



CoastalPlain\_EIS, BLM\_AK &lt;blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_eis@blm.gov&gt;

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**[EXTERNAL] Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS**

1 message

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**Belle Mickelson** <bellemickelson@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 19, 2018 at 11:16 PM

To: blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_EIS@blm.gov, Lesli Ellis-Wouters &lt;lellis@blm.gov&gt;

Dear Lesli and the BLM,

I recommend that oil or gas leasing NOT be allowed in the Arctic Coastal Plain because of environmental and social justice issues.

The Arctic Coastal Plain is a narrow band of coastal land--a critical habitat for polar bears, geese, ducks--and for the survival of the Porcupine Caribou herd. These caribou which are found in NE Alaska and NW Canada--all calve there. The Gwich'in people call it the Sacred Place Where Life Begins.

The Gwich'in still live a subsistence lifestyle in a little-cash economy. There are very few paying jobs--and the Gwich'in don't have money to buy high priced beef, pork or sheep. Plus caribou are an integral part of their culture. They call themselves the Caribou People and they sing songs and draw and paint and carve these animals... Grandparents and parents pass on their culture by hunting, cutting up, cooking, and eating these animals in their own homes and for community gatherings. They use the skins, bones, and sinews to make clothing, tools, and artworks.

i am an Episcopal priest and have traveled extensively among the Alaskan Gwich'in with a school music program called Dancing with the Spirit for the past 12 years. We involve local elders and musicians in teaching guitar and fiddle, staying in each community for a week at a time.

The entire Episcopal Church here in America--and our worldwide partners the Anglican Communion are on record against drilling in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge because it is a social justice issue for the Gwich'in people.

Mahsi' choh for your consideration and support.

All my best,

*Belle*

The Rev. Belle Mickelson  
Box 1362, Cordova, Alaska 99574  
907-388-3347