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Trump Admin. Announces Plans to Open More of America's Western Arctic to Development

Washington, D.C. – The Bureau of Land Management today placed a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Integrated Activity Plan (IAP) and Environmental Impact Statement for the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in the Federal Register, which will likely seek to undo protections put in place by the Obama administration. In 2013, the Department of the Interior adopted a management plan that received strong public support and put in place sensible conservation protections for 11 million acres in the Reserve, setting aside five Special Areas of exceptional wildlife and wilderness value: Teshekpuk Lake, Colville River, Utukok River Uplands, Kasegaluk Lagoon and Peard Bay. The oil industry has long had its sights set on the Teshekpuk Lake Special Area in particular, and today's announcement potentially puts at risk one of the most productive and unique wetland complexes in the circumpolar Arctic and breeding grounds for countless species of migratory shorebirds as well as the Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd.

The National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska contains approximately 23 million acres of some of our nation's most vital natural resources – millions of acres of wilderness-quality lands with critical habitat for migratory birds, brown bears, caribou, polar bears, walrus, endangered beluga whales and more. The Alaska Native communities that live along the Reserve have maintained a subsistence lifestyle for thousands of years based on its living resources.

Statement by Leah Donahey, Legislative Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

"The Interior Department spent years working with tribal and local governments, the state of Alaska, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group and the public to build consensus on the current management plan. Throughout this multi-year process, the vast majority of public comments supported strong protections for Reserve Special Areas. Abandoning this science-based, common sense approach in favor of oil and gas interests is reckless and makes a mockery of Interior's planning process."

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