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**[EXTERNAL] Arctic Refuge EIS - in opposition of drilling**

1 message

**Cat Coward** <scatycaty@gmail.com>  
To: blm\_ak\_coastalplain\_EIS@blm.gov

Sun, Jun 17, 2018 at 10:03 PM

Dear BLM,

Thank you for taking my comments about development and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I live in Anchorage and was out of town during the public hearing on May 30th. Please consider this email as my public testimony.

My husband, son, and I have spent many summers visiting ANWR and its coastal plain. Unlike the description given by many drilling proponents, the coastal plain of ANWR is not a barren wasteland. By contrast, it is teeming with life. We have seen bears, wolves, wolverine, sheep, muskox, multiple species of birds, and of-course the famed porcupine caribou heard. One of our most remarkable memories of hiking through ANWR was meeting approximately 20,000 caribou of the herd traveling up into the mountains as we were heading down towards the plains. As we hiked, the animals literally swarmed around us for several hours. This animal encounter was both breath taking and exhilarating. After the caribou had passed, we were left basking in this rare and magical experience.

One of our trips involved rafting down the Canning River, which borders ANWR on the west. The difference of the tundra on the refuge side of the river versus the non-refuge side of the river was dramatic. The refuge is pristine. No sign of human development at all. By contrast, on the west side of the Canning, we could see tire ruts and rusted oil cans from oil exploration as long as 40 years ago.

There are several problems with opening up the refuge's coastal plain to drilling:

1. Drilling proponents claim that only a minimal percentage of the coast plain will be affected by the drilling. The veracity of this claim is dependent upon perspective. If you add up the combined total square footage of each drilling platform, then it is correct to say that the total acreage will be small. However, this is extremely misleading at best, and deceptive at worst. In reality, these small drilling platforms will be spread out across the entire refuge in a patchwork fashion, linked by roads. In fact, the entire coastal plain will be forever altered and scarred, not just a small percentage of it, as our politicians would lead us to believe.
2. Drilling proponents also rightfully explain that there are advanced drilling techniques (directional, or slant, drilling) which can be used to drill from outside the refuge into the coastal plain without any affect to the surface of the plain itself. Were it obligatory to utilize this technique when drilling in the refuge, I would have no issue with opening the refuge to drilling. However, the technique is more expensive than traditional direct drilling, nor is it required, and therefore it is unrealistic that oil companies would use it. To cite directional drilling in the argument to drill in the refuge is insincere and dishonest.
3. Thanks in part to fracking in the lower 48, the US currently has a glut of oil and gas. We do not currently need the oil that is under the refuge. At some point, as oil supplies in the lower 48, and elsewhere around the globe, begin to dwindle, the oil under the refuge will become all the more valuable. Why give away a commodity now at a low price, when it can be saved for later and sold at higher prices? In addition, waiting to drill in ANWR allows for an improvement of drilling techniques, such as directional drilling, which make it more likely to access the oil under the refuge without damaging the surface.
4. The trend towards renewable energy is reaching a tipping point throughout the globe. The country that gains dominance over renewables will lead the world economically in this arena. We need to focus on creating jobs and growing our economy with solar, hydro, tidal and wind energy. These sources, which Alaska has in abundance, are already being used worldwide. Though the US has a growing industry for some renewables, we are behind many industrialized nations in research and development of these techniques and resources. Let's put our focus on jobs creation in the renewable energy arena.

Now is not the time to open ANWR to oil and gas development. The land is too fragile and untouched. The drilling techniques, though available, are too expensive to be likely used to safeguard the land. The oil beneath the refuge will command a much higher price if we wait to extract. Focus should be on leading the world in the trending use of renewable energy sources. For these reasons, I urge you to oppose drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR Mail - [EXTERNAL] Arctic Refuge EIS - in opposition of drilling

Thank you,  
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