

ARCTIC REFUGE: MAKE SCOPING COMMENTS AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Now is an important time to speak up to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge! The Tax Cut and Jobs Act passed last December included a rider mandating oil and gas leasing and development on the Coastal Plain (1002 Area), with two lease sales (of at least 400,000 acres each) within ten years (one within four years and one within seven). The Department of the Interior (DOI) took the first step in this process by issuing a Notice of intent (NOI) to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for oil and gas leasing on April 20th. The NOI kick started the Scoping comment period, **which closes on June 19th**. They have to hear from the public before they decide what to do. You have a voice in this decision, make it heard!

WHAT IS SCOPING?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider all environmental and social impacts of a proposal before taking action (e.g., issuing oil and gas leases). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing the EIS for an oil and gas leasing program on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge. The EIS will analyze the potential impacts from oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain, consider different options for how it might conduct the oil and gas program, and look at mitigation measures to decrease impacts.

The first step in the NEPA process is scoping. Scoping provides an important opportunity for the public to inform BLM of relevant issues, needed studies, concerns and potential impacts of oil and gas activities in the Coastal Plain, and to influence the scope of the EIS. BLM will use the scoping comments to develop the EIS, determine what to analyze, and form alternatives.

WHAT SHOULD YOU TALK ABOUT IN YOUR SCOPING COMMENTS?

Scoping comments are your chance to bring up issues, impacts, and alternatives that you want BLM to consider in the EIS. Your opinion matters. Be sure to tell BLM not only that you are opposed to oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Refuge, but also *why* you are opposed. Raise anything that you feel may be important; scoping guides the rest of BLM's environmental review process.

HERE ARE SOME KEY ISSUES TO SPEAK AND WRITE ABOUT AT THE SCOPING STAGE:

(1) Impacts to resources such as water, air, fish and wildlife, subsistence resources, caribou migration, culture, community health, recreation, wilderness, climate change, and more.

- What are potential impacts of oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain? How extensive will they be and for how long might they last? How will those impacts affect you?
- What studies do you think BLM needs to do to adequately assess the impacts of oil and gas activities on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge?

(2) Additional information that BLM should include and analyze in its EIS.

- This may include scientific studies, traditional knowledge, etc.
- Is there any other information you want BLM to analyze in its EIS?

SCOPING TIMELINE AND MEETINGS

All scoping comments must be received by the agency by the close of the scoping period on June 19th. Scoping comments may be submitted online, by snail mail, or at a public meeting. The public meeting in Fairbanks is scheduled for May 29th at the Carlson Center. There will be an open house from 3-4:30, followed by a presentation and public commenting until 9 pm. You must sign in to speak and sign-ups begin at 3pm. Meetings will also be held in Kaktovik, Arctic Village, Anchorage, Utqiagvik, Venetie, and Washington, D.C. For more information, including meeting locations and times, and to submit comments online, go to <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/plans-in-development/alaska/coastal-plain-eis> and follow the links for submitting comments. E-mail comments to blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov or mail comments to: Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS, 222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13 Anchorage, Alaska 99513.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS AFTER SCOPING?

Once scoping is completed, the next step will be the publication and review of the draft EIS. This is the document where the BLM will put forward its analysis of the issues and explain what it is considering for oil and gas development on the Coastal Plain. There will be another comment period at this step, and will likely be hearings or public meetings, too. This will be another opportunity to submit comments and engage the public in the process, as well as to review and critique the alternatives analyses in the document.

After the draft EIS is reviewed, the agency revises it and issues the final EIS. Once the final document is issued, the agency can make its decision. The agency will issue a “record of decision” which will identify the specific course of action (i.e., which of the alternatives considered in the EIS) BLM will move forward on. There will not be formal opportunities for public comment at either of these latter stages, but it is important to review and understand what BLM will do.

The DOI is pushing to expedite the NEPA process through a Secretarial Order requiring EISs take no longer than one year to complete, from NOI to ROD (they typically take several years).

The NEPA Process: What’s Coming

