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Contact: Corey Himrod

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

New Western Arctic management plan is a good start, but the Biden administration must go further

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Bureau of Land Management have [released](#) a new Record of Decision (ROD) for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (Reserve) that reverts management of the Reserve back to the 2013 IAP. Also included are additional lease stipulations and operating procedures contained in the 2020 IAP for threatened and endangered species.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Conservation Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

“The previous administration’s move to open more than 82% of the Reserve to oil and gas leasing failed to address the realities of the climate crisis or impacts to the region’s significant wildlife and wilderness values. Returning to the 2013 management plan is the right move in the near term and will restore protections to critical areas like Teshekpuk Lake.

“The Western Arctic is the next major front in the fight to address the climate crisis on our nation’s public lands. The Biden administration should move quickly to put in place durable regulations and protections for the Reserve that recognize the realities of the climate crisis and that are not reliant on which party controls the White House.

“Permafrost thaw is already damaging buildings, roads and pipelines and causing landslides and sinkholes across Alaska. New oil and gas development in the Western Arctic and the massive carbon pollution it would create would supercharge that thaw and place even more infrastructure at risk of environmental catastrophe.

“World events have predictably led to industry lobbyists and the lawmakers they bankroll calling for new domestic oil and gas leasing and production, especially in Arctic Alaska, and in the name of ‘energy security.’ In reality, the answer to energy security does not lie beneath the thawing Arctic permafrost but in accelerating the shift to clean, renewable sources of power generation. Continuing to greenlight massive, long-term oil and gas projects in Alaska will only keep us traveling the perilous path of a fossil-fuel-dependent future.”

Background on the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska:

The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in Alaska’s Western Arctic is the largest single-unit of public land in the nation, spanning approximately 23 million acres across Alaska’s western North Slope. The



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

Western Arctic is home to some of our nation's most vital natural resources — millions of acres of wilderness-quality lands with critical habitat for migratory birds, brown bears, caribou, threatened polar bears, walrus and more. The Alaska Native communities that live in and around the Reserve have maintained a subsistence lifestyle for thousands of years based on its living resources.

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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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