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Federal Court Once Again Reins in Trump Assault on Alaska's Federal Lands and Waters

Washington — Late Friday evening, U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason in Alaska threw out President Trump's executive order that sought to overturn bans on offshore drilling in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans put in place at the end of President Obama's second term in office. Several conservation and Alaska Native organizations filed suit against the order, including Alaska Wilderness League, League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands), Center for Biological Diversity, Greenpeace and The Wilderness Society, represented by attorneys at Earthjustice and Natural Resources Defense Council.

In two separate opinions yesterday, Judge Gleason first voided a land exchange deal between the Interior Department and the King Cove Corporation that attempted to trade away vital wetlands and wilderness to build a road through the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge on the grounds that Interior's decision-making was arbitrary and capricious. Judge Gleason then also voided Trump's 2017 executive order undoing Arctic and Atlantic ocean drilling bans on the grounds that the order exceeded his constitutional and statutory authority in violation of federal law.

Adam Kolton, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League, issues the following statement:

"In less than 24 hours, a federal court has put a halt to Trump's assault on wild Alaska. Yesterday's court decisions are victories for land and sea alike, and a reminder that the Trump administration is not above the law. The Izembek sweetheart deal was never in the public interest, and the American people have overwhelmingly spoken out in favor of protecting our oceans and coastlines and the communities and wildlife that depend on them. They were the driving force behind Arctic and Atlantic protections being put in place, and today they should be celebrating these wins.

The reining in of Trump's Alaska assault is great news for the state and great news for the planet. The wilderness values of the Izembek Wildlife Refuge are irreplaceable and circumventing a public process to build a road right through its heart would damage important habitat for migratory birds, brown bears and salmon, as well as other wildlife. It would have been a bad deal for taxpayers and a bad deal for the environment, especially when there are other, safer options available. And Trump's 2017 executive order sought to open more than 120 million acres of ocean to the oil and gas industry, including 98 percent of federal Arctic Ocean waters where offshore drilling would threaten irreplaceable wildlife, sensitive marine ecosystems, coastal villages and our global climate. We applaud yesterday's decisions that will instead keep these lands and waters protected for future generations."



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