
From: Hayes, Miriam (Nicole) <mnhayes@blm.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2019 4:02 PM
To: coastalplainAR; Sean Cottle
Subject: Fwd: [EXTERNAL] Tax Law of 2017 (section 20001 of PL115-97)

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From: **alice** <alevineed@aol.com>
Date: Tue, Mar 12, 2019 at 2:52 PM
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Tax Law of 2017 (section 20001 of PL115-97)
To: <mnhayes@blm.gov>

I urge you to consider that The Tax Law of 2017 (Section 20001 of PL 115-97) if allowed to proceed, will destroy the heart of the Arctic refuge , specifically the Arctic Coastal Plain. Table 3-31 on DEIS 3-209 lists the purposes for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), including the goals

- (i) To conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity
- (ii) To fulfill the international fish and wildlife treaty obligations of the US
- (iii) To provide the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents
- (iv) To ensure water quality and necessary water quantity in the refuge
- (v) To provide for an oil and gas program on the Coastal Plain.

That last clause is the equivalent of a death sentence for the Arctic Coastal Plain.

This fragile ecosystem faces a great threat from climate change. By its very nature, oil and gas development will only exacerbate climate change. The BLM has been faced with an impossible task as it is not possible to implement an oil and gas leasing program and its subsequent development that is consistent with the purposes of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The BLM's efforts to authorize oil and gas leasing in the Coastal Plain are beyond what the BLM is required to consider. Conducting an environmental impact statement on an area that is the breeding and nesting ground for hundreds of thousands of birds as well as on the Porcupine Caribou herd. The wildlife that depends on this plain come from six continents and all 50 states. By offering public meetings only in Alaska and one in Washington, D.C., the government does not begin to address the concerns of all of the the citizens of the United States. There has not been an opportunity

to speak in any substantial way outside of Alaska. All those who value, care, and who might be affected by the impact oil and gas leasing will have on Alaska Native/First Nations peoples and wildlife have a right to speak beyond this short comment period. Specifically, this DEIS is deficient, misleading, or inaccurate in many respects.

- The 2,000-acre disturbance limit

Each sale offer for lease was to include at least 400,000 acres of the highest hydrocarbon potential, which is approximately 25 percent of the program area. WHY is the DEIS offering “from 66 to 100 percent of the 1.56 million-acre Coastal Plain” (DEIS unnumbered page following letter from Ted A. Murphy). However, the Tax Law set an upper limit of “surface disturbance” to 2,000-acres “to be covered by production and support facilities, including airstrips and areas covered by gravel berms or piers for support of pipelines. This seems to imply a relatively small footprint. In reality, it would not be clustered in a specific area but would be spread out. There would be several facilities connected by a network of gravel or ice roads and pipelines.

More than 200 miles of gravel road would be needed [under Alternative B] to connect facilities” (Vol. 1, 3-221). The DEIS states that “Typical gravel roads in the Arctic require 7.5 acres of surface disturbance per mile (BLM 2012)” (Vol. 2, B-16). That means 1,560 acres would effectively be disturbed just for gravel roads under Alternative B! These roads would be barriers to caribou movement and migration and would impact surface water, vegetation, and permafrost.

The DEIS admits that the impacts to the environment and wildlife are substantial from gravel mining. “Impacts of gravel mining on physiography would last beyond the development phase because the pits remaining from gravel extraction would typically not be completely backfilled, and any remaining depression could fill with water and become a permanent lake” (Vol. 1, 3-26). The problem with that scenario is that a newly formed lake would then become a heat source that would further damage the permafrost.

Appendix B.7.5, the section on Abandonment and Reclamation states, “Gravel from pads and roads would be removed and reused in other areas or placed back in the gravel mine it was extracted from.” BUT gravel cannot be removed from pads and roads and reused or replaced without causing even more surface disturbance to the wilderness and “outstandingly value of the Coastal Plain would be completely scarred by gravel mining and gravel roads.

All of the action alternatives offer considerably more acreage than is required by the Tax Act. The DEIS gives no reason why it is offering 66 to 100 percent of the 1.56 million-acre Coastal Plain for leasing purposes in the action alternatives, when Congressional direction only stipulated “at least” 400,000 acres be offered—just 25 percent of the total program area.

This DEIS ignores the traditional knowledge of the Gwich’in and Iñupiat, whose roots go back 12,000 years; the Alaska Native/First Nations peoples say that any development in the program area would have devastating effects on the population of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, migratory birds, and fish. This knowledge has been passed down through generations, and they have seen the effects of oil and gas development on the rest of the North Slope.

The DEIS correctly states that “climate change can be understood as an environmental justice issue,” citing the Iñupiaq who are disproportionately affected by it because of their subsistence activities on the North Slope and the Gwich’in communities of Arctic Village and Venetie, because climate change threatens their way of life (Vol. 1, 3-195). However, the DEIS then avoids addressing the potential impacts by dispersing the answer to the question of “whether the potential environmental effects of post-lease oil and gas activities would be disproportionately high and adverse” — which makes hunting for the answer exceptionally difficult. It states: “In all cases, future development would affect subsistence uses of resources of major importance for the subsistence study communities.” Furthermore, potential impacts to the Porcupine Caribou Herd could be more intense “because of their lack of previous exposure to oil field development” (Vol. 1, 3-169).

I would, in addition, like to address the issue of water quantity. How much water will be needed for oil and gas development and where will it come from? When ANWR was first established under ANILCA, one of its specific purposes was to ensure

“water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge” to conserve fish, wildlife and habitats. This DEIS must demonstrate adherence to that purpose and show how lease sales will not impact water quality and quantity. BUT The DEIS does not provide estimates on how much water will be required for drilling wells. Fresh water is scarce on the Coastal Plain; lakes and rivers could never supply the amount of water without completely decimating fish and wildlife habitat.

A seawater treatment plant is assumed and envisioned in the DEIS, but the DEIS also notes that this increases the cost for development, and this infrastructure would require a road and seawater transport pipeline.

A water treatment plant would have environmental impact on the Arctic Coastal Plain as it would have to be placed in critical denning habitat for polar bears; any facilities constructed within 20 miles of the coast would be located in that critical habitat unit. Endangered polar bears are critically threatened by climate change. The DEIS does not address how the United States will honor the international Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears.

The DEIS notes, “Whaling crews have reported skittish behavior in bowhead whales and other marine mammals during times of heavy air and vessel traffic and seismic exploration”(p. 3-170). And although the DEIS claims an oil spill in the Beaufort Sea is unlikely, it is still a risk for these waters and its inhabitants.

When viewed against the backdrop of the rest of Alaska’s North Slope with its oil and gas development, the Arctic Coastal Plain is the last remaining piece that is wilderness. The Coastal Plain and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are not only worthy of wilderness

designation and protection, they are worthy of designation as a World Heritage Site: the Coastal Plain nurtures and feeds caribou that have the longest migration of any land mammal, and it is the breeding and nesting ground for at least 156 species of birds who migrate from six continents and 50 states. As the “Sacred Place Where Life Begins” for Alaska Natives/First Nations peoples, it should be conserved forever and for all peoples; It should not be opened up to oil and gas leasing and subsequent development.

The documentation by the DEIS of the impacts of development on the Coastal Plain argue against its goals. The conclusions do not appear to be created with them in mind.

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