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Your Voice.*

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**March 25, 2021**

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**Interior forum on federal fossil fuel program highlights the need for sweeping change**  
*Effective public lands management requires greater public input and shift to clean energy focus*

Washington — Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior held a virtual public forum as part of its comprehensive review of the federal oil and gas program. As stated in the Biden administration’s executive order of January 27, 2021, the review will “provide a chance to review the federal oil and gas program to ensure that it serves the public interest and to restore balance on America’s public lands and waters to benefit current and future generations. Fossil fuel extraction on public lands accounts for nearly a quarter of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Irresponsible leasing of public lands and waters impacts communities’ access to clean air, clean water, and outdoor recreation; carves up important wildlife habitat; and threatens cultural and sacred sites.”

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

“If your car is headed for the edge of a cliff, you hit the brakes. When it comes to extracting oil and gas from our public lands, America has done the exact opposite, leasing more and more acreage even as the science tells us we can’t extract and burn known reserves if we’re to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

“The previous administration sought to roll back almost all meaningful protections in America’s Arctic with one goal in mind: to increase drilling, with little regard for science, the concerns of Indigenous communities or ensuring the American taxpayer received fair value in return. Irreplaceable national treasures like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge were auctioned off for as little as \$25 an acre. Conoco Phillips’ massive Willow development in the western Arctic was fast-tracked without analyzing climate impacts or addressing the health and subsistence concerns of the nearby Native Village of Nuiqsut. With companies like BP pulling out of Alaska, inadequate reclamation and decommissioning requirements risk leaving a legacy of pollution across thousands of square miles of sensitive lands and waters.

“Federal oil and gas leasing must be reformed in ways that align with climate imperatives, ensure fiscal responsibility and account for long-term environmental impacts. This review is long overdue and an important first step toward fixing a system that has long been tilted in favor of the fossil fuel industry. This is an opportunity to advance equity and environmental justice through public lands management. Alaska’s public lands and waters and the wildlife they support are central to the ways of life of Indigenous communities who have been stewards of these lands for generations. We can do better to honor this legacy of community stewardship, and we should start now.”

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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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