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**Groups Optimistic About Administration's Reported Decision to Pause Arctic Oil Drilling**

*Announcement reflects the concerns of millions of Americans that Arctic oil drilling is too risky*

Washington, D.C. – The following statements are regarding the Obama administration's reported decision to pause exploratory oil drilling in America's Arctic Ocean scheduled for this summer:

“Together with people on the Arctic Slope, we extend our gratitude and thanks to President Obama and Secretary Salazar for their decision today to suspend Shell Oil's plans for drilling in the Arctic Ocean this summer,” said **Cindy Shogan, Executive Director of Alaska Wilderness League**. “We look forward to working with them to make sure that any development in these pristine waters is only allowed to proceed when it can be done safely.”

“Secretary Salazar's suspension of Shell's Arctic drilling plan is a tentative first step in the right direction,” said **Rebecca Nolan, Alaska Director for the Center for Biological Diversity**. “What polar bears need now is a permanent ban on the dirty, dangerous offshore drilling in the Arctic that threatens their very survival.”

“President Obama and Interior Secretary Salazar should be commended for suspending Shell's plans to drill in the Arctic Ocean this summer. The Arctic environment absolutely could not stand an oil spill like the one we're now seeing in the Gulf of Mexico -- any spill, in fact, would have devastating effects on Arctic wildlife, and it's clear that we couldn't clean it up. We're hoping President Obama will now take the next step and place the Arctic Ocean off-limits to oil and gas drilling by including a presidential moratorium against offshore drilling,” said **Richard Charter, Senior Policy Advisor at Defenders of Wildlife**.

“We are pleased the Obama administration recognized the glaring holes in Shell's plan to drill in the Arctic Ocean until the causes of the Gulf spill—including failures at the Minerals Management Service—have been fully and completely studied,” said **Trip Van Noppen, President of Earthjustice**. “We have a responsibility to protect, not exploit, the pristine beauty of the Arctic Ocean. This decision is a step in the right direction towards cutting our dependence on oil and investing instead in a new, sustainable energy future.”

“The Administration’s decision to suspend offshore oil and gas exploration in the Arctic Ocean this summer is a testament to the Administration’s pledge to proceed cautiously in sensitive frontier areas until the lessons of the Gulf are fully absorbed and new, more effective policies are in place. It is critical that Shell Oil apply the lessons of the Gulf disaster before moving ahead and that proper government oversight and regulation is in place to ensure the highest standards for environmental safety,” said **Mike Daulton, Senior Director of Government Relations, National Audubon Society.**

“Secretary Salazar is absolutely right to suspend the Shell permits. This administration understands how important it is to protect this unique and extremely sensitive ecosystem,” said **Charles M. Clusen, Director of the Alaska Project, Natural Resources Defense Council.** “Any significant spill in Arctic waters would be a disaster for polar bears, seals, walrus, endangered bowhead whales, beluga whales and the entire marine ecosystem. If a spill occurred, the source of considerable subsistence for Native Alaskans would be poisoned.”

“Secretary Salazar’s decision to suspend summer drilling in the Arctic was the right thing to do,” said **Andrew Hartsig, Staff Attorney with Ocean Conservancy.** “Arctic ecosystems, wildlife, and people are already experiencing stress from warming temperatures and the loss of summer sea ice. Before we pile on impacts from exploratory drilling—including the potential for a catastrophic oil spill—we need to expand baseline science in the region, understand more completely the potential impacts of drilling, and develop and implement robust and effective methods of responding to spills in icy waters.”

“Secretary Salazar has made the right decision in putting Alaska Native peoples before Shell’s profits,” said **Carole Holley, Alaska Program Co-Director for Pacific Environment.** “Halting offshore oil exploration this summer ensures that, at least in the short term, no grimy and suffocating oil will ooze into pure Arctic waters, despoiling Alaska Native culture and wildlife.”

“This is the right decision to make. Until a full review of what happened to cause the devastation in the Gulf of Mexico and of Shell’s plans to deal with a similar situation, it would be irresponsible to continue drilling as if nothing happened,” said **William H. Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society.** “The risk that faces the coastal communities and fragile ecosystems of the Arctic Ocean is too great.”

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