

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2015

**ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE * CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY * FRIENDS OF THE EARTH *
GREENPEACE USA * NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL * NORTHERN ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL
CENTER * OCEAN CONSERVATION RESEARCH * SIERRA CLUB**

Conservation Groups Applaud Rep. Huffman Legislation to End Arctic Offshore Oil Drilling

On the day Shell announces an end to its Arctic adventure, Rep. Huffman looks forward with introduction of Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act.

WASHINGTON – Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) [today introduced the Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act in the U.S. House of Representatives](#) to prohibit oil and gas leasing in federal waters off the coast of Alaska. This important legislation comes following Shell Oil’s revelation that after seven years and \$7 billion in investment, its Arctic drilling campaign has come up dry. Today’s announcement sends a clear message to the Obama administration and the American public that it’s time to look forward and protect the Arctic for our children and our climate future.

The Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act, which mirrors a bill of the same name that was introduced in the Senate in July by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), also comes on the heels of a [letter from Senate Democrats](#) calling on President Obama to reverse current policies promoting Arctic drilling.

Shell’s announcement that its exploration efforts have failed is a fitting end to an Arctic drilling campaign marred by blunders and missteps, and the Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act recognizes that in order to move forward and manage the Arctic Ocean in the best interest of the American people, the United States must keep a significant amount of fossil fuels in the ground in order to mitigate 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 of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Building the infrastructure needed for the development of Arctic oil and then bringing that oil to production would take decades, and would simply be feeding our addiction to fossil fuels at a time when developing reliable and affordable renewable energy should be our priority. The Arctic Ocean plays a pivotal role in regulating the world’s climate, and whether or not the U.S. drills there in the future will have a major impact on the global effort to address climate change. Drilling is a risky gamble in the Arctic, one of the most remote and dangerous places on earth, a region prone to hurricane-force storms, 20-foot swells, pervasive sea ice, frigid temperatures and months-long darkness.

Statements from Conservation Groups:

“Thank you Rep. Huffman for standing up for America’s Arctic and pushing our nation to pursue policies aimed at avoiding the worst effects of climate change,” said **Cindy Shogan, executive director at Alaska Wilderness League**. “Climate change is at our doorstep. Arctic communities and iconic wildlife are

feeling the heat of a warming Arctic. As Shell leaves with its tail between its legs, now is the time to focus on developing and transitioning clean and efficient forms of renewable energy into the mainstream instead of locking ourselves into a future dependent on fossil fuels.”

“We got lucky that Shell didn’t strike oil and has decided to pull out of Arctic, but now we need to make sure this threat doesn’t return. The Stop Arctic Drilling Act is exactly what we need -- a permanent ban on drilling in these hazardous federal waters,” said **Miyoko Sakashita, ocean program director at the Center for Biological Diversity**. “We need President Obama to heed his own climate change rhetoric and stop oil leasing on our public lands and offshore areas.”

“To keep our climate and fragile Arctic Ocean ecosystem safe, Arctic oil and gas must remain in the ground,” said **Marissa Knodel, climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth**. “The Stop Arctic Drilling Act is exactly what our nation needs to lead the world in keeping arctic oil in the ground.”

“The Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act couldn’t come at a more important time. Shell announced that it would not return to the Alaskan Arctic to drill for oil today, and now is the time to take Arctic offshore drilling off the table for good,” said **Greenpeace Arctic campaigner Mary Sweeters**. “We need more strong leaders like Representative Huffman to champion a sustainable future by keeping extreme fossil fuels like Arctic oil in the ground.”

“Rep. Huffman’s bill recognizes the old adage ‘when in a hole, stop digging,’” said **Franz Matzner, director of NRDC’s Beyond Oil Initiative**. “The science is clear we can’t use all the fossil fuels we already have, let alone put more on the table by drilling for fossil fuels in our nation’s last pristine ocean. We need to show the world we are serious about delivering a future fueled by clean, renewable energy – not continued oil addiction.”

“Passing this bill will keep fossil fuels in the ground. Lease sales in the Arctic Ocean indulge the extreme fossil fuel extractors and detracts from meaningful investment in renewable energy sources and production. Potential production from Arctic Ocean lease sales will surely contribute to the already excessive amount of carbon released into our atmosphere. This bill is progressive and will curb long term fossil fuel development while protecting the Arctic’s traditional cultures and wildlife,” said **Jessica Girard, program director at Northern Alaska Environmental Center**.

“The melting of the polar icecaps may provide the oil industry un-impeped access to untapped fossil fuel deposits, but Rep. Huffman’s bill is the only sane response to this disastrous artifact of the ongoing global climate catastrophe.” **Ocean Conservation Research director Michael Stocker** asserts. “The industrialization of the Arctic – like the industrialization of all ocean areas does not bode well for the sustainability of marine life on our planet.”

"We applaud Congressman Huffman for recognizing that drilling in our Arctic waters is fraught with unnecessary risks, especially to our climate. To effectively combat climate change we must leave dirty fuels in the ground and look instead to the available cleaner sources of energy that are already powering our country," said **Dan Ritzman, Alaska Program Director for Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign**.

Contacts:

Corey Himrod, Alaska Wilderness League, 202-266-0426, corey@alaskawild.org
Miyoko Sakashita, Center for Biological Diversity, 510-845-6703, miyoko@biologicaldiversity.org
Marissa Knodel, Friends of the Earth, 202-222-0729, mknodel@foe.org
Cassady Sharp, Greenpeace, 828-817-3328, cassady.sharp@greenpeace.org
Jeff Benzak, Natural Resources Defense Council, 202-513-6248, jbentak@nrdc.org
Jessica Girard, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, 907-452-5093, girard@northern.org
Michael Stocker, Ocean Conservation Research, 415-464-7220, mstocker@OCR.org
Virginia Cramer, Sierra Club, 804-519-8449, virginia.cramer@sierraclub.org