



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Comment on the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program

1 message

Jessica O'Connor <jessoc98@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 15, 2018 at 7:32 AM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Dear Bureau of Land Management

I am a citizen of Alaska and a voter writing to have my voice heard. I'm in total opposition to the proposed opening of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development. I understand the need for energy independence and the benefits that responsible energy development can bring. However, this is absolutely the wrong place for it!

The Arctic Refuge is an unique wild place that was set aside for a reason. It provides critical habitat for 37 species of land mammals including caribou, musk oxen and polar bears, eight marine mammals, 42 fish species and more than 200 migratory bird species. It is a treasured area for human recreation and refuge; and it is a homeland and an essential subsistence resource for Gwich'in people and other northern indigenous tribes and nations.

Oil and gas development would have a highly destructive, damaging effect on this fragile coastal ecosystem. Production and transportation would have a huge footprint, in the form of pipelines, roads, helicopter bases, work camps, drilling rigs, and increased traffic, noise and waste. High potential risk of oil spills.

Such impact has countless effects. Breeding caribou and females with young will be forced to relocate to avoid infrastructure; they are notoriously skittish and are already pinched in the narrow coastal plain.

We are at a time in history where further oil production is irresponsible; the Arctic is currently warming at twice the rate of most other parts of the planet. Humans and animals are both feeling the brunt of unmitigated fossil fuel use.

For all of these reasons and countless others detailed by other citizens during this process, I urge you to listen to the Fish and Wildlife Service, who, after an extensive analysis, recommended in 2015 wilderness protection for the coastal plain to Congress. We entered a 1987 treaty with Canada to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd. I urge the BLM to coordinate with the Canadian government and indigenous nations on this treaty's requirements.

No matter what the outcome, this issue cannot be forced through channels without due public process. The Coastal Plain is public land. Procedural and scientific integrity, not political expediency, should drive the timeline. I urge you to extend the EIS and public comment period to at least 60 days beyond the current close date in order to allow for the best available scientific information and traditional and local knowledge, as well as data to fill baseline data gaps.

This lease sale will have major impacts on wildlife, the Gwich'in people, and all those across the world with connections to the Arctic Refuge, whether because of ancestral ties, familiarity with the region through work or recreation, or because it represents a part of this world that transcends humans' importance and scale. Wilderness has value whether we ever visit it or not. Please take seriously the public outcry of we citizens who are pleading with you to reconsider development of this priceless and irreplaceable area.

Sincerely,

Jessica O'Connor

Healy, AK