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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 8, 2020**

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**Interior Department harassment authorization risks the lives of threatened polar bears**

Washington — Today the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [published in the Federal Register](#) a proposed Incidental Harassment Authorization and accompanying draft environmental assessment that would greenlight the harassment of polar bears during seismic exploration on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear population is the world's most imperiled polar bear population, with as few as 900 individuals, and the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain is vital to the survival of this imperiled population.

**Statement by Adam Kolton, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:**

"This is an illegal effort to ram through the permitting of a massive seismic testing program in the final days of the lame duck Trump presidency and it should be halted immediately.

"This scheme envisions letting a bankrupt company under SEC investigation invade the wildest place left in America with roaming camps of up to 180 workers accompanied by a small army of industrial vehicles, including vibration trucks weighing as much as 97,000 pounds, crisscrossing one-third of the Refuge's biological heart, putting denning polar bears at risk and leaving lasting scars on the fragile tundra and its vegetation.

"Even the best technology can only detect denning bears less than 50% of the time. We shouldn't make the survival of the world's most at risk polar bear populations subject to a coin flip.

"Both the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have acknowledged they lack adequate information about the impacts of oil and gas development on the coastal plain to protect wildlife, especially polar bears. This is a keystone Arctic species already seriously threatened by the climate crisis and Arctic warming, and we can't afford the death of a single bear to fossil fuel development."

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

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