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Contact: Corey Himrod

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

Willow scoping period will allow crucial public engagement on massive Western Arctic oil project

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management have [announced](#) they will solicit public input as part of a supplemental environmental review of the proposed Willow oil and gas project in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Scoping is a crucial part of the NEPA process meant to determine the scale and impacts of a proposed project and identify significant issues that require in-depth analysis while allowing the public the opportunity to offer valuable input.

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

“We commend the administration’s decision to solicit early public input into the process as it reassesses the Willow project. Willow is a massive proposal that requires careful review, especially given the rushed and inadequate permitting process under the previous administration. Robust public input will ensure that ConocoPhillips’ profits do not overshadow the project’s impacts on the people, land and wildlife that will be severely impacted by oil development.

“Last week the Interior Department noted, in response to a federal court decision invalidating its Gulf Mexico lease sale, that it has ‘documented serious deficiencies in the federal oil and gas program’ and that in the face of the climate crisis, the agency needs ‘to take the time to make significant and long overdue programmatic reforms.’ If the administration means to follow through on that promise, it must consider Willow’s long-term and global climate impacts. We believe that doing so will demonstrate that this project cannot go forward if we are to meet our nation’s climate goals. How the Biden administration approaches Willow will be the ultimate test of its commitment to bringing the management of our nation’s public lands in line with the urgent need to combat the climate crisis.”

Background:

Gulf Lease Sale 257 — the [largest](#) offshore oil-and-gas lease sale in U.S. history — had the potential for the production of up to 1.1 billion barrels of oil, and an [analysis](#) by the Center for American Progress found the potential to emit 723 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere over its lifetime. For comparison, Willow is one single development project yet is estimated to produce more than half of that entire lease sale, nearly 600 million barrels of oil between 2024 and 2050 — equivalent to emissions from 66 new coal-fired power plants (or roughly 1/3 of all U.S. coal plants). Environmental reviews conducted by the previous administration estimated that Willow will result in more than 250 million metric tons of CO2 emissions, an enormous contribution from a single project that is equivalent to more than 4% of current annual emissions for the entire country.

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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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