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Trump stretches authority to pull presidential withdrawals in the Arctic and Atlantic

WASHINGTON, DC – President Trump directed his administration to begin work to expand offshore drilling. This could include seeking to revise the 5-year leasing plan finalized last year, and purports to reverse permanent protections against expanded offshore drilling in America’s Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Interim Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“The Arctic is fragile and remote with little to no infrastructure – the nearest Coast Guard is 1,000-miles away. Simply, it would be irresponsible to drill there.

President Trump may try to roll back presidential withdrawals from the last administration and open new areas to drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans despite millions of Americans asking for the Arctic and Atlantic to be protected. President Trump and his administration are marching us down an unprecedented path – filled with conflict and risk. In no point in history has a president challenged another administration’s permanent withdrawals. Trump’s action could set a dangerous precedent, which will only undermine the powers of the office of the president.

The Arctic is ground zero for the devastating impacts of climate change – warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world. Sea ice is declining, permafrost is melting and coastlines are eroding, and in order to avoid exacerbating these problems, we should not open new areas to drilling.

And oil drilling is inherently risky. As we have seen time and time again, it is not a question of whether we will spill, but when. The *Deepwater Horizon* and *Exxon Valdez* spills prove that there is no such thing as an effective clean up; once oil has been spilled, the battle has been lost. The government—by its own estimate—has said that there is up to a 75 percent risk of a major spill if drilling were to move forward in the Chukchi Sea in Alaska.”

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