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Trump administration takes step to re-open protected Arctic Ocean to drilling

Anchorage, AK – The Trump Administration took a giant step toward oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Ocean today in a territory that is currently off-limits to drilling. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced it will publish in the Federal Register tomorrow a call for information and nominations covering a proposed lease sale in Alaska’s Beaufort Sea Planning Area in 2019.

The proposed sale is listed in the draft proposed 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program that the Secretary of the Interior announced on Jan. 4, 2018. The agency has set a 30-day public comment period for this call for nominations. Millions of Americans have already voiced their opposition to new offshore leasing in the Arctic and other ocean areas.

Important areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas were permanently protected under the Obama administration because of their ecological and subsistence values. Just last week, a federal district court in Alaska rebuffed efforts by the Trump administration and the oil industry to dismiss a lawsuit challenging Trump’s attempt to jettison a permanent ban on new offshore oil and gas drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

Statement from Adrienne Titus, Inupiaq member of Native Movement:

“Rushing ocean lease sales in the Arctic is opening a threatening door of destruction to Alaska Native culture and food security. As an Inupiaq woman I oppose this threat to our future, the future of all Alaskans and all life on this planet. Opening the oceans to oil development would eliminate the chance of my grandchildren truly knowing who I am.”

Statement from Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition, Greenpeace, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Pacific Environment, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society:

“Planning for a Beaufort lease sale this early in the process of crafting Trump’s five year plan is a clear sign that the decision to include the Arctic has already been made. Just today it was revealed that the Trump administration coordinated with Florida Governor Rick Scott on Gulf leases in an effort to improve his election prospects. Likewise, this Beaufort sale is about giving a win to the Alaska delegation by starting the process to fast-track getting leases into the hands of the oil industry without full, fair and open debate. It’s clear that Trump’s offshore process is driven purely by politics, and is not in the best interest of Americans.”

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