



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Scoping comment-Coastal plain: Immoral, undemocratic, imprudent1 message

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Wed, May 23, 2018 at 10:45 AM

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There is an old story from chapter 25 of the book of Genesis that relates to oil and gas leasing in the coastal plain. A starving hunter named Esau agrees to sell his birthright to his stay-at-home brother Jacob for a bowl of stew.

Of course, fossil hydrocarbons are not food. And, the partnership of politicians and industry who have undemocratically, via P.L. 115-97, legalized oil and gas drilling in the Refuge are not planning to sell their own but others' birthright. That is immoral. In particular, these self-appointed authorities are planning to sell the birthright of the Porcupine Caribou Herd upon which Gwich'in nutrition and life ways depend. They are also planning to sell out the rightful will of a large majority of the U.S. public who also do not want this federal land to be drilled. That is undemocratic. Moreover, the intended exchange of land and oil for money and energy would have generational consequences for a very short-sighted, moreover, destructive gain. This is imprudent.

The actual U.S. federal oil recovery calculations go something like this. According to average figures from the 2018 Congressional Research Service report, "Arctic...Refuge: An Overview," the estimated yield of the presumed coastal plain oil fields over the projected forty-year duration of their productivity might equal over seven billion barrels of oil. This would amount to perhaps a single year's supply for the U.S. at current use rates, although P.L. 115-97 also does not prohibit export of the Refuge's oil and gas. The report also finds it unlikely, at current values, that coastal plain natural gas would be economically recoverable.

Scientific evidence indicates a high likelihood that drilling would harm the Porcupine Caribou Herd—who for millennia, entwined with Gwich'in People—have depended upon this ground. Those consequences would be palpable across multiple generations, if not irreversible. The coastal plain is a land of many other kinds of beings, of beauty and mystery that many U.S. voters, though they may never setting foot in it, want to defend for itself. Evidence also indicates that at least 80% of already proven reserves of fossil hydrocarbons must stay underground for there to be a reasonable chance of staying below the 2 degree C threshold global temperature rise, the estimated threshold of catastrophic climate change danger. Exploration and drilling for additional oil to burn is contrary to the health and safety of everyone.

How does it make sense to drill in the coastal plain in light of how immoral, undemocratic, and imprudent it would be?