

Over 300 Businesses Across 50 States Call for the Protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Statement released as the Trump administration announces oil and gas lease sale for the refuge

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Washington, DC — On news of the Trump administration opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing, [over 300 businesses](#) from across the country call for “oil and gas corporations and the other businesses that support drilling activities to not violate the Refuge’s biological heart, the coastal plain, and to listen to the will of the people. We must hold our national treasure in trust for future generations.”

This statement comes amidst the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Arctic Refuge on December 6 and the Trump administration announcing that the [oil and gas lease sale will happen on January 6](#). The [sale](#) is the final process to open the refuge to drilling. The timing of the notice of a lease sale is surprising as it comes during the current open “call for nominations” which is set to end on December 17.

It also comes at the heels of Bank of America joining the other five major U.S. banks in refusing to fund oil and gas projects related to the Arctic Refuge. [This business statement](#) is another in a long list of thousands of Indigenous communities, faith leaders, investment firms, conservation organizations, and others who have been calling on [banks](#), [insurance companies](#), and [oil and gas companies](#) to not drill the Arctic Refuge.

Companies who signed onto the letter urged fellow businesses to not take the reputational and financial risk of bidding on leases in the Arctic Refuge. The statement says: “Drilling in the Arctic Refuge is also incredibly risky. The massive infrastructure needed to extract and transport the oil, as well as accompanying air, water, and noise pollution from drilling, would have devastating impacts on this pristine and fragile natural area. Chronic spills of oil and other toxic substances in the fragile tundra would irreversibly and forever scar this land.”

Quotes From Businesses Statement Signers:

Meghan Wolf, Environmental Activism Manager with Patagonia, said, “The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a national treasure and an ecologically important landscape. The refuge’s critical coastal plain is sacred ground for the Gwich’in people and should not be auctioned off for oil and gas development. Drilling in the refuge’s coastal plain would compound the devastating climate impacts already being felt in this majestic place, and we need to do all we can to protect it.”

David Levine, Co-Founder and President of the American Sustainable Business Council, said, “The American Sustainable Business Council strongly disagrees with the actions to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling, especially when we have such a clear and strong path forward to meet our energy needs through renewable and clean sources. The path to renewable energy offers great business opportunities, and job creation, exactly what our economy needs at this time.”

David Perry, Executive Vice President, Alterra Mountain Company which owns resorts like Steamboat, Winter Park, Alpine Meadows, Mammoth Mountain, Big Bear, Deer Valley and, Solitude Mountain said, “On behalf of our fifteen

mountain resorts that host over nine million visitors annually, and our 27,000 employees that are deeply passionate about treating our natural world with respect, we commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of the Arctic Refuge as a national wildlife refuge this week. We should be doing all we can to protect it, supporting the Indigenous peoples who have watched over this land since time immemorial, and not open it to destructive development.”

Sarah Tingey, Co-owner, Alpaca Raft, based in Mancos, Colorado, said, “As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of this important land becoming a national wildlife refuge this week, the critical coastal plain should not be auctioned off for oil and gas development. Fossil fuel extraction will have serious biological, cultural, and climate impacts in the rapidly-warming Arctic Refuge, which is ground zero for climate change and is warming at twice the rate of the rest of the world.”

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More Information:

The recent “call for nominations” came out in mid November as a result of the passage of the 2017 Tax Act which included a last minute provision requiring drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern Alaska which mandated two lease sales on the Refuge’s coastal plain.

A [“call for nominations” allows oil companies to say where in the refuge they want to operate.](#) The notice was published [in the Federal Register](#), and potential bidders will have [30 days](#) to make their nominations.

The Bureau normally would [review the comments due December 17 and determine which tracts to sell before issuing the final notice of sale and that can often take many months.](#) In this case, however, the Bureau of Land Management published the notice of a lease sale on Monday, Dec. 7th. They will start accepting bids on December 21 and bids must be received by Dec. 31. The bids will be open in the lease sale on Jan 6th. [The process could be complete days before Biden officially assumes the presidency on Jan. 20.](#)

This comes after the Trump administration [released a](#) plan in late October to conduct seismic exploration this winter on 1/2 a million acres of the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge.

Alaska Native communities like the Gwich’in and Iñupiat depend on the Arctic Refuge and its resources to sustain their communities, culture and way of life. Iñupiat communities rely on Arctic fisheries for their diet, which would be impacted by increased marine traffic to build oil infrastructure, while the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge has sustained the Gwich’in people for millennia. The Gwich’in are physically and spiritually linked to the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which give birth to their young in the refuge. This month, the United Nations [called for an investigation into the United States](#) regarding how proposed development in the Arctic Refuge violates the Gwich’in people’s human rights.

The Arctic Refuge is a critical denning habitat for the Southern Beaufort Sea population, the world’s most imperiled polar bears due to climate change. Over 75 percent of the coastal plain is designated critical habitat for threatened polar bears under the Endangered Species Act.

Protection of the Refuge had been supported by Democrats and Republicans since 1980, and over [70 percent of voters in the United States oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge.](#)