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U.S. polar bears to receive new Endangered Species Act review

Washington — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [has announced](#) its intention to conduct a 5-year status review under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for polar bears, listed as threatened in 2008. An initial 60-day comment period begins today.

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

“U.S. polar bears, particularly the Southern Beaufort Sea population, are under incredible stress due to climate change impacts and the threat of increasing oil and gas development on Alaska’s North Slope. Protection came too late for the [23 species](#) the Interior Department recently declared extinct, but although human-caused climate and environmental destruction is pushing polar bears to the brink, we believe there’s still time to prevent the permanent loss of this keystone Arctic species.

“The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the most important onshore denning habitat for polar bears in the United States, and mother polar bears with cubs are increasingly denning in this area as Arctic sea ice continues to decline. Allowing oil and gas drilling on the last remnants of Alaska’s undeveloped coastal habitat could eradicate polar bears from the United States. We’re glad to see Interior begin a new review, as the Southern Beaufort Sea bears are in jeopardy now with as few as [780 bears remaining](#) and action is needed sooner rather than later.”

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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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