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[EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge1 message

Gloria Shen <gloshen@yahoo.com>

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To: "blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov" <blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov>

The ArcticRefuge is no place for oil and gas. This is an area that was set aside decades ago as a national wildlife refuge. How can oil and gas leasing be justified in this area? Surely there are special interests at work here but the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not beholden to special interests. It belongs to EVERYONE in the United States and overwhelmingly, the public is opposed to oil and gas leasing in this pristine area.

This is the single most destructive attack on the wilderness, wildlife, and subsistence resources of a national wildlife refuge in modern history. The Administration is putting politics above protection of one of our most treasured public lands. Rushing into leasing is not what the Refuge deserves or what the law requires. The administration needs to comply with all the important legal protections that are in place to protect caribou, water, subsistence, and other sensitive resources of the Coastal Plain.

The Coastal Plain is the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge and provides important habitat for polar bears, caribou, muskoxen, and hundreds of species of migratory birds that travel from all 50 states and 6 continents. Oil and gas would harm the most important onshore denning habitat for threatened polar bears in the United States, further placing this imperiled species at risk. Oil and gas activities would also further exacerbate climate change, which is already causing temperatures in the Arctic to rise at twice the rate of the rest of the country. Oil and gas activities are completely at odds with the protection of the wildlife and other values in the Refuge, and with the urgent need to address climate change.

The Coastal Plain is the calving and post-calving ground for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, an important subsistence resource for the Gwich'in Nation. The Gwich'in people have relied on the caribou for millennia and consider the Coastal Plain to be "the sacred place where life begins." Protecting the caribou and its habitats is a matter of basic human rights for the Gwich'in. Protection of the herd and its habitats along its migration route is one of the original reasons why the Arctic Refuge was set aside, and there is a treaty between the U.S. and Canada to protect the herd. Interior needs to gather the best possible scientific information and err on the side of caution to ensure that the herd is fully protected from oil and gas activities.

Interior needs to consider the impacts from all stages of oil and gas, including seismic activities, leasing, exploration drilling, and development, as well as any related infrastructure or other activities. The environmental impacts from oil and gas will extend well beyond the footprint of any actual developments and will harm the wildlife, water, subsistence, and other values the Arctic Refuge was set aside to protect.

This would be a regrettable decision that will irreversibly damage the area and wildlife. No oil and gas leases should be granted.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,
Gloria Shen