



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

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## [EXTERNAL] Oil and gas development rights on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska

1 message

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Nicholas Porter <nporter@jerusalempeacebuilders.org>  
To: blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_EIS@blm.gov

Mon, Jun 18, 2018 at 12:11 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

**I urge the Bureau of Land Management not to allow an oil and gas lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.**

My objections focus on three principal considerations:

1) Indigenous rights: The Arctic Refuge has sustained the native Gwich'in and Inupiat people for thousands of years. The Refuge's coastal plain provides vital habitat for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which use the area to bear and nurture their young. The Gwich'in people call the coastal plain "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins." Protecting the caribou is a matter of basic human rights for the Gwich'in. The Refuge's coastal plain and waters also provide fish and other resources important to the subsistence of the Inupiat people. Principal among these are the bowhead whale, polar bear and whitefish. The Inupiat people of Kaktovik also utilize the Porcupine caribou, Dall sheep, wolves and other wildlife resources on the coastal plain and nearby mountains as well. Although I know that efforts to drill for oil and gas would be done in an as environmentally responsible way as possible, serious adverse consequences are unavoidable wherever oil and gas operations are carried out. We know this from experiences in other portions of Alaska and the rest of the world. I do not believe that the long-term impacts to the living resources of the area and their importance to the human inhabitants are worth the short-term and relatively minor economic benefits that would accrue from oil and gas extraction in this area.

2) Biodiversity and natural legacy: The Arctic Refuge is probably the largest protected area in the United States that is still in a condition relatively unchanged by human development. As such it is an important historical and environmental legacy and a remnant of our great land that is still much "as God made it". It contains a vast and unique array of wildlife, including caribou, musk oxen, wolves and polar bears. Nearly 200 species of birds migrate between the Refuge, six continents and all 50 of the United States. The rush to lease and drill is not in line with the precautionary principle that should be applied to such an important area and one of our most exceptional ecosystems. The impacts of further exploration for and production of oil and gas would, in just a few years, irreversibly change the physical and biological characteristics of this important area that have evolved over millions of years.

3) Climate change: The Arctic is experiencing rapid changes due to a warming climate that the vast majority of scientists in the world agree is due to a human-caused increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Temperatures there are rising at twice the rate in the rest of the world, which has for years been so predicted by climate science. Villages are being eroded into the sea, permafrost melt is making infrastructure insecure, and food sources are disappearing. Drilling there for more oil to burn and the further consequent increase in greenhouse gases will compound the serious impacts already being experienced throughout the Arctic. This would be a sad instance of adding insult to injury for the people living there as well as for the inhabitants of the rest of the planet. Instead of seeking to drill there for more oil, the Department of Interior's efforts would be better spent in working toward setting Alaska on a more stable and sustainable path toward energy production and use. This has been done elsewhere in the Arctic, with prominent examples in Scandinavia and Iceland that should be mirrored in Alaska. If those people can do it, surely the greatest nation on earth can do the same.

**I urge the Bureau of Land Management not to allow an oil and gas lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.** The current residents and future generations are looking to your agency to make the right decision.

Thank you for considering my comments on this important matter,

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The Rev. Canon Nicholas T. Porter

Interim Pastor

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