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Contact: Corey Himrod

Tel: 202-266-0426 or Email: corey@alaskawild.org

Fast-tracked Willow oil project threatens Alaska's western Arctic

Washington — Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management released a final Record of Decision on the proposed Willow Master Development Plan, ConocoPhillips' massive oil development project within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The proposed Willow project would be massive, including a new central processing facility, up to five drill pads with up to fifty wells on each pad, an extensive road system, 1-2 airstrips, pipelines, a gravel mine and potentially a gravel island in Harrison Bay. Willow would also be located within and next to the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area, threatening an essential cultural area and food source for North Slope communities, one of the most productive wetland complexes in the Arctic and an important calving ground for the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd.

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

“Despite a national crisis that has drastically impacted Alaska’s rural villages and elevated health and food security concerns, the Trump administration is nonetheless forcing through a controversial proposal to greatly expand oil and gas drilling in our nation’s melting Arctic. Administration officials saw an opportunity to check off another industry wish list box with the public’s attention diverted by coronavirus, and they took it.

“Fast-tracking the Willow project during a global pandemic shows a complete lack of consideration for local communities, or for the impact increasing oil and gas development will have in the region. Communities like Nuiqsut brought serious and valid concerns including threats to air quality and food security, only to have their voices set aside or excluded completely. This administration’s rushed process has absolutely failed to adequately address risks to the health and safety of people, or the land, water and wildlife they depend on.”

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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.



www.AlaskaWild.org

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