



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Arctic Refuge comments

1 message

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Fri, Jun 15, 2018 at 10:16 AM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept these comments on the proposed Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing EIS for the Arctic Refuge. I request that all of my included comments be considered in the EIS and the alternatives presented therein.

I have spent a good amount of time in the Arctic Refuge and on the coastal plain in particular including places such as the Kongakut, the Okpilak, the Hula-hula rivers. I have also spent a lot of time in other wild areas on our North American continent. Nothing compares to the Arctic Refuge. Nowhere else. This is a place teeming with life, most of which you find on the coastal plain. Nowhere else can one experience such a vast, intact wild landscape and fully functioning ecosystem. Nowhere else in our country does this exist. Let's talk about that before drilling and all the roads, pollution, and irreparable damage that result from oil development. This is the LAST of our wild, fully-functioning and intact wilderness areas in the United States.

This coastal plain area is far too unique to sacrifice it for short-term financial gains related to oil & gas production. Nowhere in our country do we have anything like the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge in terms of it's size, wilderness character, and habitat for intact wildlife populations. It may be perhaps the only place left in the US where so many species come to breed and reproduce every spring. It is mind boggling to consider that the state of Alaska and the US government would even consider supporting drilling in such a unique area that will irreparably be harmed and damaged.

As a country, we have nothing to gain by drilling in this area because oil production is actually not in high demand right now. We don't need the oil. National Geographic, in their June 2018 issues, states that our nation is awash in shale oil and gas from the lower 48 states. Alaska can't even currently sell the existing leases they have available outside of the refuge. Not to mention there are vast amounts of lands that are already slated for development that are still awaiting leases, such as in the National Petroleum Reserve adjacent to the refuge. In fact, it's roughly 150 miles of coastline is a small fraction of the roughly 1,000 miles of Alaska coastline that have already been slated for oil and gas development. The coastal plain in this area is the ONLY part of Alaska's vast north slope that has historically been protected from development and it should stay that way indefinitely.

Instead, we have everything to lose by drilling in this area because of the immense loss of habitat and wilderness character that would forever be damaged by development. The 1002 area is the birthing ground of the Porcupine caribou herd and is essential to the long-term health of this population. Scientists have documented that caribou spend upwards of 6 weeks during their birthing season out on the coastal plain. This is a significant amount of time during a critical period of their annual cycle. This is also a time when the caribou are vulnerable having just migrated hundreds of miles and given birth. Disrupting this habitat, which is the backbone to their long-term survival, is nothing short of horrible management. There is no science to show that the Porcupine herd will or can survive such intrusive development in such critical habitat.

Additionally, this area is known denning grounds for polar bears and arctic fox, which are already facing extreme pressures to survive related to climate change and how global warming is affecting the arctic. Hundreds of species of birds migrate to this area to breed every year, not to mention all the birds that rely on this part of the coastal plain for food as they prepare for their migrations south again in the fall....both of which are part of annual cycles that have been going on for far longer that we can even conceive. Disrupting these cycles through development could spell disaster for many species.

The EIS should take into account that inadequate consideration was given to the overwhelming public support for protection of this area as wilderness. This place belongs to all Americans. Similar to Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, it is an American treasure that deserves to be protected indefinitely. The people of this country have overwhelming spoken in support of protecting the Arctic Refuge for conservation purposes. Senator Murkowski's underhanded and politically

devious maneuver to slip her provision into the budget bill is a stark reminder that this bill would have never passed on its own. The people of this country do NOT support drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

However, the state of Alaska continues to forge forward with narrow-minded greed despite the fact that the refuge just happens to be in Alaska, they don't own it. It is wrong, ethically and ecologically, to develop this area just to line the pockets of Alaska corporations and inhabitants. Let's be clear, this is a political decision designed to benefit a few. Alaska needs to deal with their economic dependence on oil taxes in ways that do not threaten federally protected lands that were intended to protect wildlife and wilderness qualities. Whose welfare are you proposing to maximize with your proposal to drill?

This proposed leasing goes against the values for which the Arctic Refuge was set said. Also, it does not follow the recommendations of the management plans for the Arctic Refuge. There is no way to drill in this area and maintain the values set forth for this area when it was established. The EIS must contain an alternative that describes the values inherent in protecting this area from drilling and set forth a proposal to protect it indefinitely.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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