



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Arctic Refuge

1 message

John R Davis <john@rewilding.org>
Reply-To: john@rewilding.org
To: blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov
Cc: wildwayscout@icloud.com

Mon, Jun 11, 2018 at 4:16 AM

BLM and other public lands officials

Please accept The Rewilding Institute's letter calling for full protection
(no oil & gas drilling!) of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you
John Davis
Rewilding Institute executive director

**Arctic Refuge letter to submit.docx**

145K

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge letter of support

Dear public lands officials

The Rewilding Institute wishes to register our strong opposition to any oil and gas exploration or exploitation in America's landmark reserve, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We call for full protection of Arctic Refuge – including its biologically critical Coastal Plain – as Wilderness. Reasons to completely protect Arctic Refuge (and other parts of the Arctic Coastal Plain and adjacent waters) are as numerous as the area's tremendous abundance of wildlife, but they include these:

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge provides home for great herds of Caribou, families of Grizzly Bears and Gray Wolves, the rare and elusive Wolverine, migratory salmon and char, and globally significant concentrations of waterfowl. Arctic Refuge is one of the last places on Earth where large animals in Pleistocene abundance still find room to roam. Most famously, the Porcupine herd of Caribou calves on the Coastal Plain, where energy development is proposed. Energy exploitation in Arctic Refuge thus could mean the end of one of North America's grandest wildlife concentrations.

The Arctic Coastal Plain, where energy exploration is proposed, is the most ecologically-sensitive and biologically-rich part of the Refuge. Energy sprawl here would mean habitat fragmentation, likely leading to invasion by exotic species, diminished habitat security for wide-ranging species, severing of travel routes for migratory species, and altered microclimates; pollution, from spills, exhaust, and use of toxic chemicals; erosion and melting of permafrost, with attendant deleterious effects on plant communities and streams; and outright displacement and killing of wild animals and plants.

The Rewilding Institute also opposes energy extraction in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. Again, these Arctic ecosystems are rich in wildlife and sensitive to disturbance.

Fossil fuel extraction needs to be phased out everywhere, so that atmospheric carbon levels can be brought back down to livable levels – which many scientists suggest are about 350 parts per million, or about 50 parts per million below where we are now (and rising at least a part per million per year). Removing carbon from the ground in Arctic regions to burn and thus put into the air is at least doubly damaging, for Arctic regions are warming faster than the rest of the globe and proving especially sensitive ecologically; and the very foundation of Arctic ecosystems, frozen ground, is undermined as permafrost melts. We as a nation must learn to leave carbon in the ground, and meet our energy needs through conservation, population stabilization, efficiency, and small-scale renewable energy.

Finally for now, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is among the premier wildlife watching and wilderness travel destinations in the world. Many of us at Rewilding

Earth have enjoyed some of our most fabulous wilderness outings on paddling and hiking trips there. Our country would be terribly foolish to squander this immense recreational and ecological value for a few months worth of fossil fuels. We have no choice but to transition away from fossil fuel burning – which is already dangerously overheating the biosphere. Let's make that transition well before we've ransacked our greatest wildlands.

Beyond just protecting all of Arctic Refuge as Wilderness, The Rewilding Institute advocates phasing out exploitation in the misnamed National "Petroleum" Reserve of Alaska and joining it to Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to form an international peace park. The resulting National Pleistocene Reserve, with indigenous communities but no industrial exploitation, would be the grandest protected area on Earth and a model for how humans might relearn to co-exist with the natural world.

Thank you,
John Davis, executive director