



CoastalPlain\_EIS, BLM\_AK &lt;blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_eis@blm.gov&gt;

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**[EXTERNAL] Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**1 message

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**Jean Balay** <jbalay@mtaonline.net>  
To: blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_EIS@blm.gov

Tue, Jun 19, 2018 at 8:31 PM

To the BLM:

I am a citizen of Alaska and a voter writing to express my extreme opposition to the proposed opening of the Arctic Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development.

The Arctic Refuge is an unmatched wild place that was set aside for a reason. It provides critical habitat for caribou, migratory birds, denning polar bears and many endangered species; it is a treasured area for human recreation and refuge; and it is a homeland and an essential resource for Gwich'in people and other Northern indigenous tribes and nations.

Despite misleading campaigns promising responsible development, Alaskans are wise to the devastating impact oil and gas would have on this fragile coastal ecosystem. Production and transportation would have a huge footprint, in the form of pipelines, roads, work camps, drilling rigs, and increased traffic, noise and waste.

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. The Gwich'in people are inextricably linked to the caribou herds; their physical and spiritual health rise and fall with the health of their homelands.

We are at a time in history where further oil production in the Arctic is irresponsible; this region 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. We can not continue to build new resource extraction infrastructure without continuing to have a devastating effect on the climate of our planet. This is a time in human history when we must plan to decrease our consumption of fossil fuels. We increase production and use of these energy sources at our peril.

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 Arctic Refuge 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 in order to allow the best available scientific information and traditional and local knowledge 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. Wild spaces have value whether we ever visit them 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,

Jean Balay

P.O. Box 415, Healy, AK 99743