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House Climate Solutions Bill Would Ban New Arctic Ocean Oil and Gas Leasing

Washington — House Natural Resources Committee Chair Raúl Grijalva has introduced the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act of 2020, a bill that would take advantage of our oceans' potential in the fight against climate change by promoting offshore renewable energy, protecting blue carbon, supporting climate-ready fisheries, expanding marine protected areas, improving ocean health and more. The bill, among other things, prohibits new oil and gas leasing in all areas of the Outer Continental Shelf including the Arctic Ocean.

The Beaufort, Chukchi and Northern Bering seas provide habitat for a variety of irreplaceable wildlife, are central to the life and food security for coastal communities and play a key role in regulating the world's climate. Offshore oil and gas activities create significant risk to important and fragile Arctic ecosystems and the coastal communities that have depended on them for millennia, as well as having broader climate impacts for the planet. New leasing in the Arctic Ocean is both unnecessary and unwise.

Statement by Leah Donahey, Legislative Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

"It is incumbent on the incoming presidential administration and Congress to put a plan in place that reduces carbon emissions and our nation's carbon footprint, safeguards resources critical to Indigenous peoples, and establishes a national goal to protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030. Ending new fossil fuel leasing and permitting on federal lands and waters, particularly in the Arctic, will play an important role in achieving these goals and slowing the spiral of a region currently on life support.

"Climate change is being felt acutely in Alaska, a state warming at three times the rate of the rest of the world leading to decreased sea ice and increases in wildfires, coastal erosion and permafrost loss. Alaska's public lands and waters are home to 62 percent of the total carbon stored on our nation's federal lands, making the Arctic literally the worst place for America to stake its energy future. Developing those oil deposits would take decades, while ramping up global warming and sea level rise and risking catastrophic damage from spills we could never clean up.

"Our public waters are deeply threatened by climate change and development, but they can also serve as a huge pillar of our climate solutions making this bill a badly needed step forward."

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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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