

5/29/18

Fairbanks
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Coastal Plain oil and gas Leasing Program EIS Scoping Meeting

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and participate in this public process. My name is Jennifer Nu, I live in Fairbanks, Alaska. I am a long-term resident of Alaska. I am a food security and food systems researcher as well.

In 2012, my partner and I walked and paddled over across the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, starting at Arctic Village at the southern boundary, across the Brooks Range, and down the Hulahula and across Arey Island to Kaktovik at the refuge's northern boundary. For 15 days and over 200 miles, under our own power, we had the opportunity to experience one of the world's last great wilderness areas. Since then, we have embarked on similar wilderness trips in other parts of this great state, and no other place begins to compare to the diversity, the clean water, and wildlife of the refuge.

Large tract of wilderness perform ecosystems services such as clean water, vegetation, food security for local communities. These intact ecosystems are the best buffer to mitigate the effects of a changing climate. In addition to being the essential calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, which is important for the food security of local communities. This land is meant to be a resource for future generations and we cannot know today what the value and economic potential of its above-ground resources will be for future generations.

Additionally, I encourage the committee to remember that these lands are also indigenous sacred places. As expressed by the Gwich'in people, the refuge is important to the long-term well-being of their people and their communities. As expressed by the Inupiaq people, responsible development is also important. It is important for resources to focus on investment in jobs and economic development needed by these communities through renewable energy options as well as opportunities such as high-end community-based tourism.

Disruption to the ecosystem services and food security by proposed oil and gas drilling in the refuge will have a huge negative impact on the communities that rely on their traditional foods because the traditional food system is a lifestyle that supports people's physical and psychological well-being.

I have confidence that there are other ways that Alaska can develop a new and diversified economy. We need our lawmakers to be open to invest in a new economy now to invest in innovation and ingenuity. These federal lands are protected for the benefit of all Americans, and most of all, those communities who are speaking for themselves. I support the continued protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as a long-term investment in Alaska's future.