



*Your Land.  
Your Voice.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 23, 2020**

Contact: Corey Himrod

Tel: 202-266-0426 or Email: [corey@alaskawild.org](mailto:corey@alaskawild.org)

### **Trump administration pushing last-second oil exploration in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge**

Washington — The Trump Interior Department and the Bureau of Land Management are fast-tracking an application to conduct intrusive and destructive exploration on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge this winter. Forward-looking infrared surveys (FLIR) would begin in December, with 3-D seismic working beginning in January.

Studies have [shown FLIR to be less than 50% effective](#) at detecting winter polar bear dens. (See below for additional research materials.)

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

“Fearing a potential political shift in a matter of days, the Trump Interior Department is rushing the approval of a massive new seismic testing program in the heart of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, all in a mad rush to create new facts on the ground before a potential change in presidential power. This corrupt move would allow a company facing a \$100 million securities fraud investigation to invade America’s most important polar bear denning habitat with convoys of 60,000-pound vehicles that would scar 3,200 miles of fragile tundra.

“For months this administration sat on an internal analysis showing the endangered Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population would suffer habitat encroachment and increased stress from oil development activities. Attempting to permit this process with a rubber stamp review would not only violate environmental laws but pose an unacceptable risk to polar bears that are increasingly using the Arctic Refuge to build their winter maternity dens and leave lasting scars across a half million acres of tundra vegetation.

“The Interior Department could use the Trump administration’s newly-gutted National Environmental Policy Act regulations to evaluate this plan, thus intentionally ignoring many potential impacts. This reckless scheme violates environmental laws, sidelines science, disregards public opinion and trusts a discredited, bankrupt company to protect one of the most cherished, remote and environmentally important landscapes left on the planet. It must be stopped.

“We are in court now challenging the broader Trump leasing plan, joining in solidarity with the Gwich’in people for whom this very area is considered ‘the sacred place where life begins.’ This new seismic



[www.AlaskaWild.org](http://www.AlaskaWild.org)

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 \* Tel: 202-544-5205 \* Fax: 202-544-5197

scheme proposes looking for oil in the very lands where hundreds of thousands of caribou calve before migrating to or through Gwich'in villages in Alaska and Canada.”

###

**Additional Links:**

[Long-delayed Trump administration study finds that climate change threatens polar bears](#) (Washington Post, October 2020)

[Landscape impacts of 3D-seismic surveys in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska](#) (Ecological Society of America, April 2020)

[Oil Industry Tool to Spare Polar Bears Is More Miss Than Hit](#) (The New York Times, February 2020)

[Efficacy of aerial forward-looking infrared surveys for detecting polar bear maternal dens](#) (Plos One, February 2020)

[Review of the SAE proposal for SEISMIC EXPLORATION ON THE COASTAL PLAIN](#) (Polar Bears International, August 2018)

**BLM Document Links:** <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2003258/570>

*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.*



www.AlaskaWild.org

122 C St NW, Ste 240, Washington, DC 20001 \* Tel: 202-544-5205 \* Fax: 202-544-5197