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[EXTERNAL] Comment on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge leasing proposal1 message

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June 15, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke

Secretary of the Interior

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am writing to submit comment as part of the scoping process for the Bureau of Land Management's Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain. As a business leader and job creator in all 50 states, I strongly value the importance of public lands to our nation's quality of life, and vehemently oppose any oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge.

Like democracy itself, the concept of publicly owned and protected land has been a unique and unassailable aspect of the American experiment. From vast National Monuments that dot the American West to the smallest municipal park, our country has set a worldwide precedent for the protection of natural wilderness, wildlife, and resources.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the crown jewel of the United States' federal lands - perhaps the most beautiful and unspoiled area left on Earth, and it deserves to be left this way.

I've personally visited the Arctic Refuge on 20 occasions since 1999. On my trips I've witnessed indescribable beauty that I carry with me to this day – sights like 20,000 caribou feeding under the midnight sun, or hundreds of species of birds that have literally migrated from the other side of the world. Additionally, the Refuge is home to the densest population of polar bears in the United States. Any of these animals would be catastrophically harmed by oil and gas development disrupting their habitats.

For nearly sixty years, the Arctic Refuge has been protected by a bipartisan coalition of elected officials who understood that it is meant to be cherished and preserved. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower set the precedent in 1960 when he established the Refuge, and since then leaders in both parties have fought for protection.

Earlier this decade, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service conducted a rigorous assessment that resulted in a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain. Among other recommendations, the Plan called for the Coastal Plain to be officially designated as wilderness.

The Arctic Refuge's status has been expanded or affirmed every decade since its inception – but now, it faces a truly existential threat.

Proponents of drilling in Congress had to attach it to an unrelated must-pass massive rewriting of the U.S. tax code. They had to make sure it avoided normal rules for passage and debate. They had to lie and mislead about its economic and environmental impact. They had to hold votes at 2 AM on legislation that no one had even seen.

They cut all of these corners because they knew that a standalone vote on drilling in the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain would fail, and that the American public overwhelmingly opposes drilling. But Congress was willing to ignore the will of the people, ignore the science, and ignore the heritage of the Gwich'in people so they could pass unrelated tax cuts.

As the Bureau of Land Management moves forward with the EIS process, it is imperative that every applicable law and regulations be satisfied before this ill-advised proposal proceeds. There should be no further loopholes or special considerations given. The American people deserve a fair and transparent process that follows both the spirit and letter of the law.

In short, this is a terrible precedent – making one of the primary purposes of a National Wildlife Refuge the development of oil and gas. This is wholly inconsistent and contrary to the purposes and rich history of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and an awful statement of how we, as Americans, value our public lands.

I firmly oppose any development of the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge, but if consideration moves forward, it must strictly follow all laws and regulations governing National Wildlife Refuges in the United States. It's clear that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge should be preserved and protected for future generations to enjoy it. As an American who places a deep value on our public land, I implore you to not advance drilling in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Sincerely,

Tom Campion

Chairman & Co-Founder

Zumiez Inc.