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Suspension of Arctic Refuge leases a positive step, but more is needed

Washington — Today the Biden administration announced the suspension of oil and gas leases for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge issued under the leasing mandate contained in the 2017 Tax Act. President Biden had previously placed a temporary moratorium on oil and gas leasing activities on the Arctic Refuge coastal plain, [doing so via an executive order](#) issued on his first day in office.

Alaska Wilderness League is one of several organizations that [sued the Trump administration](#) in August 2020 over the finalizing of an illegal leasing program that violated bedrock environmental laws including the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Wilderness Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Acting Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“We strongly support the Biden administration’s commitment to preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the last great expanses of untouched wilderness areas in America. The leasing program and resulting lease sale were the result on a substantial flawed and legally deficient process that must be reversed. Suspending these leases is a step in the right direction and we commend the Biden administration for committing to a new program analysis that prioritizes sound science and adequate tribal consultation. The Arctic Refuge coastal plain is sacred to the Gwich’in people who were roundly ignored by the Trump administration, as well as the Iñupiat that have lived on the coastal plain for generations.

“There is still more to be done. Until the leases are canceled, they will remain a threat to one of the wildest places left in America. Now we look to the administration and Congress to prioritize legislatively repealing the oil leasing mandate and restore protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.”

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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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