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Senator Merkley introduces legislation to end Arctic Ocean development

Today, Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced the “[Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act](#).” This legislation would prohibit oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Planning Area of the Outer Continental Shelf. The bill recognizes that in order to manage the Arctic Ocean for the best interest of the people, the United States must, in part, keep fossil fuels in the ground to avoid the dangerous impacts of climate change. Under the bill, the Secretary of the Interior would be prohibited from issuing or renewing a lease or any other authorization for the exploration, development, or production of oil, natural gas, or any other mineral in the Arctic planning area.

Statement by Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“We applaud Senator Merkley for introducing legislation that would keep oil from spilling in our fragile Arctic Ocean, while helping to ensure our nation is pursuing policies aimed at avoiding the worst effects of climate change. Now is the time to end the failed experiment of Arctic Ocean drilling once and for all. Not only has Shell proven time and time again that they are incompetent and careless in pursuing drilling in America’s Arctic Ocean, it is well documented that there is no known way for any company to clean up an oil spill in the icy conditions of the Arctic.

Furthermore, international scientific consensus has shown us that the vast majority of known fossil fuel reserves must be left undeveloped if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change, and the development of Arctic Ocean oil and gas has specifically been identified as incompatible with efforts to stay within our global carbon budget.

We can’t ignore the impacts of climate change and development in the fragile Arctic region, and some of the world’s most iconic species are being disproportionately impacted by these effects. Walrus and polar bears are already being displaced by the disappearance of Arctic ice, and Shell’s drilling plans have put them in double jeopardy. The Arctic Ocean is one of the most unique marine ecosystems in the world. Many of America’s most beloved marine creatures thrive here, including whales, seals and countless birds. Thanks to Senator Merkley for his efforts to protect America’s Arctic to ensure that the region thrives for generations to come.”



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