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[EXTERNAL] COASTAL PLAIN OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM EIS comments

1 message

Jerry Bassalleck <jerrybassalleck@hotmail.com>

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To: "blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov" <blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov>

Secretary Zinke,

My name is Jerry Sue Bassalleck, and I care deeply about what happens in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is a truly unique, important wild place. I already felt this way, but after a recent extended visit to Alaska (unfortunately, I did not get to visit ANWR and the coastal plain, but saw some amazing photos and videos of that special place) and speaking with numerous Alaskans, I feel even more strongly about the need to protect this fragile ecosystem, the indigenous peoples, and wildlife.

There are some places drilling doesn't belong, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of those places. Oil and gas activities should not be allowed on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. This is the single most destructive attack on the wilderness, wildlife, and subsistence resources of a national wildlife refuge in modern history.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is of cultural and natural value to all Americans, and especially to the Gwich'in people of Alaska and Canada. It provides denning habitat for threatened polar bears and the calving ground for the Porcupine Caribou Herd that sustains Gwich'in and other indigenous people.

Oil and gas development will exacerbate climate change, which is already causing temperatures in the Arctic to rise at twice the rate of the rest of the country. We shouldn't continue to blindly lease public lands without considering the impacts to our climate.

Rushing to sell off one of our most treasured public lands is irresponsible and reckless. The administration needs to comply with all the important legal protections that are in place to protect caribou, water, subsistence, and other sensitive resources of the Coastal Plain.

With regard to the EIS, if it proceeds, it must, at an absolute minimum, address the following and explain how these impacts will be mitigated or avoided:

- Impacts on food security, subsistence rights and subsistence food availability, and resulting sociocultural effects on the Gwich'in and Inupiat people
- Impacts to human health and well-being from oil and gas exploration and development
- Transboundary impacts and how BLM plans to uphold international agreements and consultation requirements, such as the 1987 agreement between the U.S. and Canada on the conservation of the Porcupine caribou herd and international polar bear treaties and agreements
- Discrepancy with the current Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), under which oil and gas exploration and development are not permitted
- Recognize all of the purposes of the Arctic Refuge and adhere to stipulations and requirements of relevant federal laws, such as ANILCA, the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and international treaties

- Preserve wilderness values, analyzing potential impacts to wilderness—including impacts on ecological integrity, wildlife, waters, noise, air quality, vegetation, visual and recreational impacts
- Analyze potential impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat
- Use the best available science in making determinations and acknowledge data gaps, missing, and unavailable information
- Evaluate the additive impacts of oil development on an iconic already stressed threatened species, the polar bear; undertake ESA Section 7 consultation with the USFWS, and uphold international polar bear treaties
- Identify all production and support facilities that would be included in this 2000 acres surface development limit and explain how it will be implemented and enforced
- List all potential water sources and thoroughly analyze potential impacts to aquatic and riverine systems – localized and downstream – and impacts on resources dependent on those systems, in accordance with the refuge purpose to ensure water quality and quantity within the refuge
- Climate change impacts, including the contribution of the proposed actions to climate change from emissions on site and potential emissions from oil and gas once shipped out of state, processed, and burned as fuel; as well as addressing how the Coastal Plain is being impacted by climate change
- As per NEPA requirements, cumulative impacts of all potential future leases on the coastal plain and adjacent federal, state, and Native corporation lands and waters when assessing cumulative impacts

Bottom line: I oppose oil and gas activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and stand with the Gwich'in to demand that the coastal plain of the Refuge remain protected for future generations.

Sincerely,

Jerry Sue Bassalleck, PhD