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2019 MAR 12 PM 12:02

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BLM, Alaska State Office  
Attention - Coastal Plain EIS  
222 West 7th Avenue, #13  
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599

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Attention—Coastal Plain EIS  
222 West 7th Avenue, #13  
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Comments on Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Draft EIS

I am writing today as a biologist, parent, American taxpayer and Woolsey Fire survivor to express my vehement opposition to drilling within the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I am deeply concerned about ANWR, the people & wildlife that live there, and especially the impact of drilling and burning more fossil fuels on the worsening global Climate Breakdown which threatens all of humanity.

The DEIS significantly underestimates the amount of carbon pollution that oil leasing and development would add to our shared atmosphere, and it fails to truthfully address the implications of the program's significant effects on exacerbating a Climate Crisis that is ALREADY an existential threat to all life on our planet.

At a time when the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the United States, burning the oil in the Refuge would be the carbon equivalent of adding 776 million more cars to the road. The precipitous loss of biodiversity which the planet is currently experiencing as a result of global warming threatens worldwide ecological collapse and thus the disintegration of the natural systems on which humans also depend for our survival.

As a taxpayer who lives in a community uncomfortably close to those devastated by the Christmas 2017 Thomas Fire, I will never forget how the Santa Ana Winds, which normally last only 2-3 days maximum, blew for an unheard of 13 days that year ... fanning the 3rd largest wildfire in California history. Hundreds of millions of dollars were lost as multiple fires burned through the December holidays & into January, ravaging not just the so-called "wildland-urban interface" but annihilating whole neighborhoods and towns. Every night before I dared fall asleep, I checked the progress of the fires online to reassure myself that my family was not in immediate danger. And I worried constantly how my daughter, who suffers from asthma, would be able to breathe the contaminated air (which had everyone I knew congested, coughing & complaining of headaches) without life-threatening consequences.

Less than a year after the devastating Thomas Fire, the insured residential and commercial losses from the Carr and Mendocino Complex fires topped \$845 million, placing them among the most destructive wildfires in our state's history. And as of September, California had already blown through our annual firefighting budget for 2018!

That was all BEFORE the Woolsey Fire forced my family and 250,000 of our neighbors to evacuate our homes, and BEFORE the deadly Camp Fire incinerated the entire town of Paradise, burning residents alive as they attempted to flee.

As the 2017/18 California fires make clear, NONE of our communities are secure from flaming embers in hurricane-force winds, where even the dehydrated root systems of our landscape act as a subterranean conduit for raging wildfire. Our collective security smolders along with our state's now year-round fire season, especially as higher temperatures, lower humidity, more drought-parched fuel, and ever scarcer water make them increasingly difficult to defend.

There has been bipartisan opposition to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for several decades and nearly two-thirds of Americans are opposed to such drilling. To begin drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is irresponsible, immoral and contradictory to what science warns we must do to maintain the habitability of vast portions of our planet.

Continuing the expansion of oil drilling will only deepen the climate crisis, fueling more hurricanes, extreme heat, drought & wildfires, while accelerating sea-level rise. We need to end polluting drilling now ... and new drilling in our most sensitive ecosystems is particularly unconscionable.

BLM must reject ALL new fossil fuel infrastructure in favor of BOLD, impactful climate solutions that transition our societies & economies quickly & completely to 100% clean, safe, renewable energy. .

Additionally and significantly:

\*Oil leasing and development would destroy the wild quality of both the Coastal Plain and adjacent designated Wilderness lands in the Arctic Refuge. The DEIS fails to truthfully explain what would be lost by opening the Arctic Refuge to oil leasing and development.

- The DEIS fails to describe how oil leasing and development would destroy the Arctic Refuge's ecological integrity which has flourished since the beginning of time.

- The DEIS fails to fully assess the significant impacts oil leasing and development would have on caribou, especially when caribou are most vulnerable to disturbance—during critical times of calving and raising young.

- Oil leasing and development on the Coastal Plain would cause caribou populations to decline, which would have significant ramifications over a vast area of Alaska and Canada, and these effects would persist beyond the estimated 130 years of exploitation. The DEIS fails to address this reality and its effects on indigenous people.

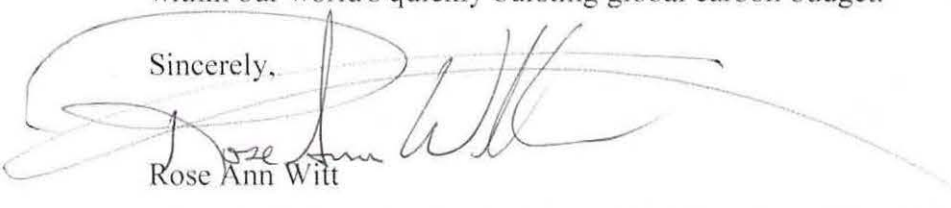
- Fresh water is relatively limited on the Refuge Coastal Plain, however the DEIS does not adequately assess the impacts that industry's water use would have on fish and wildlife.

- The DEIS does not thoroughly assess the cumulative effects of oil leasing and development within the Refuge and with current and expanding development across the North Slope and offshore in the Arctic region.

- The DEIS fails to fulfill NEPA requirements, and therefore BLM cannot authorize leasing.

Please put a stop to this recklessly shortsighted and wholly irresponsible attempt to drill our Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil we don't need and can't use if we are to live within our world's quickly bursting global carbon budget.

Sincerely,



Rose Ann Witt