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**[EXTERNAL] Scoping comment-Coastal plain: The rush**

1 message

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What is the rush, DOI and BLM?

Any fossil hydrocarbons that might be under the ground of the coastal plain have been there for a very, very long time. They are not going anywhere, and they would be really hard to get out. The haste of administrators, politicians, and a handful of corporations to implement drilling activities in the Refuge is not due to a risk that any existing oil and gas might suddenly disappear or be stolen. So, why move so fast?

Senator Lisa Murkowski admitted publicly that she worked “quietly” to append P.L. 115-97 to the tax bill so as to avoid opposition. This action and attitude points to the reason for the hurry. Those few people who want to get machines into the coastal plain would need to do so before getting stopped by the large majority of U.S. registered voters who do not want this to happen, many having worked for decades to keep drilling out. The machines would need to enter before being halted by the rising multitudes who stand with the Gwich'in Nation and other Alaska Natives, who are aware that oil and gas drilling in the coastal plain would violate their rights and responsibilities, and agreements with them and other Nations. The machines would need to get there before the U.S. citizenry, working through proper democratic and judicial processes, catch up and deter the irreversibility of their wrong-doing.

There is no supportable reason for fossil fuel activities in the coastal plain to go forward than as a show of dominance by the “corporate-industrial mind.”

There are numerous supportable reasons for fossil fuel activities in the coastal plain to be prohibited. Fundamental among them is so that the self-renewing capacities for life of the coastal plain may have the liberty to continue. Primary among the reasons is so that the cotton grass, snow geese, Porcupine Caribou Herd, and Gwich'in People can continue for generation after generation along with a habitable climate upon which all of us depend for food security and flourishing.

The failure, in the first place, of BLM to schedule scoping meetings in each Alaska village—to give voice to everyone who would be most affected by drilling activities—and, given that this is federal land, the failure to schedule meetings in every state of the Nation, is an insult to the diverse membership of this country. The recent rejection by Interior Assistant Secretary Joe Balash of multiple requests from Alaska villages and tribes and of numerous other U.S. citizens for additional scoping meetings and a scoping period extension deepens the offense. Mr. Balash claims that he has heard “consistent messages” that will “inform the development of the EIS” yet ignores the content of those messages. His claims and decisions undermine peoples' trust in a process that is meant to reflect the will of the people while protecting the foundations of this Nation's cultures and prosperity—our land's health, including climate habitability—not that of corporations nor any authoritarian power.

The BLM continues to consider a recent permit application for seismic testing, preliminary to drilling, that a US Fish and Wildlife Service review deemed “not adequate”—with “a lack of applicable details for proper agency review,” unsupported by adequate study and accurate details regarding the effects of seismic work and equipment on the coastal plain lifescape, and, with a timetable that begins machine activities already by Dec. 10, before the EIS is even complete, continuing them into the caribou calving season. This shows reckless disregard for democratic process, the intent and law of NEPA and other pre-existing domestic and international agreements, the rights of the Gwich'in People and other Alaska Natives and, in general, people's trust. These violations are deepened by accompanying lies—that is, by claims of oil and gas politicians, administrators, and corporate industry's managers to be dedicated to “minimizing the effect of our operations on the environment” and to be “careful” and show “environmental responsibility.”

These lies are tied to another lie—that Native Corporations speak for Native tribes. This is not necessarily so. Native Corporations, including Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and Kaktovik Inupiat Corp., who (with SAExploration) submitted the first and grossly inadequate seismic testing application, speak for industry interests—that is, for profit. To respect what Native Peoples want, the tribal leaders—including the Gwich'in Nation's consensus against drilling in the coastal plain—must be heard, and must count.

I adamantly object to the haste and attitude with which the BLM under the DOI is administering P.L. 115-97. The speed and “corporate mind” controlling this process is democratically erosive, culturally exclusive, and environmentally reckless.

Who is hearing this comment, and, who is responding so that it matters? Show us.