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Trump Administration Continues Pushing to Hand Western Arctic over to Oil and Gas Industry

Washington — Today, the Bureau of Land Management released its Final Environmental Impact Statement for a new Integrated Activity Plan, the management plan for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in America's Western Arctic, following a rushed and incomplete process.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Conservation Director at Alaska Wilderness League:

"The world remains mired in a global pandemic and the oil markets are experiencing continued volatility, yet this administration has once again opted to barrel forward with unnecessarily aggressive oil and gas development. The new draft plan for the Western Arctic faced clear opposition from the public, especially from local communities facing increasingly negative impacts on air quality and health as well as concerns over food security due to climate change and existing development. The Trump administration and BLM are not only blatantly disregarding those concerns, but in fact are going one step further by introducing a completely new and unvetted alternative that would open more land to development than any prior option.

"Years were spent working with tribal communities, local governments, the state of Alaska, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and the public on the current management plan, and more than 400,000 sportsmen, scientists, Alaskans, North Slope residents, tribal members and citizens commented in favor of the science-based protections that were ultimately adopted in the 2013 IAP. Trashing that carefully crafted plan in favor of a rushed alternative that received no public oversight is emblematic of this administration's preference for catering to industry at the expense of the American public.

"This new preferred alternative would open seven million additional acres within the Reserve to oil leasing, bring the available total to 18.6 million acres (82% of the Reserve) — an area larger than all of West Virginia — with no opportunity for the public, including local communities, to comment. It would endanger the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, one of the most productive wetland complexes in the world and an important calving ground for the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd, an important source of food and culture for communities on the North Slope. This region provides a haven for a multitude of birds as well, including up to 100,000 molting geese, more than half a million shorebirds, and high densities of loons and eiders.



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“As climate change impacts the Arctic at a rate more than double the rest of the world, we must view our public lands as part of the climate crisis solution, not as a tool for this administration to continue doing the bidding of the fossil fuel industry.”

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Alaska Wilderness League stands with, serves and supports the many people and organizations that believe in a sustainable future for Alaska. We honor and respect the cultures of Alaska Natives whose way of life remains deeply connected to the state’s land, waters, and wildlife. We believe that Alaska’s long-term economic future and subsistence traditions are inexorably tied to the health and sound stewardship of its natural resources, which support hunting, fishing, tourism and unrivaled outdoor experiences that are central to Alaskans’ quality of life.



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