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Double standard for offshore drilling in Atlantic and Arctic

Following is a statement from Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“As Interior Secretary Ken Salazar testifies today in front of the House Natural Resources Committee on the recently released draft five-year program for offshore drilling, I remind him of the Obama administration’s commitment to safer, cleaner drilling and a new way of making decisions about drilling. The recent decision to include new leasing in the Arctic’s Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the draft of the next five-year plan - following closely on the heels of several decisions to allow Royal Dutch Shell to move forward with drilling in these same Arctic waters next year – fails to follow this commitment and looks a lot like the fast and loose decision making of the past.

The facts clearly show that there is no way to clean up an oil spill in the Arctic’s icy, extreme, remote conditions. What’s more, the Department of Interior’s own scientific arm, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), confirmed that important missing information about the Arctic’s unique marine environment presents a ‘major constraint to a defensible science framework for critical Arctic decision making.’ Despite this, new drilling is being proposed in America’s Arctic Ocean without the necessary science and without a proven plan to clean up an oil spill.

Secretary Salazar should be applauded for taking our nation’s Atlantic waters off the drilling drawing board. However, his stated reasoning behind this decision makes it seem as though the Arctic is being left out in the cold. As the decision was explained: [‘A number of specific considerations supported the Secretary’s decision not to include the \[Mid- and South- Atlantic planning areas \], including the current lack of infrastructure to support oil and gas exploration and development, as well as spill preparedness and response.’](#) These same reasons could be applied – tenfold – to the Arctic.

There must be no double standard when it comes to drilling in our nation’s waters. We ask the Obama administration to stand by its promises of a new way of doing things and keep the Arctic out of the final version of the five-year program. The American people expect real change – please protect our Arctic Ocean.”

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