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**Suppressed Documents Raise New Questions About Arctic Refuge Development, David Bernhardt**

*Former oil lobbyist Bernhardt, the likely nominee to be the next Secretary of the Interior, is known for altering/omitting Arctic Refuge data during the Bush administration*

Washington — Alaska Wilderness League conservation director Kristen Miller issues the following statement on today's [revelations from Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility \(PEER\)](#) that 18 memos from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identifying the types of information needed for "planning, developing, and managing an oil and gas program in the 1002 area" of the Arctic Refuge were withheld from BLM's Draft Environmental Impact Statement process:

"While incredibly disappointing, yesterday's news is not a surprise considering that the Trump administration has been aggressively moving the environmental assessment for its lease sale forward to meet false, politically motivated deadlines from the beginning. The only way BLM can meet these timeframes is by taking huge shortcuts on scientific analysis and public process.

Since last summer the Trump administration made clear it had no intention to gather any new data about the Arctic Refuge that could inform its decisions on leasing, despite the [release of a USGS report](#) noting several major science gaps. Yesterday's news of additional Fish and Wildlife Service documents ignored during the DEIS process and withheld from FOIA requests (including our own outstanding request) — expert memos covering issues including permafrost, water resources and caribou impacts — is shameful but also completely consistent with this administration's reckless rush to get leases into the hands of oil companies before the 2020 election.

Acting Interior Secretary David Bernhardt has been driving the Arctic Refuge development process and is an oil and gas ally with a long pattern of putting fossil fuel interests first and sound stewardship of our natural resources a distant second. During his time in the Bush administration, Bernhardt notoriously altered or omitted data to distort Interior Department conclusions about the Arctic Refuge in a bid to advance drilling there. Now, under his direction, BLM is covering up valid scientific concerns and allowing outdated and incomplete science to inform the critical decision about whether and how oil and gas development will occur in one of the world's most iconic landscapes. His growing record of deception makes him completely unfit to serve as America's chief steward of our public lands and waters."

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