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Sham Arctic Refuge lease sale seeks to liquidate a national treasure

Washington — Today, the Trump administration proceeded with the first-ever oil and gas lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. 11 tracts received complete bids totaling just more than \$14 million dollars, well below the \$1.8 billion dollars (or less than 1%) in revenue promised by drilling proponents in the lead up to passage of the Tax Act in 2017. The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority was the leading bidder. All in all, just over 550,000 acres of the 1.6-million-acre coastal plain received bids.

For context, Arctic Power — a trade group pushing for Arctic Refuge drilling — claimed as recently as 2014 that the state and federal government could expect as much as [\\$4-6 billion in revenue](#) from a lease sale. Today, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority — a semi-public independent corporation of the state — spent \$12 million on tracts. **Instead of the federal treasury and the state of Alaska making billions, today the state of Alaska had to spend money to make an Arctic Refuge lease sale happen.**

Statement by Adam Kolton, executive director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“This lease sale was an epic failure for the Trump administration and the Alaska congressional delegation. After years of promising a revenue and jobs bonanza they ended up throwing a party for themselves, with the state being one of the only bidders. We have long known that the American people don’t want drilling in the Arctic Refuge, the Gwich’in people don’t want it, and now we know the oil industry doesn’t want it either.

“The American people will not turn a blind eye to the liquidation of this national treasure. President-elect Biden, who ran on an ambitious climate agenda and on a promise to protect the Arctic Refuge, must take strong action on day one to put the brakes on this calamity.

“Ultimately, we believe the courts will find the Trump administration’s Arctic Refuge drilling scheme to be illegal, violating bedrock environmental laws and ignoring its responsibility to protect the food security of Indigenous peoples and the refuge’s irreplaceable wildlife and wilderness values.

“We will continue to stand with the Gwich’in and fight the effort to industrialize the wildest place left in America with every tool at our disposal, with the goal being the complete reversal of today’s lease sale



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and the restoration of protections for this haven for hundreds of thousands of caribou, denning polar bears and millions of migratory birds.”

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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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