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[EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Oil and Gas Drilling in the ANWR

1 message

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I am opposed to oil and gas drilling in the ANWR for many reasons.

Most importantly, we must curb as much oil and gas production as possible, in order to halt or slow down global warming. A 2014 US Department of Energy study found 78% of US global warming emissions were energy-related, with 42% from oil and 27% from natural gas. We may have a very short period of time to do this, as little as one to twenty years to prevent runaway global warming with dire consequences to all living creatures, including ourselves. Consequences include more extreme weather events, significant increase in desertification (making parts of the world uninhabitable, with widespread famine and huge numbers of climate refugees), acidification of oceans killing off many species including ones we eat, negative health effects like the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses and the release of pathogens in melting permafrost, coastal flooding, and the worst die-off of species since the loss of the dinosaurs. We must ramp up our reliance on renewable energy instead.

The ANWR is one of the last wild places in the US and is home to many animals including Porcupine Caribou, polar bears, and large flocks of migratory birds. It is a fragile area that has been set aside as a wildlife refuge. Drilling for oil and gas will cause irreversible damage to the tundra by 3-D seismic surveys, massive infrastructure, and machines, according to Vladimir Romanovsky, a permafrost expert at the University of Alaska. In addition, oil spills are likely. Oil spills are common in nearby oil fields of Prudhoe Bay. Although the legislation which permits the drilling states the surface land affected is limited to 2000 acres, in actuality with all the infrastructure it is likely to spread to 640,000 acres as it did in Prudhoe Bay. Drilling in this area will keep the caribou from reaching their calving grounds, and may disrupt the birthing and rearing of endangered polar bear cubs. According to Joel K Bourne, Jr., in a National Geographic article (12/19/17), state of Alaska biologists have found that caribou calf survival is very low when herds are displaced, threatening the very survival of the species.

Alaska Inter-Tribal Council representing 229 Native American tribes has officially opposed any development in the ANWR. This is the homeland of the Gwich'in. Luci Beach, executive director of the steering committee for Native Alaskan and Canadian Gwich'in, indicates that 60-70% of the diet of the Gwich'in comes from the land, with caribou being one of the primary sources.

US oil companies already have permission to drill on millions of unexplored areas. Why add such a pristine and fragile area? The Trump administration's argument is that it will help to ensure energy independence which will make our nation more secure. It seems to me that extracting huge quantities of oil and gas annually is foolish from this perspective. There is only so much oil and gas in the world and we will need a certain amount of it for the unforeseeable future. We can probably not be 100% reliant on renewable energy for some time because there are days when the sun doesn't shine and there is no wind. With this proposal, we are cheaply squandering a limited resource, making us more reliant on foreign sources when ours dries up. The only real way to be energy independent is to decrease our dependence on oil and gas by converting to as close to 100% renewables as soon as possible.

Drilling in the ANWR is supposed to be a way to pay for the tax cuts recently passed which is creating a \$1.5T deficit. Alaskan Senator Murkowski states that drilling will create \$2B in royalties over the next 10 years, one half of which will go to the federal government. The Center for American Progress has determined that only \$37.5M will result. But no financial benefit is worth the cost to the environment and threatening our very existence, especially for an unnecessary tax cut that basically only benefits corporations already awash in cash, and the top 1%.

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