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[EXTERNAL] NOI public comment for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Coastal Plain

1 message

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TO: BLM and Secretary Zinke

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an internationally important bird habitat a registered IBA – Important Bird Area – and this must be examined in any environmental review – a careful and hard look at the 200 species of birds that call this place home.

Ed Alexander, Gwich'yaa Gwich'in from Fort Yukon and co-chair of Gwich'in Council International, who “unilaterally condemn oil and lease sales,” emphasized at the Fairbanks scoping meeting that there is no place else on the continent of North America or anywhere like the coastal plain. It is world-renowned, unique in itself. It is, he warned, “un-ethical not to heed Gwich'in” in a “rushed process that may destroy our ways of life.” It also goes against state and federal agreements and mandates. He also called for a National Security Analysis to be part of this scoping process, as part of the EIS. I echo Ed Alexander – an official National Security Analysis MUST be a part of the EIS.

To support increasing fossil fuel discovery and mining in the coastal plain and elsewhere in the US, lawmakers and administrators talk about “energy independence and national security.” Yet, these goals seems to be specious justifications. In the specific case of P.L. 115-97, there is not even a stipulation that oil and gas taken from the coastal plain must be used domestically. Fossil fuels from there could, that is, be mined, sold and transported elsewhere. Additionally, in situation where energy flows are controlled by a global market where prices and demands are outside national oversight, fossil fuel “energy independence” has little meaning. Energy Independence analysis must also take into consideration Need – it is far more economically viable to transition to renewables, we are finding across the country that renewables create far more jobs, and are much better overall for the health and well-being of people and the planet.

What might actually make the US more energy independent would be networks of local to national scaled non-fossil fuel energy systems implementing existing and innovating renewable, decarbonizing efficiencies and technologies. What might actually make us more secure, nationally are renewable, decarbonized energy systems tethered to local to national-scale economies—energy systems that could be manufactured, installed, and re/generated right here at home as well as a decrease in consumption. As we take a hard look at Energy Security and Independence – alternatives analysis must be a strong component.

What would make us less secure nationally is more fossil fuel mining polluting more of our homeland and disrupting more domestic ecosystems that sustain national food security and conditions for local to global-scale human health. The coastal plain is of special note as an intact, sacred ground with a particularly profound capacity for re/generating life, which sustains the Gwich'in Nation and other human beings nutritionally, culturally and spiritually.

What would make us less secure nationally is mining and burning more fossil fuels increasing climate change, which the Center for Naval Analysis in 2007 deemed “a threat multiplier for instability for the most volatile regions in the world,” increasing human migrations, public health problems, interstate tension, and conflicts over shrinking, less dependable “resources” with heightened food insecurity. The Arctic is one of the most volatile places in the world, in the sense that it is warming twice as fast as the world average and what happens here affects global ocean flows and weather patterns. At the same time climate change is already affecting local villages already suffering from warmed-world melting ice and permafrost, rising seas, eroding lands, and less predictable and less successful hunts on top of point-source illnesses (not to mention non-point source ones) from air, water, and land pollution caused by nearby

mining activities.

Further warming global climate--increasing world-wide instability and conflict--while reducing our homeland's capacities for self-renewal--which are the foundations of human health--would be a risk to national security from the outside in and the inside out. A full climate analysis must be a part of the EIS process.

A full national security analysis taking the fullness of such matters into account must be part of the coastal plain EIS. Drilling and mining in the coastal plain must not go forward as a local as well as national security risk.

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