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Arctic Refuge public comment period closes with overwhelming opposition to development

WASHINGTON – Today marks the final day of the 60-day scoping period for an Environmental Impact Statement on a proposed lease sale in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Six public hearings occurred in Alaska and one in Washington, D.C., with public sentiment favoring (often overwhelmingly so) protection of the Arctic Refuge and its coastal plain. In addition, the American public has submitted more than 675,000 public comments during the 60-day comment period in favor of protections.

Statement by Adam Kolton, executive director of Alaska Wilderness League:

“Let’s be clear: our public lands and waters are national treasures owned by all Americans, and they are increasingly under attack. Unfortunately, the only voices the Trump administration will listen to are those who would financially benefit from increased drilling and development. The Trump administration is trying to advance a lease sale in the heart of the Arctic Refuge by next summer, years in advance of the legislative timeline. Despite promises not to undercut environmental laws, the intent is clear: beat the clock and rush oil leasing before potential shifts in the political landscape can occur.

This administration has denied requests to have hearings around the county, denied requests by several Native villages for hearings and denied requests for an extension of the public comment period, refusing to ensure all Americans can have their voices heard. Still, the vast majority of those turning out for the six hearings in Alaska and one in Washington, D.C. opposed drilling. In fact, every single person that took a number and waited patiently to speak in D.C. ultimately spoke out passionately against plans to lease.

During the tax bill debate, Greg Sheehan, Principal Deputy Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, testified regarding lease sales that ‘two would occur four to five years from now, with drilling being potentially as far out as 7-10 years.’ They need to keep that promise and employ a process that incorporates the best available science and considers the full breath of comments from Native people, Alaskans, the outdoor industry, faith leaders, scientists and the majority of the American public.”

Additional Support for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:

- [U.S. Senate Letter](#)
- [U.S. House of Representatives Letter](#)
- [Conservation Alliance Letter](#)
- [Athletes and Influencers Supporting Arctic Refuge Protections Letter](#)
- [Guides and Outdoor Recreation Professionals Supporting Arctic Refuge Protections Letter](#)
- [Scholars for Defending the Arctic Refuge Letter](#)
- [Evangelical Environmental Network Petition](#)
- [Link to D.C. Public Hearing Telepresser Recording](#)



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