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Contact: Corey Himrod

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

House unveils Build Back Better Act that repeals Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil program

Washington — Today the U.S House of Representatives released reconciliation bill language that includes repeal of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas program and the buyback of all existing leases. The program originally passed through reconciliation in 2017 as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The language will next be voted on by the full House before being sent to the Senate for consideration.

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

“The Build Back Better language released today is a historic investment in America’s climate and clean energy future. And critically, we’re grateful that it imposes some much-needed fiscal common sense and overdue action to reverse the fire sale of the crown jewel of our National Wildlife Refuge System. Congress needs to get this done now.

“The Arctic Refuge oil and gas leasing program was passed by Congress in 2017 by promising the American public billions in federal revenue. Those projections were laughable then and are even more so today after a lease sale that returned less than 1% of what was promised.

“Congress and the Biden administration will not get a better opportunity to work together to restore protections for the Arctic Refuge. Repealing the oil and gas program is the most important action Congress can take right now to protect threatened Arctic wildlife and ensure the rights, culture and sacred lands of Gwich’in and Iñupiat peoples remain intact, and it is a vital piece of addressing the climate crisis.”

Background:

On January 6, 2021, the Trump administration held the first lease sale for tracts on the 1.5-million-acre coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. No major oil companies showed up to bid and only nine tracts out of 22 offered were sold. Seven of the nine leases awarded went to an Alaska state entity that had never bid on oil leases before. The sale generated a mere \$12 million — less than 1% of the projected revenue, with half of that paid out back to Alaska.

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www.AlaskaWild.org

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

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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