

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Court Allows Conservation and Alaska Native groups to challenge Trump's reversal of Arctic and Atlantic drilling ban

Court now set to determine whether Trump broke the law in trying to undo permanent safeguards

Anchorage, AK — Conservation and Alaska Native groups have a green light to hold President Trump accountable to the rule of law. The coalition of ten groups had sued Trump in May of 2017 over his attempt to jettison a permanent ban on new offshore oil and gas drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. A federal district court in Alaska yesterday rebuffed efforts by the Trump Administration and the oil industry to dismiss the case, rejecting arguments that public-interest advocates were barred from challenging the decision.

The Trump Administration and the American Petroleum Institute disputed the groups' ability to bring the lawsuit on a host of grounds, including that Trump's action should not be subjected to review by any court at all. Late yesterday, the federal district court in Anchorage rejected those arguments across the board. The court is now set to determine whether Trump broke the law in trying to undo permanent protections established for the Arctic and Atlantic under President Obama.

The groups challenging President Trump's decision are: League of Conservation Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Alaska Wilderness League, Defenders of Wildlife, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands), Center for Biological Diversity, Greenpeace and The Wilderness Society. They are represented by attorneys at Earthjustice and Natural Resources Defense Council.

Statements:

"This is an important reminder that the President is not above judicial review of his actions, but it is just the first step," said **Gene Karpinski, President of the League of Conservation Voters**. "The threat of devastating oil spills associated with Trump's risky offshore drilling proposal puts coastal economies and ways of life at risk while worsening the consequences of climate change. We look forward to working with our fellow plaintiffs to show in court that the President acted outside his authority when he removed protections for these waters."

"President Trump tried to shut the courthouse door. But the court's order keeps the door open and affirms that we are a country of laws; the President gets no exception," said **Erik Grafe, an attorney with Earthjustice representing the plaintiffs**. "We now look forward to demonstrating to the court that President Trump violated the law and the constitution in attempting to undo the Arctic and Atlantic drilling ban."

"Trump's brazen attempt to strip protection from 128 million acres of U.S. ocean waters for the benefit of polluters is unlawful," said **Niel Lawrence, senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council**. "Now he will have to answer for it in a court of law."

“This is a huge first step toward blocking Trump’s plan to turn our oceans into oil fields,” said **Kristen Monsell, a senior attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity**. “We’re confident the court will see right through this reckless giveaway to the oil industry that threatens polar bears, whales, and coastal communities with devastating oil spills. We’ll keep fighting to ensure the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans stay off limits to dirty, dangerous drilling.”

“The oceans and the species within them will get their day in court, but they deserve protection from President Trump’s attempts to plunder our natural heritage. This administration’s cynical and shortsighted offshore drilling plans must be stopped,” said **Jason Rylander, Senior Attorney at Defenders of Wildlife**.

“Once again, the courts are reminding Donald Trump that he is not above the law,” said **Lena Moffitt, Senior Director of the Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign**. “This is yet another example of Trump overreaching in his reckless attempts to give our public lands and waters away to the fossil fuel industry. We will continue to fight back against Trump's illegal actions and keep these protections for our oceans in place.”

“As the Trump administration does all it can to quash public participation in our democracy, we applaud the court for upholding the public’s right to have a say in the fate of its communities and vital resources. Trump's reckless offshore drilling plan threatens our coasts, communities and climate, and we look forward to showing that his actions also violated the law,” said **Mary Sweeters, Climate and Energy Campaigner for Greenpeace**.

“This fight is far from over, but yesterday’s decision at least ensures that America’s public lands and waters will have their day in court,” said **Kristen Miller, Conservation Director, Alaska Wilderness League**. “Trump and his lackeys don’t get to ignore the law or the principles America was founded on whenever it suits them. The American public has overwhelmingly spoken out in favor of protecting our oceans and coastlines and the communities and wildlife that depend on them, and now Trump cannot ignore their voices. We are the guardians of these waters. Keeping them off-limits to development and protected for the good of future generations.”

Read the press release online <<https://earthjustice.org/news/press/2018/court-allows-conservation-and-alaska-native-groups-to-challenge-trump-s-reversal-of-arctic-and-atlantic-drilling-ban>>.

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