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Interior continues warp speed push to open Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Washington – Today at a breakfast in Anchorage, Alaska, Deputy Secretary for the Interior David Bernhardt and Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Joe Balash reiterated the Trump administration's desire to pursue an extremely aggressive timeline for leasing and development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Statement from Adam Kolton, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“This administration’s warp speed approach to forcing open one of the most iconic and wildest places left in America is disgraceful. They are hitting the gas and driving straight for the oil rigs without so much as a pause to consider the true purposes of the Arctic Refuge, from preserving its public land and water to protecting its wildlife.

The Trump administration’s secretive work with Senator Murkowski and others to ‘aggressively’ push for Arctic drilling while dismissing the voice of the Gwich’in people runs counter to her own promises to, in her own words: ‘do it right and take care of our lands, our wildlife and our people.’ And Secretary Zinke has made clear that his Interior Department is a facilitator for the oil industry, nothing more. They are ‘partners’ and everything else – protecting wildlife, preserving America’s public lands and waters, and extending to native peoples the respect they deserve – comes second, if at all.

From congressional Republicans to the Trump White House, the fate of America’s most iconic wilderness is being decided in secret. We, however, will continue to stand with the Gwich’in people in their effort to protect the Arctic Refuge. They are the first peoples of this land. Their lives and culture are tied to the health of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and the Coastal Plain.”

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