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Alaska Wilderness League Statement on Nomination of David Bernhardt to Interior Secretary

Washington, D.C. – Alaska Wilderness League Executive Director Adam Kolton issues the following statement on the nomination of David Bernhardt to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

“Acting Secretary Bernhardt is a strong oil and gas ally with a long pattern of putting fossil fuel interests first and the sound stewardship of our natural resources a distant second. Nowhere is this pattern more alarming than with Alaska’s public lands and waters. It was Mr. Bernhardt’s decision to keep oil and gas lease sales and permitting moving in Alaska and across the country during the government shutdown, even as national parks were shuttered, and vital services were being ignored.

During his time in the George W. Bush administration, Bernhardt notoriously altered or omitted data to distort Interior Department conclusions about the Arctic Refuge in a bid to advance drilling. As a lawyer in private practice, he represented the State of Alaska in its quest to push through seismic testing in the Arctic Refuge. And as Deputy and now Acting Secretary, he is pushing a rushed, inadequate review of the impacts of oil and gas development in Arctic wilderness to hold a lease sale twice as fast as stipulated in the 2017 tax bill. Under his direction, BLM is allowing outdated and incomplete science to make the critical decision about whether and how oil and gas development will occur in one of the world’s most iconic landscapes.

In considering whether to confirm Mr. Bernhardt as steward of our nation’s millions of acres of public lands and waters, Senators should consider that he has shown no indication that he will put the broad interests of the American people or our future generations ahead of those seeking short term profit or personal gain.”

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