



CoastalPlain\_EIS, BLM\_AK <blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_eis@blm.gov>

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## [EXTERNAL] Re: EIS on Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain

1 message

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**John Breiby** <jbreiby44@gmail.com>  
To: BLM\_ak\_coastalplain\_EIS@blm.gov

Thu, May 31, 2018 at 8:15 AM

Please see the attachment below for my comments on the EIS for opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling.

Thank you,

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### 2 attachments



**Letter to the Bureau of Land Management in Protest of Opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Drilling.docx**  
161K



**ATT00001**  
1K

## Re: EIS on Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain—in Protest of Opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Drilling

When I first moved to Alaska, in 1962, I was delighted with the idea that beyond the hills north of Fairbanks there was virtually nothing but wilderness between those hills and the Arctic Ocean. Most of Alaska north of Fairbanks had no major development by man—no cities, just a couple of small, dirt roads, with just a few small villages between Fairbanks and the Arctic Ocean, and it had been so since forever.

The early 1970s brought an end to this naïve vision of untrammelled wilderness. The discovery of oil, the subsequent production at Prudhoe Bay, and the building of the Trans Alaska Pipeline in the early 1970s, was the end of true wilderness on most of the North Slope. Since then, industrialization has spread like a cancer, from Prudhoe Bay outwards to the National Petroleum Reserve, Point Thompson, and other areas, eventually encompassing something like 90 percent of the North Slope, wherever oil could be wrung from the land. The sole exception has been the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that until now has remained undeveloped. But our representatives in Congress have recently buried a provision in tax legislation to open the 1002 area of the Refuge to oil and gas drilling. This has truly been a “camel in the tent” story. If you’re an oil company, and you have your shills in Congress, you get your nose in the tent and keep shoving until you have the whole tent to yourself, and everything else is pushed out.

One of my forebears, about six or seven generations back, had a farm on Manhattan Island, on Broadway, somewhere near 70<sup>th</sup> St. Looking at Manhattan today, it’s a wonder how it was ever possible for it to have once been a wilderness, or even rural enough to have had farms. If we don’t preserve the wilderness we have in Alaska, there will come a time in the not too distant future when we will wonder the same thing about Alaska.

How must the Gwich’in feel about what is proposed for the refuge? They, and their Proto-Athabaskan ancestors, have lived in this area at least since the Bering Land Bridge, 15,000 to 18,000 years ago. That amounts to between 600 and 700 generations, not the paltry one or two generations claimed by most Alaskans. Throughout these long ages the Gwich’in have prospered and succeeded in a harsh environment, living a sustainable life in harmony with Nature, dependent upon the caribou and other bounty the Refuge continues to provide. And here we descend, with our arrogance and greed, and in the span of fifty years want to sweep it all away.

The 1002 area was set aside for further *study*, but with no foregone conclusion that it would be opened for oil development. Being “legal” (if it is) doesn’t make it morally acceptable. On moral grounds, those trying to destroy such a precious, pristine area to industrialization should be found criminally culpable. Who has the right to steamroll over the concerns of the Gwich’in? By right of prior and continued occupancy, should they not have the final say in how the birthplace of the Porcupine caribou herd is treated? Is it not wrong to go against the wishes of the Gwich’in simply because our Congressional representatives and oil corporations say they want more oil?

Indeed, it is a violation of Gwich’in human rights as a sovereign nation. According to United Nations treaties pertaining to the rights of Indigenous people, it is illegal under international law to destroy, against their wishes, what they have depended on for so many thousands of years.

Proponents for drilling say development of these pristine places can be done “in an environmentally sensitive manner,” or words to that effect. Do you suppose my ancestor on Manhattan was told that his farm would be treated in an environmentally sensitive manner before they covered it over with concrete and buildings? That is what will happen if drilling is allowed on the coastal plain. The resultant industrial area will completely change the character of this

area. It will be visible from the highest points of the Brooks Range. It is a foregone conclusion that the caribou will suffer on their birthing grounds, not to mention the millions of migratory birds that fly from five continents to nest here. The lie that development can be done without harm to the environment is just that: a lie. Industrial development will radically alter the coastal plain, forever.

Much has rightly been said about the amazing variety of wildlife and plants in the Refuge—America's Serengeti. Beyond the issue of the Refuge itself, however, is the equally important question of the effect of more oil development on Human Caused Catastrophic Climate Change. Except for nuclear war, this is probably the *MOST* important issue of our day, a not-so-slow-moving disaster, far more important than the petty political squabbles in Washington, which are simply distractions from this most vital of problems to the future of life on Earth. The idea that Congress, the administration, and you, Mr. Zinke, would push for yet more oil development, knowing of, yet ignoring the burgeoning disaster, which, unless checked before it's too late—it may *already* be too late—shows an appalling lack of understanding of *established* climate science.

If your doctor tells you that you have cancer and you go to get further opinions, and 99 out of 100 doctors tells you that, yes, you have cancer, do you go with the opinion of the one doctor who says you don't have cancer, or do you begin treatment? Because that is what we are facing with Climate Change: 99% of climatologists say it is happening, that it is human caused and it is already costing us mightily in human suffering and billions, perhaps trillions, in dollars. We don't need any more oil; there is already too much carbon-based fuel in the world. Take the money that would be invested in drilling in the Refuge and invest it in renewables in Alaska instead—in geothermal, solar, wind and tidal energy.

I have never had the good fortune to go to the Arctic Refuge, and at my age I may never get that chance. However, just because I may never get to experience it myself, that doesn't mean that I want to see it drilled and built upon. It is important for mankind as a whole to simply know that there are places that are inviolate, which should be left alone to develop in peace and at their own pace, as they have for millennia.

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