am sickened by the recent decision to open ANWR to oil and gas development. I was born and raised in Fairbanks, Alaska and have spent many summers hiking in and around ANWR. For six years I have conducted research on sites located only twenty miles from the Refuge boundary, studying the effects of climate change on carbon cycling and permafrost degradation. I have witnessed firsthand the beauty of the Arctic, and the devastation climate changes wreak. I now hold a PhD in Ecology and work at Cornell University.

ANWR is a unique resource, one of the few truly wild areas left in the United States. In addition to providing critical habitat for countless species, ANWR is home to the Gwich'in peoples whose way of life and future existence are directly threatened by oil and gas development. The environmental degradation of a minimum of 2,000 acres of land (required for oil and gas production and support facilities) is incompatible with the original purposes of the Refuge:

- (i) *To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, the Porcupine caribou herd (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of this herd and the Western Arctic caribou herd), polar bears, grizzly bears muskox, Dall sheep, wolves, wolverines, snow geese, peregrine falcons and other migratory birds and Arctic char and grayling;*
- (ii) *(ii) To fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;*
- (iii) *(iii) To provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents;*
- (iv) *(iv) To ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge*

Oil and gas production will require substantial water diversions and withdrawals from the coastal plain, which does not have these resources readily available; BLM must publicly identify potential water sources and conduct environmental impact assessments before leasing lands, to ensure water quality is protected. If an oil and gas plan is developed, BLM must comply with all federal stipulations and guidelines outlined by the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the Wilderness Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act, and international treaties. Instead of degrading wildlands to eke out the final drops of non-renewable oil and gas, our government should consider investing in the research and development of renewable energies. Oil drilling will only exacerbate the effects of climate change, particularly in the sensitive Arctic, which is warming at rates twice the national average.

Sincerely,

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