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Alaska Wilderness League Supports Senators' Call to Halt Drilling in the Arctic

Washington — A coalition of senators showed their support for America's Arctic Ocean by sending a letter to Interior Secretary Sally Jewell urging her to prohibit drilling in the Arctic Ocean.

[The letter, spearheaded by Sens. Jeff Merkley \(D-OR\)](#), and signed by 18 senators calls for protecting fragile Arctic ecosystems and the livelihoods of Alaskan communities and urged the Interior Department to prohibit drilling in the Arctic Ocean.

Statement by Cindy Shogan, Executive Director:

"We thank Senator Jeff Merkley for his leadership to take steps to protect America's Arctic Ocean. Today's letter spearheaded by Sen. Merkley and signed by 18 senators urging the Interior Department to prohibit drilling in the Arctic Ocean is timely.

On Wednesday, California Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency for Santa Barbara County as cleanup teams were scrambling to clean up more than 20,000 gallons of oil. Today's estimate is 105,000 gallons of crude potentially spilled from a broken pipe. The reality is when we drill, we spill. This incident happened only days after the Interior Department greenlighted Shell's exploration plan for the Arctic Ocean. Even by the government's calculations, the chance of a major oil spill is 75 percent if development moves forward on the Chukchi Sea leases.

California's spill reminds us that any drilling is risky business, but the risks in the Arctic Ocean are particularly great. The Arctic is prone to hurricane-force storms, 20-foot swells, pervasive sea ice, frigid temperatures and months-long darkness. There is no proven way to clean up an oil spill in these extreme conditions. And the biggest risk of all is trusting Shell in our ocean. As we all remember, Shell's mishaps in 2012 culminated with the Kulluk, its drilling rig, running aground near Sitkalidak Island, Alaska.

Drilling in the Arctic is reckless and irresponsible and no oil company should develop there. The risks are far too great. Thank you, Sen. Merkley for your leadership and efforts to protect our Arctic Ocean."

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