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[EXTERNAL] Scoping comment-Coastal Plain-Economic/supply claims, jobs

1 message

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The Alaska congressional delegation wants their state and country to believe that drilling in the Refuge's coastal plain will provide jobs, economic growth, and generations of energy independence. These claims must be examined.

On energy independence: The law legalizing oil and gas in the Refuge, P.L. 115-97, does not prohibit the export of coastal plain yields. And, even if burned in the U.S., projected oil yields would power only about one year of current U.S. energy demands.

On economic growth: Based on recent bids in the North Slope, leasing sales held over the next decade would not even generate the \$2.2 billion claimed in the tax bill. The estimated revenues from oil and gas over the estimated 40-year duration of field productivity would not pay off even half of this year's federal budget deficit and would not fund Alaska's budget for even a single generation. Moreover, the possibility of sunk costs is real as drilling in the Arctic always comes with additional expenses and risks. At the same time, there is a growing global movement of institutions divesting from the fossil fuel industry, including lenders like the World Bank, and reinvesting in decarbonized energy innovation. Because of global climate change the demand for oil and gas must and will fall. Additionally, financial calculations have failed to account for increasing costs of slumping infrastructure, moving villages, and more illness as consequences of intensifying climate change due to burning fossil fuels.

On jobs: While oil industry does provide jobs, these would last only for the 40-year estimated durability of the presumed oil field, or less, as oil demand drops. Meanwhile, despite the recent U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the U.S. has been seeing explosive growth in renewable energy jobs with a far more extensive outlook. The fact that the EU and China are outpacing the U.S. should help motivate the U.S. and Alaska to move forward more competitively. Wind industry jobs are already double those of coal, and solar employs many more. Alaskan communities already are moving forward in renewables as discussed in the recent report "Beyond Fossil Fuels" supported by the Northern Alaska Environmental Center and Greenpeace- <https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Arctic-Report-2017-10-13.pdf>. While Scientific American ran an article last year highlighting how remote Alaskan communities are cutting edge for integrating renewable energies into power grids-<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-rural-alaska-can-teach-the-world-about-renewable-energy/>. And, the Cold Climate Housing Research Center in Fairbanks is another example of Alaska innovation, brim with possibility supporting invention, building, and selling re/generative energy systems—providing jobs at each step of the way.

We must examine the claims of benefits upon which the Alaska delegation stake their argument for drilling in the Refuge. The claims are not supported by evidence. Should drilling activities based on falsehoods—ones that would move Alaska and the U.S. backward—still go forward? Should everyone lose—Gwich'in and other Alaska Natives, as well as other Alaskan residents and nationwide—to support the lost and dangerous cause of fossil fuel industry? I think not. It is time to shake free. It is time to look ahead.