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Sierra Club
Testimony DOI Arctic Drilling dEIS Hearing
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My name is Lena Moffitt, and I am the Senior Director of the Sierra Club's Our Wild America Campaign, and I'm here representing our 3.5 million members and supporters across the country to oppose this proposal to drill in the Arctic Refuge.

This outrageous proposal must not go forward. This rushed and deeply flawed draft environmental impact statement dramatically underestimates the very real and lasting damage that drilling would have on the refuge, its wildlife, the people that depend on them and on our climate. We understand that Republicans in Congress, fueled by their patrons in the fossil fuel industry, made clear their intention to see this place destroyed by drilling when they passed the provision opening the refuge in the tax bill, but your charge is to arm the public and decision-makers with a real accounting of the impacts of those actions, and this dEIS falls far short.

Because the facts are clear - drilling in the refuge in *not* in the public interest.

First off, our planet is seeing the devastating impacts of climate change, and we need to be weaning ourselves off of all fossil fuels - not opening up even more extreme, disastrous sources of them, like oil and gas from the refuge. Climate-related disasters cost the US more than \$300 billion dollars in 2017 alone - the same year that Trump pulled us out of the Paris climate agreement, making us the only developed country on the planet to continue denying the facts of climate science. Last year saw some of the deadliest climate-fueled wildfires in history, with people burning to death in their cars while trying to escape. Entire villages in Alaska are faced with forced relocation because their homelands are literally falling into the sea as the oceans rise. And yet this proposal would make that disaster worse - pulling billions of barrels of oil out of the Arctic refuge would add the same climate pollution to our atmosphere as 898 coal plants for one year.

And the thing is, we simply DO NOT need to continue our reliance on the fossil fuels that are causing this climate disaster. WE HAVE the solutions, they're ready to go. Global electric vehicle sales increased by 54% in 2017, with countries like China leading the way, committing to ban *all* internal combustion engine sales by 2040. They're following the lead of countries like France and England, who have committed to the same. And clean energy and battery storage technologies are increasingly powering homes and businesses around the world - in the US alone, the clean energy sector employs 800,000 people. This is not a question of technological feasibility, it's a question of political will.

And yet - this proposal would do the *opposite* - our analysts have calculated that, if fully extracted and burned, all the oil under the refuge would emit the same amount of carbon

pollution as *adding* 776 million new internal combustion engine cars to the road. Exactly the opposite kind of investment we need to be making if we hope to avoid an all out catastrophe for our climate.

Second, drilling in the Arctic Refuge would destroy one of the last truly wild places on the planet, a place we have specifically protected because of its unique value to wildlife and the huge number of species that depend on it. The refuge is home to 200 bird species and 37 land mammals, including grizzly bears, polar bears, wolves, foxes, musk ox, dall sheep, wolverines, caribou, and many, more. And some of the worlds most pre-eminent polar bear scientists, who offered technical comments on the misguided proposal to conduct seismic testing in the refuge - which we are thrilled to hear is not going to go forward this winter - would mean 90,000 pound thumper trucks dragging their weight back and forth across the tundra and blasting the ground with seismic waves - would run a very real risk of running over denning polar bear mothers and their babies and crushing them. That is not something that the american public would support - in fact, poll after poll shows that the vast majority of Americans do oppose drilling in the refuge.

And all of that, *clearly*, should be enough for any truly impartial decision-maker to see that this is not in the public interest, but drilling here would not only hasten the climate crisis which poses an existential threat to our entire planet and *all* species on it, but it also poses a very specific, direct threat to the Gwich'in people, as we've heard from leaders earlier today. The Arctic Refuge is the ancestral homeland of the Gwich'in people. It's home to the porcupine caribou herd that uses this exact spot of the refuge to go and calve, as any mother knows is a sensitive process during which they can easily be disturbed. And there is NO way that this drilling could happen without impacting the caribou, without negatively impacting this pristine environment, without having hurting the way of life of the Gwich'in people. Drilling in the arctic refuge is not just an environmental issue, it is a human rights issue. As my friend Bernadette Demientieff with the Gwich'in Steering Committee says, her people are fighting for this place because they are fighting for their way of life, for their very existence - and they are not going to stop fighting for it. And we are here to stand with them and we ask you to listen to them.

Thank you.