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Obama administration proposes risky, new drilling in America's Arctic Ocean

WASHINGTON - The Obama administration's draft of the 2012-2017 program for oil and gas drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) includes potential drilling in America's pristine and fragile Arctic Ocean. The draft, released today, calls for a lease sale in 2015 in the Arctic's Beaufort Sea, and a lease sale in 2016 in the Arctic's Chukchi Sea.

This is the Obama administration's first offshore drilling program – the final version, due to be released in June, will dictate the size, timing and location of proposed leasing activity in our nation's offshore waters over the next five years.

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

“In the days that followed the Deepwater Horizon disaster, President Obama stood before the American people and promised safer, cleaner offshore drilling and a new way of making decisions about drilling. The headlong rush to drill in America's Arctic Ocean laid out in today's draft five-year program fails to meet these promises – and looks a lot like the fast and loose decision making of the past.

As President Obama's first offshore drilling program, this can be only be characterized as business as usual. The risks are huge – at this point, drilling in the Arctic Ocean is tantamount to 'Mission Impossible.' Let's check the cold, hard facts: There is no proven way to clean up an oil spill in the Arctic's extreme, icy conditions. The last public spill drill in the Arctic – that tested booms and skimmers and other conventional methods of oil spill cleanup only in partial sea ice conditions in 2000 – was deemed a failure. Since then, the oil industry has put forth drilling plans that are inadequate, deficient and fail to take into account real-world Arctic conditions. In fact, Shell Oil is pushing to drill this summer in the Arctic with promises that they will clean up 95 percent of all oil spilled in the Arctic using mechanical recovery means – even though only 3 percent was cleaned up in the Gulf last year and only 8 percent was cleaned up after the Exxon Valdez spill.

Government experts, international scientists and Alaska Natives all agree – we know too little about this one-of-a-kind marine environment. With no plan to clean up a spill and inadequate scientific information, we should not be risking our one and only Arctic with aggressive, risky drilling.

President Obama, we ask you to stand up for your promises and keep the Arctic out of the final version of the five-year program. Otherwise, you could have the next major oil spill disaster, and the



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devastation of a marine ecosystem that is vital to health of our planet, on your hands. The American people expect real change – please protect our Arctic Ocean.”

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