



CoastalPlain_EIS, BLM_AK <blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov>

[EXTERNAL] Re: Comments on the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program, Alaska

1 message

Margi Dashevsky <margueritedashevsky@gmail.com>
To: blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov

Thu, May 10, 2018 at 11:48 PM

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To: Ms. Nicole Hayes
Cc: Acting State Director Karen Mouritsen
Arctic NWR Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS
Bureau of Land Management
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13
Anchorage, AK 99513
907-271-4354, blm_ak_coastalplain_eis@blm.gov

May 10, 2018

Dear Ms. Hayes and Ms. Mouritsen,

I am writing you to express my opposition to ANY oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. My letter is in response to the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental impact Statement for the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program, Alaska.

I am an Alaskan who opposes oil exploration and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge because I grew up valuing the vast wild lands of my home because they are vital to the health of my community. My middle name, Nularvik, is a river that flows from the Arctic Refuge's mountain peaks to the coastal plain, the sacred birthing ground of the Porcupine Caribou herd, the lifeblood for the Gwich'in people. I've spent over half my life fighting for the Arctic Refuge and I'm not about to stop.

I was 16 when I first started raising awareness about the threats oil development poses to the Arctic Refuge by screening films, giving power point presentations, and filling petitions that I mailed to Alaska's senators in Washington DC. The problem with battles like this is that even though we've won time and time again for decades we only have to lose once for irreparable harm to be done to a vital and incredibly fragile ecosystem.

Seismic trails left from oil exploration on the delicate coastal plain have permanently altered the tundra vegetation and the underlying hydrology. You can see the scars from space. I should know because most summers of my life my mom has been out on the tundra, studying these scars by ground-truthing the satellite data she analyzes during the winter. Her research has documented permanent damage left by 15% of the trails from winter seismic exploration carried out in 1982-1984. Changes in technology mean that we can expect even more intense

seismic impacts from exploration activities conducted in the future. Seismic exploration reduces the diversity of the plant communities and destroys lichen. Caribou depend on lichen. Not only could oil exploration and development on the coastal plain disturb the caribou during their sensitive calving period, but it could reduce their food at this especially critical time.

Protecting the Arctic Refuge, and fighting climate change by leaving that oil in the ground, is a matter of human rights. For the Gwich'in Nation protecting the Arctic Refuge is a matter of food security, self-determination, and ultimately cultural survival.

I am particularly concerned about the impacts that oil and gas activities would have on the four purposes the Arctic Refuge was specifically established in 1960 to fulfill: (a) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity; (b) to fulfill the international fish and wildlife treaty obligations of the United States; (c) to provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and (d) to ensure water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.

No oil and gas activities are compatible with achieving these four criteria, much less preserving the overall wilderness values. Any leasing program needs to analyze the cumulative impacts destructive seismic exploration has by melting permafrost and permanently altering vegetation and hydrology. Any leasing program needs to analyze the cumulative impacts any exploration and development activities could have on migratory birds, on fish, on caribou, on polar bears, on wolverines, on lynx, on all wildlife, down to the littlest shrews. Any leasing program needs to analyze the cumulative impacts on subsistence use of all affected users. Any leasing program needs to analyze the cumulative impacts oil activities would have on water quality and quantity and related aquatic resources.

I am concerned that if you do not address these issues that irreparable harm will be done to our state and global climate. I will not stand idly by and let the Arctic Refuge be destroyed for the short-term interests of oil companies and the selfish greed of a few people at the expense of the majority, not to mention future generations.

Ms. Hayes and Ms. Mouritsen, please don't passively bear witness to this senseless destruction and please incorporate my concerns, and your own, to the fullest extent possible.

Sincerely,

Margi Dashevsky, M. Ed.