



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Scoping comment-Coastal plain: Food security, military, resilience1 message

Julianne Warren <coyotetrail.net@gmail.com>

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To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

"Historically," writes Pete Peter in the June 8 Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, "the Porcupine Caribou Herd has always been food on the table for the Gwich'in people. We need 'grandfather rights' for the guaranteed security to fresh, healthy, organic meat source." Caribou makes up 80% of Gwich'in diet. Caribou is the lifeblood of the Gwich'in People. The flourishing of the Herd is their food security. It is their right, their responsibility to keep, and their freedom.

Pete Peter goes on to make another point. The Porcupine Caribou Herd, one of North America's largest and healthiest herds, has also helped to sustain members of the US military during the Cold War—providing food, clothing and tools. The US military established cold weather survival schools in the Gwich'in villages of Arctic Village and Venetie, after learning a hard lesson in the Aleutians. There, during World War II, Peter points out, 30% of US troops, about 2100 men, were taken out of action as victims of harsh weather. Ensuring adequate "clothing...and Soldiers' hydration and nutritional requirements" are key to survival in cold conditions, according to the US Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center. For those in the US Military defending and training in Alaska, the caribou are their food security. The Herd is their, and thus the right of all of this country, our responsibility to keep, and our liberty.

The Gwich'in People and other Alaska Natives have survived and thrived in the harshest conditions for millennia. Now, all of us face unprecedented and unpredictable consequences of climate warming, happening most dramatically in the Arctic. It is prudent to learn from those who have successful long-term experience adapting to difficult weather circumstances. The best "guarantee" of food security for the Gwich'in Nation, other Alaska Native tribes (in contrast with Native corporations), and all of us, is no drilling in the coastal plain. The Gwich'in Nation, members of other Alaska Native tribes, and 70% of registered US voters are opposed to drilling in the coastal plain of the Refuge. We are *for* keeping the resilient, self-renewing health of this area intact, including the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which is a major food source that would be diminished if not extinguished by oil and gas activities.

This is not a matter of "environmentalists" v. "industry" this is a matter precaution v. recklessness in managing risk to the sacred foundations of health and life, to food security, human nutrition, and survival in difficult conditions.

What we need now is not more of the stuff creating extreme weather circumstances, but more wits about us keeping the health of the land that funds human lives and cultures.

The BLM must seek out, listen to, and heed the deep-knowing advice of Alaska Native Peoples. The BLM must uphold the rights of their grandfathers and future generations, and of all of us.