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[EXTERNAL] Comments for EIS scoping process of Coastal Plain of Arctic Refuge1 message

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To: BLM_AK_Coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

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As an Alaskan resident and United States citizen, I have concerns and comments about the proposed oil and gas leasing and future development in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

First, the provision to allow leasing oil and gas in the Coastal Plain was added to last year's Tax Cut Act without listening to the voices of the Native Alaskans who would be most affected by this development, the Gwich'in Nation, or the opinion of the majority of Americans who are the current land owners. This EIS process needs to involve a no development alternative and let the public weigh in on the future of this land which is important to Alaskans and the rest of the country. If studies in the EIS process show harm to wildlife, water resources and/or the local way of life, then there needs to be a no development alternative. To require 2 sales within 10 years before any scoping has occurred is not consistent with my understanding of the NEPA process nor was it done in a fair democratic way.

The EIS process for the Coastal Plains Oil and Gas Developments must include mitigation to protect the way of life for Native Alaskans who have lived in this area for generations and depend upon the land and its resources for both their food and culture. The process must investigate how the proposed leasing and its developments will affect food security and substance use, including how development and the outsiders it brings in may affect the behaviors and numbers of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. You must listen to the concerns of the Alaskans who depend upon these natural resources and provide a translator for those who do not speak English.

According to your own federal website, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was set aside for 4 main purposes as described in ANLCA : To conserve animals and plants in their natural diversity, ensure a place for hunting and gathering activities, protect water quality and quantity, and fulfill international wildlife treaty obligations. The Coastal Plain EIS must explain how these original purposes can be maintained if there is oil and gas leasing and the associated construction activities associated with it. You must carefully document the ways that oil and gas leasing and development will undermine those 4 purposes and supply reasoning for the public on why you would allow such degradation to occur.

When you look at the impacts of leasing for oil and gas, you must include the impacts of the exploration and road building (gravel extractions, worker-camps and their infrastructure, water needs and wastewater disposal) and the transportation of workers in and out and transporting oil and gas to market. How will water quality be protected over these large areas? Also, what are the costs and dangers associated with building and maintaining these structures in a rapidly changing environment due to climate change.

Climate change is affecting Alaska faster than other part of the country – we see vegetation types, permafrost levels and winter conditions changing within our own lifetimes. The undeveloped Arctic National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat for arctic species to move to when their current environment become uninhabitable due to climate change or habitat fragmentation. The value of these vast undeveloped spaces should only rise in the future but is impossible to put a cost estimate on. How will you weight the value of such wild space and species diversity against oil profits? I want to see in the EIS process you discuss the intangible values of having places undeveloped in the Arctic in a changing climate.

There is nowhere like the Coastal Plain in ANWR in our country and we threaten to change it forever by letting in development for short term monetary profits for a few companies and people. The NEPA process requires analysis of all reasonably foreseeable past, present, and future actions of the proposed actions and I will hold you to that.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments on this EIS process and I hope these comments are helpful as you move forward.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR Mail - [EXTERNAL] Comments for EIS scoping process of Coastal Plain of Arctic Refuge

Sincerely,

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