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Republicans unleash attack on public lands, waters in the Arctic, Alaska

WASHINGTON – House Republicans have offered dozens of bad amendments to the U.S. Department of the Interior appropriations bill. These provisions will significantly impact the management of our public lands and waters, including five amendments specifically targeting the public lands and waters in Alaska.

Amendments include provisions that would defund the management plan for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; prohibit funding for the Interior Department to remove the three Alaska leases (two in the Arctic) in the 5-year plan for offshore drilling; prohibit funding for any new, stronger regulations for the Arctic Ocean; and, prohibit finalizing a rule to regulate non-subsistence hunting of wildlife on national wildlife refuges in Alaska and withdraw the National Park Service's authority to implement similar protections on Alaska national preserves. Additionally, Section 127 in the underlying bill would defund the finalization and implementation of [BOEM's proposed Air Quality Control, Reporting and Compliance Rule](#). Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) filed an amendment that would strike this damaging language.

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

"Republicans have introduced a suite of bad amendments to the Interior appropriations process that will plunder our public lands and waters in Alaska and the Arctic.

Alaska is feeling the effects of climate change at twice the rate of anywhere else in our nation and, in [June 2016, Arctic sea ice cover has crashed to a new record low](#). These amendments, aimed at forcing more drilling in the Arctic, would only exacerbate the impacts of climate change on our nation and on Alaska.

Shell Oil's near-decade long failed drilling program in the Arctic Ocean, followed by the recent relinquishment of hundreds of leases by Big Oil there, reinforces the reality that our nation should not be drilling in this pristine region. Yet the current draft of the 5-year plan proposes lease sales in both the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The Obama administration should remove the two Arctic lease sales from the 5 year plan to be consistent with the international agreements made on Arctic management and climate goals.

What's more, if an oil spill were to happen in these icy and chaotic waters – it would be a disaster. Today's efforts to undermine the strictest regulations possible for new rules and regulations for offshore drilling in the Arctic is risky and irresponsible.

Along the coast of the Arctic Ocean is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Arctic Refuge is spectacular, beautiful, wild and owned by all Americans. In January 2015, President Obama made a Wilderness recommendation to protect more than 12 million acres of the Arctic Refuge for future generations as part of the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, and he asked Congress to get



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the job done. Instead Republicans are trying to undo all of the good work done by President Obama and his administration to protect this special place by defunding its management plan. It is not only outrageous, but a tremendous waste of taxpayer money.

The only bright spot for Alaska is an amendment offered by Rep. Jared Huffman to protect efforts to improve air pollution control from offshore development. Updating [BOEM's Air Quality Control, Reporting and Compliance Rule](#) would not only update decades-old regulations, but it would protect coastal communities that are already seeing devastating health effects from oil and gas development.”

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