

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2016

**ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE * CONSERVATION LANDS FOUNDATION * FRIENDS OF THE EARTH *
NORTHERN ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER**

Bureau of Land Management to begin review of second commercial oil development in western Arctic
Greater Mooses Tooth-2 proposal threatens key special areas aside for protection

Anchorage, AK – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has announced a Notice of Intent to begin an environmental review on ConocoPhillips' proposed Greater Mooses Tooth 2 (GMT-2) project. The project would be located in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (Reserve) near the Teshekpuk Lake and Colville River Special Areas, and would extend Conoco's Greater Mooses Tooth Unit 1 (GMT-1) development. The GMT-2 project is yet another example of piecemeal and hurried development that threatens some of our nation's most vital natural resources, exceptional wildlife habitat, and access to subsistence resources for Alaska Native communities.

The Teshekpuk Lake and Colville River Special Areas were among five unique Special Areas recently protected under the 2013 Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) because they provide irreplaceable habitat for fish and wildlife including caribou, polar bears, migratory birds and waterfowl, which is foundational to the Alaska Native subsistence and traditional way of life. Unfortunately, the first development project on federal lands, Conoco's GMT-1, weakened the integrity of the IAP by allowing a road and pipelines within the Fish Creek setback, a subsistence use area also set aside for protection. Conoco's GMT-1 project calls for an 11.8-acre oil drilling pad, a 7.6-mile long gravel road, an 8.4-mile elevated pipeline, bridges, valve pads, vehicle pullouts, and culverts through the Reserve's sensitive wetlands and tundra.

The proposed GMT-2 project would further extend the industrial footprint and road network in the Reserve by requiring an additional 8.1-mile gravel access road, a 14-acre gravel pad with capacity for 48 wells, an additional 8.6 miles of pipeline and more, while also serving as a building block for future development. This infrastructure represents a doubling of the size of GMT-1, which was already found to have major unavoidable and adverse impacts to subsistence access and resources for Alaska Native communities in the arctic. To address this, BLM is currently conducting a public process to create a [Regional Mitigation Strategy](#) to offset and compensate for this and future projects. It is imperative that BLM follows through with this necessary mitigation strategy prior to permitting GMT-2 in order to protect existing subsistence resources within designated Special Areas.

As BLM considers Conoco's GMT-2 application, the administration must not continue to allow backsliding on key environmental protections. BLM must fully evaluate alternatives to the proposed road-connected development plan and assess the proposed drilling in the context of the administration's commitments to address climate change. This is particularly important in light of the President's recent commitment with Canada to ensure Arctic commercial activity, including oil and gas development, will be allowed only when the highest science and environmental standards are met and only when they advance global climate goals to limit warming.

Statements from organizations:

"BLM has already undermined the Reserve's management plan by allowing development to encroach into the Fish Creek protected area and threaten a watershed crucial to local subsistence," said **Kristen Miller, Conservation Director at Alaska Wilderness League**. "Instead of permitting new projects, BLM must complete a mitigation strategy for the region that adequately addresses the concerns of local communities and ensures that protections for the five key Special Areas within the Reserve will remain intact."

"ConocoPhillips wants to fast track development in sensitive bird, fish and Caribou habitat – a region extremely important to the substance needs of native Alaskans. Yet the company has yet to fulfill its promise to mitigate for impacts from previous development," said **Danielle Murray, Senior Director at the Conservation Lands Foundation**. "As steward of these lands, BLM should delay permitting GMT-2 until a plan is in place to ensure ConocoPhillips future development is conducted in the right place and does not violate protections in the region."

"Expanding ConocoPhillips fossil fuel footprint in the western Arctic is contrary to President Obama's commitment to confront the climate crisis and protect the Arctic. The western Arctic's fragile and unique habitat and wildlife have sustained the traditional livelihoods of Alaska Natives for centuries, and cannot be sacrificed to the greed of fossil fuel empires. To move in the right direction for people and the planet, the Obama administration must deny ConocoPhillips' GMT-2 application and keep fossil fuels in the ground," said **Marissa Knodel, Climate Campaigner at Friends of the Earth**.

"While the Department of the Interior and the Obama Administration identify ways in which to protect the arctic lands facing extraordinary climate impacts through policy and international negotiations, on the ground in the Western Arctic rushed development continues," said **Jessica Girard, program director for the Northern Alaska Environmental Center**. "A regional mitigation strategy that identifies development impacts and clear ways forward are necessary before additional permits are considered. The rush of GMT-2 is rash and will have direct impacts on subsistence use and permanent impacts on the climate, directly in opposition to recent Nordic and global agreements."

Contacts:

Corey Himrod, Alaska Wilderness League, 202-266-0426, corey@alaskawild.org

Danielle Murray, Conservation Lands Foundation, 302-367-8076, danielle@conservationlands.org

Marissa Knodel, Friends of the Earth, 202-222-0729, mknodel@foe.org

Jessica Girard, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, 907-452-5095, girard@northern.org

###