

**ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE \* CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY \*  
DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE \* EARTHJUSTICE \* SIERRA CLUB \* THE  
WILDERNESS SOCIETY**

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**Offshore Arctic drilling still scheduled in less than 60 days**  
*Drilling must be suspended immediately until spill response is addressed*

**Following is a statement from the above listed organizations:**

“Recent statements by the Obama administration that no new drilling will take place until a government report on the Deepwater Horizon disaster is completed and evaluated does not preclude drilling this summer in Alaska’s Chukchi Sea as planned by Shell Oil on July 1. In fact, Shell has said that they are still moving forward with plans to have drill bits in place in less than 60 days. The May 28 report deadline still leaves ample time should the Department of the Interior (DOI) choose to allow this ill-advised drilling to move forward in extreme Arctic conditions where spill response faces additional challenges of sea ice, seas of up to 20 feet, darkness and a virtual lack of infrastructure from which to stage a response.

Suspending Arctic offshore drilling this summer is the first real test of whether this administration is going to be serious about addressing oil spill response capacity and learning something from the Gulf spill. DOI needs to suspend its approval of Shell's drilling plans pending a meaningful and complete re-assessment of its decision in light of the Gulf spill.

As we have said since before the Deepwater Horizon rig sunk into the Gulf, Shell’s drilling was approved in violation of environmental laws without adequate analysis of the activities’ potential effects on people and wildlife of the region and without any analysis whatsoever of the impacts of a major oil spill. The Gulf spill shows that spills can and do happen during exploration drilling and severely undermines the government’s decision not to analyze the impacts of such spills from Shell's planned drilling.

While we appreciate the fact that the Minerals Management Service (MMS) has asked Shell for additional safety information by May 18 in light of the Gulf of Mexico tragedy, we urge MMS to make any information that Shell shares with them public right away. The public has a right to know about any proposed changes and safety considerations – and a right to provide input on how to proceed. No one knows more about the Arctic Ocean than the Alaska Native communities who have lived off its bounty for thousands of years, and MMS must be sure that these Arctic experts are able to provide direction on any new plans.

With no way to clean up a spill in the Arctic's harsh and icy conditions and limited capacity to respond to a major spill, the risk is too high in the Arctic - especially since the lessons from the Gulf have yet to be learned. The Obama administration must act now to cancel this summer's plans for offshore drilling in the Arctic before we sacrifice another one of our precious coasts."