



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Comments regarding Coast Plain Oil & Gas Leasing

1 message

Anne Beaulaurier <anne.beaulaurier@gmail.com>

Thu, May 24, 2018 at 10:29 AM

To: Blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Please find my comments attached.

Sincerely,
Anne Beaulaurier



Coastal Plain 2018 letter.docx

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May 24, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a longtime, permanent resident of Alaska. I am deeply concerned by the prospect of mandated leasing of the 1002 Area of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge of the Coastal Plain. It is an ill-founded plan that threatens the basic human rights of the Gwich'in people, disregards international conservation agreements to protect the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the threatened Southern Beaufort Polar Bear population, is incongruous with the purpose of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and only stands to compound the already dramatic effects of climate change in the arctic.

How will the leasing agreements address the tradition, dating back thousands of years and still very much alive today, of the Gwich'in people's reliance upon the Porcupine Caribou herd for food, clothing and life itself? Here we have an opportunity to protect a traditional lifestyle, whereas modern developments have stomped out nearly every other native way of life in this country. Have we not learned our lesson, yet? As an Alaskan, I support my Gwich'in neighbors in fighting for their survival. It is an issue of human rights, food securing and basic decency toward our fellow citizens. The EIS for oil development in the Coastal Plain must address and study how disruption of the breeding grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd will affect the subsistence of the Gwich'in people. It also must acknowledge that the Gwich'in's reliance upon the Coastal Plain goes beyond food security as it is "the Sacred Place Where Life Begins."

Arctic Alaska is ground zero for the effects of climate change. Nowhere else in the country, even the world, have the effects of climate change been more dramatic and life altering than in the arctic. This has led to diminishing polar bear populations and increasing onshore denning due to unpredictable pack ice. There are countless species affected by climate change, from birds to bears, but polar bears in particular are internationally recognized and protected. **How will the leases protect polar bears and the increasing rate of onshore denning, not to mention the high density of offshore denning in the Coastal Plain region?**

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is biologically diverse and was set aside first and foremost to protect fish and wildlife habitats. **How will the leases protect the intact ecosystem of the Coastal Plain? What measures will be taken to ensure the pristine water quality of the area is undisturbed? How will waste be handled as to not contaminate the surrounding area? How will spills be handled as to not conflict with the Refuge mandates listed below? How will USFWS and BLM ensure that the original purposes of the refuge are adhered to**

- (i) To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity...;
- (ii) To fulfill international treaty obligations of the US with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- (iii) To provide... the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents;
- (iv) To ensure... water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge]

despite the incongruous mandate to also "provide for an oil and gas program on the Coastal Plain?"

While the US would like to develop more American oil supplies to decrease our reliance upon foreign oil, the Coastal Plain is unlikely to be more than a drop in the bucket of our ever-growing fossil fuel appetite. Furthermore, Alaska's dependence on the oil industry for its main economic driver is outdated and falsely placed. As Alaskans, we want to move forward, take the opportunity to face the climate change challenge, and be leaders in weening our fossil fuel needs. In an area where the effects of climate change are undeniable and dramatic, adding oil and gas development to the Coastal Plain will only serve to increase and exaggerate the detrimental effects. **How will the development occur in a way that acknowledges the changing climate, changing Arctic landscape as a result of climate change, anticipate further changes and the challenges they will bring, and mitigate contributions to a warming climate?**

Development of an oil and gas program in the Coastal Plain will have undeniable effects upon the ecosystem of the biologically rich and critically important region. It is our responsibility at this juncture to make sure that it is not enacted under false pretenses, without proper study, and in considering **all** parties affected, beyond the short-sighted benefit to the oil industry. This area is a national treasure that was originally set aside as a wildlife refuge because of its importance ecologically to the region and the world, and sustenance-wise to the people native to the far north, particularly the Gwich'in. **I urge you to consider every aspect of impact, from water quality to human rights to climate change, and in doing so am confident that we will discover oil and gas development in the Coastal Plain to be ill-founded and incongruous with our other priorities for the long-term health of the region and its people.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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