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[EXTERNAL] Comment opposed to offshore oil and gas sales in the Beaufort Sea1 message

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Tue, Mar 12, 2019 at 4:36 PM

To: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov

Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

I strongly oppose the Department of Interior's proposed 2019 offshore oil and gas lease sales in the Beaufort Sea. These pristine waters are a national treasure, one reason they are permanently protected under the law. I am deeply concerned that the administration is auction these waters off to oil drilling, and I urge you to immediately reverse course.

The Arctic Ocean and the Beaufort Sea are rich feeding grounds essential for wildlife, including walrus, polar bears, sea birds, belugas, seals and many threatened or endangered animals. Introducing risky oil drilling to this area would put countless wildlife in danger.

There is a high risk of oil spills in the Beaufort Sea's rugged and remote waters, and there is no proven way to clean up a spill under the extreme conditions of the Arctic. A spill would blanket the area with a deadly slick of toxic crude that would linger for decades and would be devastating for people and wildlife.

Also, as climate change worsens, especially in the Arctic, where warming is happening faster than other places, we must be scaling back our reliance on fossil fuels and investing instead in clean and renewable energy -- not locking in decades of carbon pollution in the Arctic or anywhere else.

I oppose this lease sale and urge you to reverse course and keep the Beaufort Sea permanently off-limits to oil and gas leasing. Thank you.

Ari van Schilfgaarde