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Obama administration pushes risky Arctic leasing program forward

Washington – The Obama administration today issued [its Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Chukchi Lease Sale 193](#), which will be published in the Federal Register on February 20, 2015. This is not the final decision about whether to end or affirm the Chukchi Sea oil leases – which will be decided in 30 days.

Last year, the Ninth Circuit Court declared the Chukchi Lease Sale 193 unlawful, requiring the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to redo the analysis of environmental effects of drilling in the sea and reconsider whether the region should be open to drilling at all. This is the second time the massive offshore oil and gas sale, which was rushed through based on poor science and arbitrary economic assumptions, has been sent back by the courts. The EIS shows the effects of leasing in the Chukchi Sea could be catastrophic.

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

“We are disappointed that Interior would rush forward with a development plan under which there is a 75 percent chance that one or more large oil spills (more than 1,000 barrels, or 42,000 gallons, of oil) would occur if the leases are developed. Instead, of rushing to a decision to cater to Shell’s wishes to drill this summer, the agency should get the analysis right and fully inform the public about the risks of drilling in the Chukchi Sea.

Given the history of development in the Arctic Ocean, the potential for a serious incident is more than a statistic. In 2012, the nation was transfixed as Shell crashed its Arctic drilling rig into Sitkalidak Island, Alaska proving that no oil company is capable of drilling safely in the Arctic’s harsh conditions. Shell’s disastrous drilling program has involved a long list of near-misses, fires, investigations, pollution violations, and fines, ending with the drilling rig grounding.

Millions of Americans have asked the Obama administration to stop drilling in the Arctic Ocean based on Shell’s dismal record and a series of poor analyses and decisions. America’s Arctic is no place for risky and reckless drilling -- not only is it one of the least understood ocean ecosystem on earth, but there is also no way to effectively clean up or contain an oil spill in Arctic Ocean conditions.

Now is the time to take Arctic leases off the table in the Chukchi Sea. It is unsafe, dangerous and irresponsible to drill in America’s Arctic.”

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