



National Wildlife Federation

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June 29, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators,

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the last truly wild places on earth, and it needs your help. The heart of the refuge is the coastal plain, where pregnant caribou arrive every spring to give birth, where polar bears raise their cubs, and where red-throated loons dive for fish. Musk oxen, grizzlies, lynx, wolves, Dall sheep, Arctic fox, beluga whales, Pacific walrus and nearly 200 species of migratory birds also depend on this unique ecosystem.

The Gwich'in people call this area "the sacred place where life begins," and for thousands of years, they have depended on the migrating caribou for sustenance and for cultural and spiritual traditions. For the last 60 years, they have worked to protect this region – and their very way of life.

Unfortunately, all of this could be lost forever if oil and gas development is allowed to move forward on the coastal plain. In 2017, the United States Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which mandated oil and gas development on the refuge's coastal plain over the objections of a majority of Americans. The prior administration rushed a lease sale in early 2021, which generated a paltry \$14.4 million--well shy of the nearly one billion dollars that the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act estimated the lease sales would raise for the American taxpayer.

As a revenue source, the lease sale was a colossal failure. No major oil and gas companies wanted to bid on leases in the refuge--leaving the state of Alaska and two tiny companies as the only bidders on half of the leases that were offered. However, even if the lease sale raised significant revenue, it would remain a failure. Drilling in a place with unparalleled beauty, diverse wildlife, vast wilderness, outstanding solitude, and remarkable ecological integrity is simply wrong. Drilling in a place where hunters can experience true wilderness, where anglers can ply wild waters is simply wrong.

Scores of scientific studies have shown that oil and gas drilling in the coastal plain would have devastating impacts on wildlife and exacerbate climate change. The American people have made it clear that they want this pristine area protected. Major international banks have announced they will not finance energy development in this area because it makes no sense. It's time for Congress to step up and permanently protect this area from any oil and gas development. Opening up the coastal plain to seismic testing, heavy construction of roads and well pads, and a vast pipeline network will force wildlife to abandon the area and will forever change this ecosystem. It will also violate the human

rights of the Gwich'in people who culturally and historically have relied on wildlife migrations through the area.

It's time to put the disastrous plan to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge behind us. It was a rushed and bad decision on all fronts: financial, ecological, and cultural. The National Wildlife Federation and 38 affiliates urge you to permanently protect one of the last wild places on earth.

Sincerely,

The National Wildlife Federation

Arizona Wildlife Federation

Arkansas Wildlife Federation

Association of Northwest Steelheaders

Colorado Wildlife Federation

Connecticut Forest and Park Association

Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma

Conservation Council for Hawai'i

Conservation Northwest

Delaware Nature Society

Environmental League of Massachusetts

Florida Wildlife Federation

Georgia Wildlife Federation

Idaho Wildlife Federation

Iowa Wildlife Federation

Kansas Wildlife Federation

Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Montana Wildlife Federation

National Aquarium

Natural Resources Council of Maine

Nebraska Wildlife Federation

Nevada Wildlife Federation

New Jersey Audubon

New Mexico Wildlife Federation

New Hampshire Audubon

North Carolina Wildlife Federation

Penn Future

Planning and Conservation League

Prairie Rivers Network

Sociedad Ornitologica Puertorriquena, Inc

South Carolina Wildlife Federation

South Dakota Wildlife Federation

Southeast Alaska Conservation Council

Texas Conservation Alliance

Utah Wildlife Federation

Vermont Natural Resources Council

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Wyoming Wildlife Federation