

Arctic Drilling DEIS Testimony

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My name is Mary Anne Hitt, and I am here in firm opposition to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which this DEIS will enable as currently written. I have personally visited the Refuge and have floated 300 miles of the Porcupine River, from Old Crow to Fort Yukon. I can say from personal experience that this area is a national treasure that would be devastated by oil drilling. Opening up the Arctic Refuge to oil drilling would not only destroy this magnificent place, but it would also be a human rights crime against the Gwich'in people, who have relied on the Porcupine caribou herd for thousands of years.

My dear friend Lenny Kohm, who passed away a few years ago, traveled this nation enlisting people in protecting the Arctic Refuge from the ravages of oil exploration and drilling. He always said that if everyone could just visit the Arctic for themselves, and meet the Gwich'in who have been stewards of that land for generations, that no American would ever condone allowing oil drilling in the Refuge. So he did the next best thing – he brought the Arctic Refuge to his fellow Americans, wherever they lived, traveling across the US with Gwich'in friends with a slideshow presentation to spread the word and enlist their support.

Unlike most of the 20,000 Americans who saw Lenny's presentation, I had the rare privilege of traveling to the Arctic Refuge with Lenny myself, and what I experienced there changed my life. I came away from that trip confident that the Arctic Refuge is one of our nation's greatest treasures, and that allowing oil drilling there would be an unforgivable sin against the Gwich'in people, and against future generations of Americans.

The BLM's draft environmental impact statement in no way provides an accurate or adequate assessment of the negative impacts oil and gas drilling will have on resident and migratory wildlife, ecosystems and indigenous communities. Please reject the DEIS, go back to the drawing board, and take measures to protect this national treasure. Your children and grandchildren are watching.