



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Not Here. Not Now. Not Ever. Drilling in the heart of the refuge of America's Serengeti is unconscionable, would cause irreparable harm, and leave this precious and fragile ecosystem forever altered.

1 message

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Tue, May 8, 2018 at 1:06 PM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

To :

Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS,

[222 West 7th Avenue,](#)

Stop #13,

Anchorage,

Alaska 99513

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/comments/commentSubmission.do?commentPeriodId=64354>

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

I read that The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska State Office, Anchorage, Alaska, is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to implement an oil and gas leasing program within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain. The area comprising the Coastal Plain includes approximately 1.6 million acres within the approximately 19.3 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Deemed "the sacred place where life begins" by Alaska's native Gwich'in people, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) possesses massive environmental and cultural importance. Spanning approximately 8.9 million acres across northeastern Alaska, the ANWR is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, one of 16 refuges in Alaska.

The ANWR is also home to an impressive collection of wildlife; with 42 fish species, 37 land mammals, 8 marine mammals, and over 200 resident and migratory bird species, the Refuge is one of the most diverse areas in the arctic, with several notable species including polar bears, musk oxen, and caribou.

Drilling in the heart of the refuge of America's Serengeti is unconscionable, would cause irreparable harm, and leave this precious and fragile ecosystem forever altered.

These are my comments :

Experts say an oil spill would be inevitable. Offshore drilling threatens our oceans, marine wildlife, and terrestrial wildlife with the risk of catastrophic oil spills. **The Interior Department estimates a 75% chance of a major oil spill in the Arctic's Chukchi Sea from just a single lease sale.** Oil spills can also take numerous years to clean up. Nearly 20 years after the Exxon Valdez spill, more than 26,000 gallons of oil still remain in shoreline soils. Sadly, oil spills take place on a relatively consistent basis. Each year, about 880,000 gallons of oil are sent to the ocean from U.S. drilling operations.

The challenges for cleaning up an oil spill in the Arctic are numerous. There are no viable methods of cleaning up oil from ice, and, in addition to adverse weather conditions, much of the area where drilling would take place is remote. Responding to an oil spill is extremely challenging in any marine environment, much more so in the Arctic. The period when it would be possible to clean up an oil spill is restricted to four to five months by darkness, heavy ice, and extreme cold. These severe conditions would make it impossible to attempt an oil spill cleanup for half the time during the operating season, and 100 percent of the time during the winter.

Difficulties with an under-ice oil spill. If crude oil is spilled in the ocean, it normally floats. But if the oil is released or spilled under a lid of sea ice, it will be trapped under the ice.

In order to evaluate the environmental consequences of an under-ice oil spill, you need to know when and if the oil will come to the surface, how far the ice will drift before the oil surfaces, and how much of the oil will be trapped in the ice

when the ice finally melts.

Sea ice is more like a sponge than a solid substance. The channels and pores in the sea ice are different depending upon where they are located in the ice. At its surface, where ice is in contact with cold air temperatures, sea ice has smaller and less connected pores. Oil will normally only enter larger pores and also needs to push the seawater out of the pores. During wintertime, the ice is often too cold at the surface to allow for this, and the oil will be trapped. But during spring, or when the ice warms in warm weather, oil may migrate to the surface. Once the oil surfaces, time is of the essence. The only realistic approach to remove this oil from the surface of a closed ice cover is to burn it. **However, most of the oil can only be burned during a window of opportunity of typically one week.** After a week, the oil is said to be weathered, i.e., it has lost certain components and mixed with water and can no longer be removed by burning it. This oil then threatens the arctic ecosystem ([Sönke Maus/NTNU](#)).

Despite monitoring systems in place to prevent spills, a leak occurred in a pipe leading to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) that went undetected for several days, spilling 267,000 gallons of crude oil (Barringer, 2006). Other spills directly related to land transportation of Alaskan oil include 700,000 gallons spilled when vandals destroyed a section of TAPS in 1978, and 285,000 gallons when a hunter shot the pipeline in 2001. Just as environmental assessments of TAPS have recognized and anticipated that oil spills happen and have consequences for environmental quality (Bureau of Land Management, 2002), the same consideration is necessary when evaluating the environmental impacts of drilling in ANWR.

The Arctic is one of our last and greatest unspoiled wild places. No oil company has ever successfully drilled for oil in the pristine, wildlife-filled public waters of the Arctic Ocean despite an expensive and near catastrophic attempt by Shell Oil to explore for oil there in 2012, when a Shell drilling rig ran aground in a storm. Drilling here would threaten one of our planet's most fragile, and remote ecosystems.

Exploration—Seismic Surveys: Seismic surveys, also referred to as 'air gun blasting', are conducted to locate and estimate the size of an offshore oil reserve. In order to conduct surveys, ships use 'airgun arrays' to emit high-decibel explosive impulses to map the seafloor. The noise from seismic surveys can damage or kill marine life. High decibels are known to reduce the presence of zooplankton, impair fish eggs and larvae, and temporarily if not permanently deafen adults and juveniles. Without the ability to hear, fish and marine mammals struggle to communicate, navigate, avoid predators, and locate prey. These disturbances can also disrupt important migratory patterns, forcing marine life away from suitable habitats meant for foraging and mating. In addition, seismic surveys have been implicated in whale beaching and stranding incidents.

Drilling and Processing Oil: The process of drilling releases thousands of gallons of polluted water, known as "drilling muds". These muds contain toxins like benzene, zinc, arsenic, radioactive materials, and other contaminants used to lubricate drill bits and maintain pressure. Unfortunately, discharges are unregulated. High concentrations of metals were found around drilling platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. A study by PEW Charitable Trust concluded that a single oil well discharges around 1,500 – 2,000 tons of waste material. Contaminants from oil drilling accumulate on the sea floor; smother organisms and cause malformations, genetic damage, and mortality in fish embryos.

Sincerely,

Dr. Elisabeth Bechmann

Austria

"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."

"Once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature, his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted."

– Lyndon B. Johnson

– President of the United States

THE EFFECTS OF EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL ON ALASKAN WILDLIFE:

In the days immediately following the spill many animals died including:
Upwards of 100,000 and as many as 250,000 seabirds.
More than 2,800 sea otters and 12 river otters immediately expired.
At least 300 harbor seals and almost 250 bald eagles were also instantly destroyed.
22 Orcas living in the area at the time were killed.
Countless fish died.
Small organisms were killed by the trillions, leaving those animals who prey on them with nothing to eat, causing even more deaths.
In the following days and weeks, these numbers climbed much higher.

Recovery efforts for a number of species continued for over 20 years.

Tap on image for a wealth of information and informative links regarding the Exxon' Valdez oil spill.



