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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Trump champions dirty fossil fuel development in biological heart of the Arctic Refuge**  
*Coastal plain oil and gas leasing draft EIS released today.*

Fairbanks, AK—Today, the BLM released its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) aimed at opening up the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling. This EIS comes on the eve on the 1-year anniversary of the 2017 Tax Bill, which kicked off a rushed and reckless process to open the Refuge to drilling. Arbitrarily shortened timelines for comment and review have left Alaskans in the lurch and unable to adequately respond to this pressing opportunity to protect an ecologically sensitive and culturally important area that many around the state, nation, and world have been fighting to protect for almost 60 years.

“This is ‘the sacred place where life begins’, as the nursery and calving grounds to the Porcupine Caribou Herd. For millennia, the Gwich'in Nation has depended on the health of the herd. Now, ignoring the voices of the Gwich'in, their allies, and the impacts of climate chaos which is already disproportionately affecting Arctic Alaska, this administration is accelerating efforts to open the Refuge to seismic testing and drilling,” says Northern Alaska Environmental Center program director, Lisa Baraff.

In today’s press release from BLM, outgoing Secretary of Interior Ryan Zinke commends the President for “giving Alaskans a voice again...” This couldn’t be farther from the truth. This administration, under the authority of Ryan Zinke, has pushed to silence Alaskans, rush public processes, and ignore the overwhelming support of thousands of Alaskans to keep the coastal plain off limits to oil and gas development. It is imperative to include the voices of the Gwich'in Nation, who have long fought to keep the Arctic Refuge protected.

Baraff continues, “The Arctic Refuge should forever remain off limits and be permanently protected. Now is the time to be transitioning away from dirty fuels, not creating more dependence on carbon-intensive energy sources. Alaskans will continue to stand with the Gwich'in and work for the Alaska that future generations deserve.”

David Bernhardt states, “We [Interior] look forward to a very robust public comment period to better inform our final decision.” If this were truly the case, the comment period would be much longer than 45 days. The BLM will hold public meetings in Fairbanks, Anchorage, Arctic Village, Kaktovik, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Utqiagvik and Washington, D.C., at times and locations still to be announced.



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**The Northern Alaska Environmental Center** promotes the conservation of the environment and sustainable resource stewardship in Interior and Arctic Alaska through education and advocacy.

### **Resources and links**

Comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted through Feb. 11 and can be sent by:

- Website: [www.blm.gov/alaska/Coastal-Plain-EIS](http://www.blm.gov/alaska/Coastal-Plain-EIS)
- Mail:  
Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS  
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13  
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

