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America's Arctic Refuge and offshore waters need protection, not drilling

WASHINGTON – [Today, President Obama withdrew areas of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas from oil and gas leasing](#). This action is a good start towards protecting subsistence resources and access, and important ecological areas in both seas. The President took this action at the same time that the Interior Department released a draft proposed oil and gas leasing program for waters off of the United States.

“This has truly been a historic week for the Arctic and our nation’s public lands. Today, President Obama withdrew from leasing some very important ecological areas in the Arctic Ocean, including the biologically rich Hanna Shoal,” said Cindy Shogan, Executive Director of Alaska Wilderness League. “We look forward to participating in this process and ensuring future decisions are made based upon the best science and that they prioritize the Arctic’s amazing ecological values.”

Shogan continued, “Just days ago, President Obama announced he will make an official recommendation to Congress to designate core areas of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – including its Coastal Plain – as wilderness, the highest level of protection available to public lands. Coupled with today’s action and the opportunity for more protections, President Obama is leaving quite a legacy in the Arctic.”

The Beaufort and Chukchi Seas are central to life and important food source for coastal communities, provides important habitat for countless species of wildlife, and play a vital role in regulating the world’s climate.

“Today is a great day for my family, our elders and leaders, and everyone we have worked with over many decades to provide our voices in the Obama administration’s 5-year leasing plan,” said [Rose Ahtuanguaruk, Alaska Wilderness League’s tribal liaison in Barrow, AK](#). “This is a historical moment which recognizes the Arctic’s uniqueness and special areas that are worthy of the strongest protections. Thank you to President Obama and his administration for striking such a bold move in the right direction.”

“Our work is not done, however. As we’ve seen from Shell’s 2012-2013 drilling season, the harshness and uncertainty of the Arctic climate coupled with the lack of scientific information about our fragile Arctic Ocean just underlines why the Arctic is no place to drill,” said Shogan. “Shell’s past failures and DOI’s own recent analysis of a 75% chance of that a large oil spill could occur if leases were developed in

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the Chukchi Sea give the Obama administration ample reason to reject Shell exploration in 2015 and take all Arctic leasing off the table.”

About Alaska Wilderness League:

Alaska Wilderness League is the only organization dedicated solely to the preservation of Alaska's wilderness in the nation's capital. Go to www.alaskawild.org to find out more.

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