



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Scoping comment-Coastal Plain-Intact world economy

1 message

Julianne Warren <coyotetrail.net@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 12, 2018 at 10:32 AM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Bernadette Demientieff, Gwich'in Steering Committee Executive Director, said, in a May 23 "Your Call" radio interview, that the coastal plain "ecosystem is too sensitive" for oil and gas drilling. "Not just for structures...roads...If there is an oil spill, there's just no way to take that back," she stressed. "It'll do too much damage especially for all the different animals that are there." Birds from all 50 U.S. states and 6 continents migrate to and from the Refuge. Some 70 species nest on the coastal plain. These include, for instance, buff-breasted sandpipers who travel from and to Argentina. These nutmeg-colored birds raise their dark-feathered wings and dance when they arrive to the Arctic spring. Their whole world population, because of past market-hunting and diminished wintering habitat, is now only about 15,000 strong. Building oil works in the drier coastal plain where these sandpipers tend to nest would be a grave threat to their whole existence.

Then, too, there are the more famous snow geese--some 300,000 of them depend on the coastal plain cotton grass, horsetails, willows, and other plants and fly larvae for 80% of the food that fattens them for migration between their nests in western Arctic Canada and their wintering grounds in the Southern US and Mexico.

"Some of the bird droppings," explains Bernadette, "help...the grass [and other plants] grow that feed the [Porcupine] Caribou" who feed her People. "So, it's all connected," she says, "even the whales...will migrate there [nearshore in the Beaufort Sea] and they go to the bottom of the ocean and they clean themselves." Inupiat tribes, Gwich'in neighbors, are entwined with the whales. And, with climate-warmed, melting sea ice thwarting polar bear hunting, the bears depend all the more on sharing remains of whales harvested by the Inupiat People. "It's an amazing place," Bernadette tries to put into words, the coastal plain, "it's very sacred to us."

This is a world economy that human economies cannot exist without. This is a world economy or reciprocities that unites all of us. Buff-breasted sandpipers and snow geese deliver the nutrients of South American insects and seeds and Mexican berries and sedges to the coastal plain to fertilize the cotton grass and other plants. Having soaked up the midnight sun, the birds carry it's energy back south. The coastal plain grass thus fed, feeds not only the avian migrants, but also the caribou cows nursing their calves. The calves get strong for their own journey, carrying coastal plain nutrients to Gwich'in People of Alaska and Canada, neighbors of Inupiat villages fed by the Beaufort Sea whales who ferry nutrients between the coastal plain and ocean waters. All the while, in a complex self-organization, countless breathing life forms exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide with the atmosphere and oceans helping create a habitable climate and waters (over ages, drawing carbon into fossil stores underground). A habitable climate and waters is the security of everyone from New York to Wisconsin, from Wisconsin to the Bering Strait, from Russia to New Zealand, wrapping the planet.

The will to exchange a bit of oil and gas and fuel and cash must be evaluated in relation to the coastal plain real-world economy that holds everything together. Recognizing how the prudential and sacred values of the intact, natural economy of the coastal plain are unique and local as well as globe-encompassing makes the very idea of drilling in this area unthinkable. This must be recognized in the BLM's process.