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[EXTERNAL] Comments on Lease Sale for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

1 message

Carol Blaney <cblaney@gmail.com>

Wed, May 30, 2018 at 8:04 AM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov

Dear BLM officials,

I strongly oppose extracting oil and gas from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and object specifically to the lease sale for these petroleum products in the 1002 area of the Refuge. I also object to an expedited effort to an expedited sale, because this approach will not give this unique and irreplaceable wild refuge its due protection.

Petroleum extraction damages the Earth, no matter how carefully it is done. We have few healthy and pristine wild places left, and the Arctic Refuge is a gem among these. It is simply too beautiful, healthy, and wild to drill. The Refuge is essential to endangered species and other wildlife such as polar bears, musk oxen, Arctic foxes and wolverines. Birds from all 50 states and six continents migrate and breed here. The Porcupine caribou herd also depends on this place and makes one of the largest animal migrations in North America here. The indigenous Gwich'in people have called this land "the sacred place where life begins" and have depended on its bounty for millennia, and rightly so.

The coastal plain is a global treasure worthy of wilderness designation and protection well beyond our lifetimes--not worthy of destruction on our watch.

Here are just a few of the irreversible damages that drilling would cause: Heavy seismic equipment will create scars on the tundra; vulnerable nesting birds will face numerous, inevitable industrial oil spills and increased predation; the Porcupine caribou herd will be impacted by roads and pipelines, displacing the herd from calving grounds on the narrow coastal plain. Any oil and gas program in the Refuge will imperil long-term conservation of a healthy Arctic ecosystem.

The damage done by drilling here is not limited to the Coastal Plain. Instead, it is worldwide. Whatever petroleum products are pulled from the ground here will contribute to climate chaos, which affects all of us.

I know you are under tremendous political pressure to open this place for sale. I also know, as a former Department of Interior employee, that you are likely a proud supporter of public lands. Please take action that will protect these lands.

Here are my requests:

1. Include a "no leasing" alternative in the environmental review for the lease sale.
2. Overall, conduct a thorough, lawful planning process, and clearly explore and explain to the public how fossil fuel development in the coastal plain would impact vital public resources.
3. Fully evaluate the many and cumulative effects of oil and gas leasing, including seismic exploration, drilling and production on the following:
 - a. Migration routes and calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou herd;
 - b. Critical habitat where federally protected polar bears den and raise their cubs;
 - c. Rivers, lakes and streams that shelter Dolly Varden and other valued fish species;

- d. Nesting, feeding and breeding grounds for migratory shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors;
- e. Essential habitat for muskoxen, gray wolves, brown bears and other terrestrial wildlife;
- f. Coastal waters where seals, belugas and bowhead whales live;
- g. Wildlife corridors and the biological integrity of refuge ecosystems; and
- h. Increasing impacts of climate change.

Please take effective action to protect this Refuge for current and future generations of people and other species. Thank you for considering my comments.

Best regards,

Carol Blaney