



*Your Land.
Your Voice.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2010

Contact: Emilie Surrusco
202-544-5205 or emilie@alaskawild.org

Shell ignores reality with false assurances on Arctic Ocean drilling

Statement from Cindy Shogan, Executive Director:

“Shell Oil’s letter to the federal government’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) outlining requested safety information and additional precautions for its Arctic drilling plans for this summer is far from reassuring in light of the ongoing Gulf of Mexico disaster.

To begin, just as company representatives have parroted in repeated statements to the press, Shell’s President Marvin Odum claims that there is no comparing the Gulf situation to the Arctic because of differences in water depth. This couldn’t be more wrong. A recent report shows that deepwater drilling, such as the type being done in the Gulf, was less risky in terms of a blowout than shallow water drilling, such as the type planned in the Arctic. From 1992 to 2006, the majority of the blowouts that occurred in our nation’s offshore waters were from shallow water wells, according to the report authored by Elmer P. Danenberger III, who testified before Congress last week. Both BP in the Gulf and Shell in Arctic dismissed the potential for a blowout in their exploration plans because the risk was too low. Yet we’ve all watched as a blowout continues to cause untold amounts of oil to spew in the Gulf’s deep waters – imagine if the same were to happen in the Arctic’s shallow waters, where capacity and weather further complicate matters.

Remarkably, Shell’s Odum now says that the Arctic’s gale force winds, negative temperatures and sea-ice conditions actually make oil spill clean up easier. This is absurd. As MMS, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Coast Guard and other federal agencies have said: “There has been little experience with under-ice or broken-ice oil spills, and there is little evidence to suggest that the capability exists currently to successfully clean up a spill of this type up in a timely manner.”

The Gulf is among our nation’s most densely inhabited coasts, while the Arctic is known as one of the most remote and extreme environments on Earth. Consider these startling numbers: The number of vessels that were on hand to respond to the disaster in the Gulf within 24 hours – 32. In the Arctic, that number is 13. Likewise, the skimming capacity in the Gulf was 171,000 barrels a day; in the Arctic, it would be 24,000 barrels a day. And, while it’s 47 miles from the Louisiana coast to site of the Gulf spill, in the Arctic’s Chukchi Sea, the nearest dock is 250 miles from the proposed well sites, with cleanup equipment stationed even farther away at Prudhoe Bay.

The Arctic remains one of our nation’s most pristine natural treasures – home to some of our most beloved species of wildlife, and to the Alaska Native people who have lived off the bounty of the Arctic Ocean for thousands of years. The Obama administration must act now to suspend Shell’s plans to drill in the Arctic before it’s too late. It’s time to learn from the Gulf disaster – drilling is a



www.AlaskaWild.org

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 * Tel: 202-544-5205 * Fax: 202-544-5197

dangerous, dirty business and oil companies like Shell and BP cannot be trusted with our nation's most precious natural resources.”

#



www.AlaskaWild.org

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 * Tel: 202-544-5205 * Fax: 202-544-5197