



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS

1 message

Hilary Eisen <heisen@winterwildlands.org>

Mon, Jun 11, 2018 at 5:22 PM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Dear Ms Hayes,

Winter Wildlands Alliance is opposed to any and all oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. Our more detailed comments on this matter are attached as a pdf.

Thank you,
Hilary Eisen



Hilary Eisen
Policy Director
Winter Wildlands Alliance
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Bozeman, MT 59771
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[donate today to help keep winter wild!](#)

**WWA coastal plain EIS scoping comments.pdf**

481K



June 11, 2018

Nicole Hayes
Project Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513
Submitted via email to blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS

Dear Ms. Hayes,

Winter Wildlands Alliance is dedicated to promoting and preserving winter wildlands and a quality human-powered snowsports experience on public lands. We represent over 50,000 members and 41 grassroots partner organizations in 16 states and our members care deeply about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Winter Wildlands Alliance is opposed to any and all oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. Several of our members, including board members and ambassadors, have travelled through the Refuge in both summer and winter and can personally attest to the unique values of this area. Many more of our members may never have the opportunity to physically set foot in this area but they hold it dear, as one of the nation's, and the globe's, premier wildlands.

While few ever have the opportunity to personally experience the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, this does not diminish the fact that the Refuge is among America's greatest wild treasures. The Coastal Plain is critical to the ecological health of the Refuge; it is also essential to the survival of local people who have lived in the Arctic for thousands of years. For the native Gwich'in people, the Coastal Plain is "the sacred place where life begins" because the Coastal Plain is the calving grounds for the Porcupine caribou herd. The Gwich'in rely on the Porcupine caribou herd for subsistence and drilling on the herd's calving grounds could completely and irreversibly damage this critical habitat, threatening the existence of the Gwich'in people as well as the ecological integrity of the Arctic Refuge.

The Arctic Refuge is home to an incredible array of biodiversity. In addition to caribou, the Refuge is one of the few places on Earth where polar, grizzly, and black bears coexist and the Coastal Plain provides critical habitat for polar bears. More than 200 species of birds depend upon the Arctic Refuge, including many of the migratory species we see outside of Alaska. Birds migrate from the Arctic Refuge to every state and territory in the United States, connecting people from across the United States to this incredible landscape. Altogether, the Refuge is home to 42 fish species, 37 land mammals, 8 marine mammals, and more than 200 bird species. Experts agree that oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain would permanently and irreversibly disrupt the ecological integrity of the Arctic Refuge, threatening all 287+ species that inhabit the area.

The Arctic Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan recommends the entire refuge receive wilderness designation and in 2015, President Obama issued a formal recommendation to Congress that the entire

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refuge be protected as wilderness. Leasing land for oil and gas exploration on the Coastal Plain is contradictory to these recommendations. One only needs to look a mere 60 miles to the west of the coastal plain to see what impact oil and gas drilling has on this environment. The oil fields at Prudoe Bay are among the most technologically advanced in the world, with every conceivable step taken to protect the surrounding Arctic environment, yet this area is irreversibly damaged. Hundreds of toxic spills of crude oil and other hazardous materials seep into Prudhoe Bay and the North Slope every year. Rig fires, drilling, and general oilfield activities cause air and noise pollution. A once-intact coastal plain is fragmented with drill sites, well pads, roads, and other development. Oil and gas development is incompatible with healthy wildlife, wilderness values, and ecological integrity.

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must address the issues beyond simply leasing lands on the coastal plain for oil and gas development. The EIS must also address impacts and issues associated with the development of any leases on the coastal plain. Therefore, the EIS should address the following:

- Whether oil and gas exploration and development on the Coastal Plain is in accordance with the Alaska National Interest Lands Act (ANILCA)
- How oil and gas exploration and development on the Coastal Plain will impact wildlife, particularly the Porcupine caribou herd, migratory birds, and polar bears
- How oil and gas exploration and development will impact traditional subsistence livelihoods of people, especially the Gwich'in, who live in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- How oil and gas exploration and development in the Coastal Plain impacts those who may never visit the Arctic but who value the Refuge for its wilderness character and because it is an intact and healthy ecological system
- Climate change

Once again, Winter Wildlands Alliance is completely opposed to any and all oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. The health of our planet depends upon leaving some landscapes in their natural state. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one such place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary Eisen". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "H" and a long, sweeping underline.

Hilary Eisen
Policy Director