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Obama's plan leaves door open to Arctic drilling

WASHINGTON – Today, the Obama administration announced its proposed 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The Proposed Program released today evaluates 13 potential lease sales in six planning areas – 10 potential sales in the Gulf of Mexico and three potential sales off the coast of Alaska. BOEM has identified and analyzed several areas where there is potential conflict between oil and gas activities and important ecological resources and subsistence activities called “environmentally important areas,” allowing for input for future protections and whether or not to move forward with future lease sales in the Arctic Ocean.

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

“While we are disappointed that Arctic leases are still in the 5-year plan, we appreciate that the administration is taking places off the table, like the Atlantic, and allowing for additional protections in the Arctic Ocean.

This proposed plan sets the stage for essential protections for the most important environmental areas in the Arctic Ocean. However, in order to stay in line with the Obama administration’s recent agreement with Canada and the climate goals set out in Paris, the administration must take Arctic leases out of the final 5-year plan. Opening the ocean to development would take us in the wrong direction on protecting the Arctic.

No place has potentially more to lose due to climate change than the Arctic. The president has promised to continue to be out front in leading the fight against climate change. And, President Obama has seen the fragile and sensitive Arctic region for himself. With the high risk of a large oil spill, drilling in America’s Arctic is irresponsible and risky. The administration should be focusing more on protections, not drilling in the Arctic Ocean.

It is time for the president to take the Arctic off the table and continue his Arctic legacy.”

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